

在外研究員研究報告書

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	1. Short-term and long-term study abroad: The impact on language learners' intercultural communication, L2 confidence, and sense of L2 self	Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development		2020.10.29
	2. The English Classroom as "warai no ba": Instructor Views on Humor and Language Learning in Japan	International Journal of Educational Research		Volume 2-2 (2021)
	3. Is this thing on? Teacher views of incorporating humor into online language classes	The Language Teacher		印刷中
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## 研究成果の概要

The following is a description of research activities that I (Peter Neff) conducted during my sabbatical in the 2020-2021 school year.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 and the necessity of lockdown and social restrictions shortly after my arrival in the UK, my original research plans for this sabbatical were severely impacted. What this meant in practice was that I was unable to meet in person with my advising professor—Jean-Marc Dewaele—and collect data as planned for most of my time in the UK. However, I *was* able to use the time to complete analyses and paper writing related to three research studies I had already been involved in prior to the 2020 school year. I will therefore use this space to write about these projects as well as the data collection for the research I originally intended to undertake with Professor Dewaele, but which was necessarily delayed by the COVID restrictions.

The first project I completed while in the UK was the writing and publishing of a research paper about the effects of long- and short-term study abroad. This was the result of a study related to a KAKEN grant research group I had been involved with since 2015. Data for this study was collected from study abroad learners at three universities in Japan, including Doshisha University. By the time I reached the UK in 2020, all of the data had already been collected and some had been analyzed, but no papers had been written. During my time in lockdown in London, with the help of my co-author, I was able to complete a draft paper describing our results, which was then submitted to, and eventually published in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, an Impact Factor journal published by Taylor and Francis. Below is a summary of the study's background and findings.

Study abroad has recently become an increasingly popular option for language learners who wish to engage in an immersive educational experience while living in a different culture, but not all SA programs are created equal. Length of time can vary significantly, from a days or weeks up to a year or more spent in the target culture, and this can affect not only linguistic development but also non-linguistic factors such as intercultural communication, confidence using the second/foreign language (L2), and a sense of L2 self. The purpose of this study was to examine how two groups of Japanese learners of English going abroad for different lengths of time (one month (n = 79) and one year (n = 70) respectively) were affected across a range of non-linguistic variables. Pre- and post-SA survey data were collected, and results indicate that both groups achieved significant benefits in increased L2 speaking confidence and a strengthening of sense of an ideal L2 self, while also undergoing a weakening of ought-to L2 self. However, the degree of change was not uniform across

groups. Moreover, the short-term SA participants demonstrated a decrease in ethnocentricity whereas the long-term participants did not.

The scope of this research project was fairly extensive and included both quantitative and qualitative data collection (the latter in the form of interviews with study abroad returnees). The paper described above reported exclusively on the quantitative results due to space limitations. While in the UK, I also began analysis of the qualitative interview data and hope to finish that and write a second paper detailing those results in the near future.

The second project I completed during my sabbatical was related to the theme of humor in the language-learning classroom. As with the previous study, all of the data for this project had been collected prior to my arrival in the UK but no analysis had yet been undertaken. During my time there, I was able to complete analysis and co-author a paper detailing the results of this study.

This project was an extension of previously published study (Neff & Rucynski, 2017) about the same topic but from a different perspective. More specifically, whereas our earlier work had focused on language *learners'* beliefs about the role of humor in English education, the current study examined beliefs about humor from the point of view of language *instructors*. Below is a short description of the project and its results.

Humor holds promise as a tool to promote positive affectivity within the language classroom, but instructor differences, not to mention the effects of cultural background, make generalizations about successful employment of humor difficult to establish. This is especially true in a culture such as Japan, where the concept of "*warai no ba*" ("laughter places") establishes sociocultural limits on appropriate environments in which to use humor. The aim of this study was to better understand the role that humor can play in language learning from the perspective of instructors. To address these concerns, we surveyed 62 English language instructors (including both English L1 and Japanese L1 participants) at universities throughout Japan about their views and approaches to humor use. Results from quantitative analysis indicate a general overall endorsement of using humor use in the language classroom and its utility in enhancing the learning process, albeit with qualifications expressed concerning instructor personality. Views among the instructor participants as expressed in qualitative responses were far from uniform, however, with a great deal of variability evident regarding individual approaches to in-classroom use of humor.

After co-authoring a paper about this project and submitting it to a few journals in succession, it has finally been accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Educational Research*, an Impact Factor, Open-Access journal published by Elsevier.

As an addendum to this project, late in 2020 I and my co-author became interested in how instructors' use of in-class humor was being affected by the necessity to suddenly hold courses online after the emergence of the COVID epidemic. To study this further, we conducted yet another survey of instructors, this time asking exclusively about their reactions to using humor while teaching in online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. That study is described below.

This study investigated English language teachers' perceptions of using humor in online instruction. A mixed methods survey was administered to 59 language teachers to gauge their views on four variables—contrasting online and face-to-face (F2F) humor in teaching, humor as part of the teacher's online repertoire, benefits of humor in online teaching, and challenges of teaching with humor online. Participants had particularly divergent views about the differences between using humor in F2F or online instruction. Nevertheless, many reported finding ways to still use humor in the online format. While the benefits of humor were generally deemed to be similar in either context, teaching online presented numerous new challenges to using humor, such as a lack of nonverbal cues from learners. Qualitative comments from participants provided deeper insights into the differences, benefits, and challenges of incorporating humor into online classes.

After collecting and analyzing the data for this project, we co-wrote a paper describing the results and submitted it for publication in *The Language Teacher* journal published by JALT in Japan. It has been accepted and will be published in the near future.

The third project I completed work for during my sabbatical was related to factors that affect language instructors' assignment of grades. To undertake this work, I had collected publicly available GPA data from a Japanese university in order to determine what patterns emerged in how language instructors were grading their students over time. Prior to my sabbatical, I had begun collecting and collating this data, but during my time in the UK I was able to finish this collection, analyze the data, and begin writing a paper detailing the results. Below is a brief description of the study.

Ongoing revision of curricular and assessment guidelines has become a fact of life at the language-related centers and departments at many Japanese universities. But after the changes are implemented, what is the reality on the ground in terms of instructor practices and how they assess their students? This study was an examination of assessment practices before and after major English curriculum changes were implemented at a Japanese university. Assessment data was collected in the form of average GPA scores for English classes taught in the years immediately before and after test-based proficiency placement and grading guidelines were introduced. Additional data relating to textbook usage, number of grading categories, and class size were also collected and analyzed. Results indicate significant differences

depending on instructor choices and context, but measurements comparing GPAs pre- and post-change resulted in no significant differences, suggesting that instructors were by and large assessing their students in a similar manner despite the new guidelines.

I am currently in the latter stages of writing a paper about these results and intend to submit it for publication to journal in the field of Second Language Acquisition upon completion.

The final project I worked on during my sabbatical was one initiated with the professor who had invited me to work with him in London—Dr. Jean-Marc Dewaele at Birkbeck, University of London. After our initial online consultations, we slowly formulated the outline of a study that combined his area of expertise—Foreign Language Enjoyment—with my own recent research into humor in the language classroom. Together, we developed a 120-item survey instrument that used existing survey items relating to Foreign Language Enjoyment, personality measures, and responses to prompts about humor in the language-learning classroom.

Using Dr. Dewaele's extensive network of language instructor contacts throughout Europe and China, we were finally able to collect data from approximately 700 student participants early in 2021. After conducting some initial analyses and discussing the data, we are now in a position to begin writing up the results into a publishable paper that we plan to submit to a prestigious international journal before the end of 2021.