論文

A Liberal Arts Seminar in Applied Linguistics: Its Contents and Discussions About Current English Language Education in Japan From Students' Perspective[1]

三 浦 隆 行

MIURA　Takayuki [2]

Abstract

Out of diverse domains in applied linguistics, the predominant application has consistently been the teaching and learning of second or foreign languages (Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2020, pp. 1-2). Considering applied linguistics as an essential field of study for those who are enthusiastic about becoming English language teachers, a liberal arts seminar in applied linguistics was held in English for first-year students at Hakodate University in the first half of 2021. This paper aims to present their learning outcomes and concerns about practices of English language teaching in Japan.

Keywords

Liberal Arts Seminar, Applied Linguistics, English Language Education, Research in Language Learning and Teaching, Teacher Education

1. Introduction

In the first semester of 2021, a liberal arts seminar whose central topic was *applied linguistics* was given in English to first-year students at Hakodate University. On the syllabus, it was clearly stated that the class was principally intended for students who would be eager to earn teaching qualifications in English language teaching at the secondary level. In general, a liberal arts seminar is a class where students use a textbook that is usually an introductory technical book in a certain field and each student makes a handout on a chapter of the book and prepares discussion topics to be shared in class. In the current class, a book titled "A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics (Ishikawa, 2017)" written in Japanese was used. Along with the book, a ten to twenty-page empirical research paper which was of high relevance to each chapter was provided so that the students would get used to reading academic papers. In total, the students read nine chapters of the book and ten research papers.

The first three classes after the induction dealt with introductions to summary writing, argument structures, and handout writing using resources from The Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html) and issues of current English language education in Japan the students could think of at the beginning of the semester. Each class started with a vocabulary mini test on technical terms in applied linguistics whose study sets were prepared on Quizlet (https://quizlet.com), followed by a presentation on a chapter of, e.g., the history of applied linguistics and second language teaching. Each presenter prepared a handout with summarised points they found interesting and important in their assigned chapter. After sharing these points, they ended their presentation with three discussion topics they came up with after reading the chapter and the rest of the students exchanged their views about them. Further discussion topics concerning an empirical research paper of the day, which were submitted by the students other than the presenter on Google Classroom (https://classroom.google.com), were demonstrated accompanied by results from previous research as answers to the discussion topics by the lecturer. For instance, one student asked, "Can we become a polyglot with our efforts?," and "Some polyglots express disapproval of their being specifically talented and ascribe their achievements rather to the effects of tremendous effort (e.g., Lomb, 2008) (Erard, 2019, pp. 157-158)" and "There is no progress without effort ... One should connect language learning with either work or leisure. And not

at the expense of them but to supplement them (Lomb, 2008, p. 63)" were cited and shown as answers to the question. Occasionally, where appropriate, Pear Deck (https://www.peardeck.com), which is an interactive classroom response web tool (Mache et al., 2017) and Google add-on, was used to display questions and exercises regarding themes in applied linguistics such as cognitive advantages of bilingual speakers and acquire immediate responses from the students.

By the end of the semester, the students were exposed to the following ten topics of applied linguistics: (1) the history of applied linguistics (Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2020); (2) hypotheses in language learning, teaching, and acquisition (Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013); (3) linguistic differences between English and Japanese (i.e., required absence of subjects in Japanese) (Hinds, 1986); (4) working memory (Engle, 2002); (5) brain and language aptitude (Turker & Reiterer, 2021); (6) language awareness (Hyltenstam, 2021); (7) psycholinguistic viewpoints in language learning and teaching (Eghlidi, Talebinezhad, & Fard, 2017); (8) content and language integrated learning (Feddermann, Möller, & Baumert, 2021); (9) the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Foley, 2021); and (10) second language testing (De Jong, 2018). Considering these topics and what were covered in the book chapters, the students were required to write an end-term essay with more than one thousand words to answer the four questions which were given well in advance at the beginning of the semester on Google Classroom: (1) What new findings did you make by reading the book?; (2) What are the things you found in the book you can make use of when learning and teaching English?; (3) What research topic would you like to pursue and why?; and (4) What issues do you think we need to solve in current English language education in Japan?

The purpose of this article is to accumulate and demonstrate the knowledge of applied linguistics that was new to the students, their ideas for better learning and teaching of the English language, their probable research questions they would like to find answers to, and what kind of issues in current English language education in Japan they were aware of through their English language learning in junior and senior high schools and university, which will be to show how much attention they paid to the studies of language learning and teaching as novice learners of English language teaching and what teaching they will

subsequently need to be supplied with. The following sections will present selected answers by the students to the four essay questions with their initials at the end of each passage in an alphabetical order (see Notes (1) for their full names). The passages were revised by the author, but were not entirely paraphrased to leave some room for them to reconsider their writings later on. Written informed consent was obtained from all students to have their names and words appear in this article.

2. Answers to the four essay questions by the students

2.1. What new findings did you make by reading the book?

I gained new knowledge about modern teaching methods. There are many types of modern teaching methods. Currently, a lot of ways of teaching are being considered. So far, teachers seem to have been focusing on the content of the textbook. But now, little by little, situations where people speak English are being created. The silent way (Gattegno, 1963) or cooperative language learning (e.g., Dewey, 1899) would be very effective. These methods allow learners to learn autonomously and collaborate with other learners around them. However, both methods require teachers with a high level of knowledge and skills in language teaching. In addition, teachers need to know a lot of teaching methods and characteristics of their students. Teachers have to work probably twice as hard as learners trying to learn a second language (L2). It is quite possible that teachers will have students who are better at English than them in the course of teaching. It is important for teachers to put themselves in the position of their learners every day to prevent that from happening. Teachers should not give unilateral teaching to their students. It is important to learn from the students as well, and to create lessons together with them. It is also important to understand how to teach L2 as an effective, enjoyable, and communicative tool for the future of the students. There are many modern teaching methods, but there is no one method that is perfect in every way. So, teachers will have to keep considering and devising better ways to teach. Until they find a absolute teaching method, all they can do is to combine the methods they have now. The future lessons will be better than the ones we have taken thus far. (F. O.)

What I found new by reading the book was that although I originally aimed to become an English language teacher, I realised that I would like to become one of a subject different from English, so everything was so new to me. In Chapter 7: Establishing Language Teaching Methods, which I summarised and presented, various types of teaching methods were given as concrete examples. For example, the grammar translation method (e.g., Brown, 1994), the direct method (e.g., Skidmore, 1917), the oral approach (Palmer, 1921), the graded direct method (Richards, 1945), the audiolingual method (Brooks, 1964) and so on. Teaching methods are techniques used especially in language education. I have not heard the names of these teaching methodologies, but when I read the contents of each pedagogy, the English teachers in junior high and senior high schools who have taught English so far are sure to find them useful. (L. K.)

I found how to learn a foreign language, how to teach it effectively, and how to measure its ability correctly. Among them, the most interesting is the modern teaching method called total physical response (Asher, 1965), which enhances the understanding of L2 by performing physical reactions instead of oral reactions (Ishikawa, 2017, pp. 192-193). But, it is principally effective for children and difficult to use for adult learners (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 193). So, I thought it would not be useful for future L2 acquisition. Other than that, I found that there are advantages and disadvantages to L2 acquisition depending on the type of personality (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 121). I think my learner personality is conscientiousness. A learner of this personality type can be a facilitator of L2 acquisition, as it leads to a serious approach to L2 learning (Wilson, 2008). Certainly, when I had an English vocabulary test, I did not study the day before and started studying just before the test started. However, I got a high score as if I had studied the day before. Perhaps, the reason is that I was writing the words while reading them in a whisper. However, it was just a good study method, and personality may not matter. Another new discovery is about motivation in language learning. For example, in terms of motivational orientation, learners who learn, e.g., French, from the desire to do something in the French-speaking world have better L2 grades than those who learn French for practical purposes such as employment (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). In this way, learning progresses smoothly if I am more interested in the field than being forced to

do it, find significance in learning it, and are willing to learn by myself. So, when I learn something, I want to try to find a field of study that might be of interest to me. (N. K.)

I found that there are different types of memory, i.e., sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Information received by humans through the five senses first enters the sensory memory for about 0.2 to 3 seconds. It disappears in an instant, but only the attention-grabbing content goes into short-term memory for about 10 seconds. However, the content of short-term memory is small, and new information comes in one after another, so the information in short-term memory disappears immediately. However, it is possible to move to long-term memory by repeating the information or performing elaborate rehearsals that associate the meaning with the image such as puns. Information in long-term memory is stored for weeks, months, or even semi-permanently (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). (R. S.)

In this book, the first thing I learned was what applied linguistics is all about. Applied linguistics is a discipline that focuses on issues related to the acquisition and learning of an L2, while applying linguistics and other disciplines. Learner characteristics include : foreign language aptitude, cognition, learning styles and strategies, and motivation (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 103), age, learning style, learning strategy, affect, personality, and motivation. (Brown, 2014, p. 103), age, intelligence, language learning aptitude, learning styles, personality, motivation in the classroom, identity and race, and belief (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The most obvious of these characteristics that affect the success or failure of L2 acquisition is age. Normally, if a child is raised in an L2 environment from an early age, he or she is likely to have high L2 abilities. However, if one starts learning after puberty, it becomes more difficult to reach the same level of native speakers. Thus, it is believed that the age at which a learner starts learning L2 is related to individual differences in the success or failure of L2 acquisition (e.g., Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). Based on this, we should collect social, educational, and environmental data on L2 acquisition and proficiency, and consider each of them from various perspectives. (S. M.)

In learning so many new things, I learned for the first time the difference between L1 and L2

and what is involved in L2 acquisition. The order of subjects and predicates may be different between L1 and L2, and some spoken and written words may be different. There are individual differences in L2 acquisition, and there are six main factors that contribute to this. The first is age: the younger you are, the easier it is to learn L2. The second is aptitude: there are different types of people who are suited to learn L2, and they can learn it in a relatively short period of time. The third is personality: learners with strong neurotic tendencies perform better in verbal and written skills, and learners with openness have a wide range of interests, which may facilitate their L2 acquisition. The fourth is learning style. Each learner has his or her own preferred learning style, which can make a difference in the success or failure of L2 acquisition. The fifth is learning strategies, which are related to individual differences in the way some specific methods for L2 acquisition can promote the efficiency of acquisition. The sixth is motivation. There is a difference between those who are willing to learn and those who study without interest or concern and feel forced to do so (Brown, 2014; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). In my opinion, it would be better to learn and have knowledge of such learner characteristics so that we can understand that there are individual differences when learning L2 and teach our future students properly. (Y. H.)

2.2. What are the things you found in the book you can make use of when learning and teaching English?

It is a way of storing linguistic information. People can read and speak language because they have the vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, or the ability to properly memorise what they read and listen to. Based on this idea, we can understand that memory has a great deal to do with language acquisition. People are not good at remembering things for a long time. It inevitably has to do with short-term memory. Human memory deals with processes of sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Long-term memory is necessary for language acquisition, but is long-term memory something that can be transmitted intentionally? There are ways to transfer information from short-term memory to long-term memory (Ishikawa, 2017, pp. 73-74). Taking English words as an example, rather than shallow processing that focuses only on spelling and pronunciation, deep processing of

the meaning of words by connecting them with the five senses, such as visual angle and hearing, experience, and context, leads to long-term memory. From my experience, I can certainly still remember actual experiences and things that came into my perspective that I could immediately associate with. In learning L2, it is not just about learning vocabulary and grammar, but also about having the experience of actually using the language and experiencing success and failure, which can lead to more effective and faster learning. From now on, there should be more situations where learners can gain experience in using L2 than before. (F. O.)

I found that the teaching methods can be used when learning or teaching English. For example, the grammar translation method (e.g., Brown, 1994) is a general term for teaching methods that teach L2 language and grammar through translation and interpretation. The direct method (e.g., Skidmore, 1917) is a teaching method that teachers can use to teach L2 without following the indirect procedure of teaching L2 using the learners' L1 like the grammar translation method. The oral approach (Palmer, 1921) is a teaching method that gives priority to spoken language and allows systematic learning such as model observation, imitation, and fixation practice in both spoken and written language. The graded direct method (Richards, 1945) is a teaching method in which the teaching content is carefully selected and staged, and then directly taught in L2 without the intervention of L1. The audiolingual method (Brooks, 1964) was proposed in the United States as a result of applied linguistics research during the nascent period, and was the first scientific teaching method based on the mainstream linguistics theory and psychological theory at that time. I would like to be able to learn and teach English from now on by making use of the teaching methods I found by reading the book and articles in class. (L. K.)

Of the various learning styles, there are field independency and field dependency (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 135). I prefer to study grammar and word memorisation alone, and I know that it is more suitable for learning than studying (Majima, 1998). However, those concepts are outdated in psychology, difficult to adapt to L2 acquisition, and merely measure general intelligence from a different angle, with no meaningful results (Griffiths and Sheen, 1992).

However, in my experience, I think it is easier to concentrate and remember when studying alone silently than when gathering with someone to study English. Also, as I mentioned in the previous question, I think it is hard to find it interesting to study even if learners are forced to learn English, so if they are fortunately interested to learn English, they will have these benefits in the future. When I teach English, I use four approaches, understanding-oriented, communication-oriented, content-oriented, and learner-oriented (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 190), depending on the age group and ability. Teaching method research looks back on one's teachers and improves it by carefully examining the ideas and linguistic views behind each teaching method in order to find a teaching method that can be effective for most learners (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 240). (N. K.)

If you are interested in learning L2, find high significance in that learning, and have a strong desire to learn on your own, then learning L2 will go smoothly. However, if you are not interested in it and feel that you are being punished, you will not be able to learn it no matter how much time you spend. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be better to study using the audiolingual method so that the learners will not feel less demanding to learn L2 at the beginning. The audiolingual method is to habituate the relationship between stimulus and response at an unconscious level by reacting without thinking. This method has merits of sharpening lessons by using the body, learning in a fun atmosphere, with less stress because it does not require a language response, and naturally increases the learner's attention and concentration to L2. On the other hand, there are disadvantages such as the teaching process after the introduction period is not clear and the teaching process such as grammar and reading and writing is not shown (Ishikawa, 2017, p. 186). Therefore, I thought that this method would increase the motivation for L2 learning by using it at the beginning of learning L2. (R. S.)

One thing that can be utilised when learning and teaching English is a teaching method called the "oral approach." The oral approach (Palmer, 1921) is a teaching method that gives priority to spoken language, and allows students to learn in a formative way in both spoken and written English. The oral approach was widely practiced in the United Kingdom from

1920 to 1960, and also in Japan from 1920 to 1940. The oral approach is a teaching method proposed by Harold Palmer (1877-1921), a British grammarian and phonetician, and Albert Sydney Hornby (1897-1978), a British lexicographer and philologist. It is a method that focuses on the setting of specific "situations" when practicing sentence patterns. The oral approach is based on the following principles: (1) Explicit teaching procedures; (2) easy to develop listening comprehension and pronunciation skills in L2 speech; and (3) easy to convert receptive skills into communicative skills in a step-by-step manner. On the other hand, there are drawbacks such as (1') instructional procedures other than speech are unclear; (2') the activities tend to be monotonous and learners get bored easily; and (3') it is difficult for non-native teachers to use. Since the oral approach does not make extreme claims and is moderate from the viewpoint of language education, it has been widely adopted in modern L2 teaching methods (Ishikawa, 2017, pp. 175-177). (S. M.)

For learning, it is important to know one's own level of English skills at regular intervals on objective proficiency tests such as TOEIC or EIKEN. Learners have purposes of studying English and think about skills they want to acquire. They have to know what components of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) fits their goals and take TOEIC or EIKEN accordingly. When learners take one of them, they can know their own level of proficiency in English and what they lack to reach their goals. Knowing one's level is a good way to find out what they can and cannot do in their L2, and it will help them set your next goal. For teaching, there are many different teaching methods available today. There are comprehension-oriented teaching methods that require immediate verbal responses to input, and content-oriented teaching methods that pursue the possibility of using L2 as a vehicle for content learning. In my opinion, the communication-oriented teaching method is necessary for teaching L2 in schools because the ultimate goal of L2 learning is to help learners become able to communicate in L2. For this reason, it is necessary to teach while having students actually communicate in L2 (Ishikawa, 2017, pp. 191-225). (Y. H.)

2.3. What research topic would you like to pursue and why?

I want to study "How can information be consolidated in long-term memory?" It is often said that repetition is the key to long-term memory. However, it remains to be seen whether it is more effective to repeat reading aloud or writing by hand. As for memory, it is an ability that is very familiar to us in our lives. I had wished so many times that I could remember everything in one sitting, but it never happened. Due to the way the human brain is built, it would be impossible for it to remember everything it sees, hears, and experiences. It would also be impossible to convert any short-term memory to long-term memory in one time. Hence, I would like to research what methods are most conducive to make that happen. If we can figure out how to do this, we will be able to understand and use L2 much faster. It will also help us enjoy it as a means of communication and motivate us to learn more. Furthermore, we can help learners who are about to start learning L2 to learn it easier and faster than we do now. In the end, it will come down to individual effort, but it will make a big difference between knowing and not knowing the methods. (F. O.)

I want to study motivation in L2 learning because I suffered a lot when I was not motivated to study. Not limited to L2 learning, the quality of learning changes greatly depending on whether you have high motivation or low motivation to learn something. I would like to study the situations and timings that increase the motivation of learners, and use them to help me in my own learning and teaching. (R. S.)

I would like to study not only L2 but also other fields to see if the earlier L2 is learned, the better, and look for commonalities between L2 learning and other fields to see if there are better ways to learn L2. This kind of research is expected to raise the level of Japanese people's language skills and help them cope with globalisation. For example, it is said that the earlier one starts learning music or sports, the better. In swimming, for instance, the softer your body is at an early age, the smoother your movements will be. In case of music, starting learning music at an early age will help one acquire the ability to distinguish sounds and improve their communication and language skills. On the other hand, since there is a critical

period in language acquisition, if learning is delayed, it becomes more difficult to acquire L2 proficiency as high as native speakers. Based on these views, I would like to research what can be done to improve L2 learning. (S. M.)

I want to research how to study and teach in a way that is appropriate for the personality and age of the learner. Even though we know that the speed of learning L2 varies from person to person, we all want to learn it as fast as possible, and we may still compare ourselves to the learners around us. Even if you are continuously working hard to learn L2, you may find that your performance does not improve as much as you would like it to, or that some people get bored with studying. If there is an efficient and enjoyable way of learning and teaching that is suitable for their personality and age, they can learn L2 faster than before, and more people may want to learn L2. Fortunately, I was able to learn from this applied linguistics seminar that research is being done on personality and on how to learn and teach. Besides, the number of people learning L2, mainly English, is on the rise in Japan. We can make new discoveries by combining teaching methods and referring to previous study results, and by asking nearby learners and teachers about how they learn and teach. I would also like to continue to investigate the difference between L1 and L2. By knowing the differences, we may find new ways to approach L2 acquisition. In this way, we hope to get more people interested in learning L2 and help learners who are striving to learn L2. (Y. H.)

2.4. What issues do you think we need to solve in current English language education in Japan?

Current English language education in Japan provides few opportunities for practice, spending too much time on grammar and reading sentences. The purpose of education at junior and senior high schools may be to help students pass an entrance exam. But English is a communication tool. Teachers at these schools mistakenly believe that English is for passing exams. This would leave the students unable to speak English for any length of time. First, junior and senior high school teachers themselves will have to understand that English is a communication tool. From there, it is necessary to take in a variety of modern language

pedagogy into class. At first, teachers should teach English using total physical response (Asher, 1965). Using this method, students will understand and convert L2 input to intake. Also, students have less fear of using English. At that same time, teachers might want to use the natural approach (Terrell, 1977) and text-based instruction (Feez, 1998). Both English as communication and grammatical knowledge and ability to read and understand should be taken into the English class. In my opinion, school textbooks are not fun. If students are forced to do something they are not interested in, they will not learn it. Everyone's interests are different. If students would not improve their English skills by learning the same textbooks and the same contents under such circumstances. However, it is very difficult to prepare textbooks for each student. At least, we could present conversation patterns, e.g., I want to be a/an... Instruction: Put the occupation you want to become in the rest of the sentence. With this style of teaching, students can prepare answers that suit each student's needs and keep them interested. In the future, classes should be tailored to each student's needs and interests. (F. O.)

I could not think of the goal of English education in Japan that we would to solve so quickly. Problems include little training in pronunciation, few teachers with overseas experience, poor utilisation of assistant language teachers (ALT), and few opportunities to actually use English in and outside class. I especially sympathise with the fact that leaning English is based on translating English texts into Japanese. When I read and listen to English, I often translate it into Japanese. It is true that Japanese translation makes it easier to understand the content. If you do not translate it into Japanese, you will not be able to understand English. That said, I think it is necessary to understand English as it is without relying on Japanese translation. I also sympathise with the fact that we have little training in pronunciation. Certainly, there are some English sounds that I still cannot distinguish. I think that English language education in Japan needs to provide students with more education to write and speak. It is also true there are few opportunities to use English. I have to do something about this as well. Considering these, there are still many issues in English language education in Japan. I have just started studying English in earnest, so there are still many things I do not fully understand, but I would like to continue studying English as hard as I can. (L. K.)

The problem with English language education in Japan is that English learning is aimed at high school and university entrance exams, and the time for learning vocabulary and grammar on the premise of Japanese translation. There is less pronunciation practice, few teachers with overseas experience, and ALTs are not being used effectively. Class hours are limited, so if you calculate back how to proceed with the class and secure time for practice, you may get closer to learning usable English. It is also important for students to have a perspective of learning while thinking about in what situations they use English. If they can imagine not only the rules of English but also what kind of conversation it will be useful for, they will be motivated to learn. In addition, current English language education in Japan tends to focus only on reading and writing. In order to improve the four skills in a well-balanced manner, teachers will need to provide lessons that incorporate more verbal learning. In Japan, I am doing my best to learn English by reading and listening to a lot of English. Learning through input is very important, but input alone is not enough for learning English. Classes are required to focus on output as well. The accuracy of English is important, but first of all, students should be prepared to use English without fear of failure. (N. K.)

Today's English language education in Japan mainly focuses on learning styles to improve reading skills such as grammar and memorising words. Therefore, I feel that there are very few occasions to practice practical English skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. In my opinion, learning English is more fun when communicating in English than just practicing reading English for exams. I think it is important to acquire balanced competence in the four skills of speaking, writing, reading and listening. To that end, there are few English teachers in Japan today who have sufficient ability to teach speaking. I think that improving the speaking ability of English teachers themselves will be an important issue to be dealt with for the future English language education in Japan. (R. S.)

There are several problems with modern English language education in Japan. First, very little time is spent on practicing pronunciation. It is difficult to teach pronunciation to each student in a class of nearly 40, but if pronunciation is not taught, it becomes difficult for the students to understand what others say in English and communicate exactly what they want

to say. Secondly, English language education in Japan today is biased towards examinations and tests rather than practicality. In order for learners to be able to use English in the world, they need to acquire high competence in the four skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading. However, most of the English exams given in Japan focus on reading and writing, and the preparation for these exams is centred on reading long sentences and writing English essays. In addition, because Japanese people have to learn exam techniques, they have few opportunities to learn usable English. For high school and university students, taking English exams is an important event, but in order to cope with globalisation, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities to learn usable English. Thirdly, English tests in schools are based on a point reduction system. If the grammar or spelling of English words is even slightly wrong, points are deducted. However, the experience of a small failure of a point deduction has made students hypersensitive to mistakes. Usually, this kind of mistakes should not be a concern. The fear of making mistakes reduces the motivation to use English. Foreigners use English without worrying if their grammar or vocabulary is slightly wrong. Therefore, we should regard English as a communication tool and not be afraid of making mistakes. These are the three problems I see. (S. M.)

The problem with English language education in Japan is that classes in junior and senior high schools are often not designed to help students actually learn to speak English. Reading is the most common focus of classes, and listening and speaking are rarely. However, when there is a situation where English is used, it is probably speaking skill that is more required than reading skill. If one does not acquire the ability to speak English, and they do not have the opportunity to study English after high school or at university, they will not find much use for English in their later life. It would be a shame not to be able to use what students learned (not just English) in high school in their daily life. Of course, it is difficult to become fluent in English by the time they graduate from high school. However, it is said that English will become more and more necessary in Japan in the future. That is why I think we should change the way we teach in order to create opportunities for students to express their own opinions and have simple conversations so that they will want to learn English even after they graduate from senior high school. Another problem is that everyone learns at the same

pace. There are individual differences among learners in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, and even in terms of their interests. Nevertheless, if everyone takes classes at the same pace, those who are eager to learn may want to do something more difficult, and those who feel they are not good at English may not want to study it anymore. One way to prevent this is to divide the students into classes based on their interest and proficiency in English, which would help them further improve their English skills and deepen their interest. (Y. H.)

3. Conclusions drawn from their experiences in this course

After presenting their answers to the enquiries, the students ended their essay with what they felt about learning applied linguistics, which will be shown here.

Learning applied linguistics is an essential part of becoming an English teacher, I believe. It must be understood by instructors rather than learners. At the same time, I feel that current English language education in Japan is full of problems. The future of English language education in Japan should be created by those who sufficiently studied applied linguistics and this is the subject that everyone should learn. (F. O.)

Regarding English language education in Japan, it will be necessary for both educators and learners to work hard every day so that they can acquire "usable" English as an international common language instead of English as mere liberal arts knowledge. (N. K.)

In this class, I was able to learn how our brains work when learning L2. It was also found that there are appropriate ages for learning L2 and various learning and teaching methods and learning styles. By using these, I can now learn English not unthinkingly but more efficiently than before. (R. S.)

What I learned in this course is that L2 learning should be carried out as early as possible in order to familiarise the ear of learners with pronunciation and improve language and communication skills. In addition, since English language education in Japan does not

provide practical English training, students should focus on learning practical English, such as pronunciation, in addition to exam preparation. Based on this, I would like to teach English to my students not only for exams, but also for when they use it overseas. (S. M.)

Learning applied linguistics allowed me to look at learning English from new perspectives, which in turn allowed me to think about the problems of English language education in Japan today, which are different from what I had thought before. Anyone in a position to teach English should acquire this kind of knowledge and make the most of it. (Y. H.)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

As stated in the syllabus, the seminar was meant for future English language teachers and its aims and objectives were that students understand various fields of applied linguistics and will be able to apply the perspectives of L2 acquisition, processing, learning, teaching and assessment to the teaching of English in the future. Students enrolled in the course did not have particularly high English language proficiency as Hakodate University does not have a department specialised in foreign language studies. In spite of that, they accepted the challenge to participate in classes conducted in English and learn not English but the basics of applied linguistics that must have been absolutely novel to them.

As can be seen, the students made a lot of effort to answer the essay questions recalling their English language teachers and classes at their junior and senior high schools although there are some places where they seemed to struggle with understanding numerous new ideas to them and encapsulating them in a few sentences.

Most of the new findings they reported they made were related to the teaching methods, the critical period of L2 acquisition, the functions of memory in language learning, the individual differences in L2 acquisition, and motivation in L2 learning. What they found useful for language learning and teaching were the effective way of converting short-term memory to long-term memory, the teaching methods (the audiolingual method and the oral approach) (although it is certain that they will need to really use those teaching methods when teaching English to feel their true usefulness) and providing students with more opportunities to actually use English in communication than before.

They showed interests in doing research on the functions of memory in L2 learning, how to motivate students to learn English more attentively, aptitude, especially age, in L2 acquisition, and personality types and L2 learning, all of which appear to stem from their own L2 learning experience. At early stages of research, developing students are inclined to find research topics solely from their own experience, which is acceptable. Notwithstanding, it will be crucial for them to realise problems encountered by their students right in front of their eyes, for issues their students will face can be quite different from theirs since technologies in education advance much quicker than we think and learning contents in schools are becoming more and more difficult.

It was of highest interest to learn what issues in current English language education in Japan they found problematic and if they could come up with any solutions to them. Most of the students mentioned that English language classes in Japan, which they encountered at least, lack practical aspects of the language and fail to provide students with sufficient opportunities to practice "useful" skills such as pronunciation, listening, speaking, and writing. It is a shame, but it is true that some Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) are less proficient in English than their own students who are often returnees from English-speaking countries, hence they seem to feel embarrassed to demonstrate their poor pronunciation skills. Ideas from the students to work these out are that: (1) JTEs improve their English language proficiency, especially their speaking skill; (2) teach English not as a compulsory subject for exams but as a communication tool; (3) learn and employ new teaching methods; (4) help students imagine realistic situations where they use English for communication; and (5) divide English language classes depending not only on students' proficiency of English, but also on their interests and eagerness to learn English so that they will continue their studies of English even after graduating from senior high school and university as lifelong learners.

All in all, the students seemed to have a favourable impression of this course maintaining that it was worthwhile to learn the subject which they believe is an indispensable field of study for both future and incumbent teachers of English. It was a pleasant discovery that all of them found interesting topics to pursue so that they can make themselves good teachers and decently help their students with their studies.

In general, the purpose of the liberal arts seminar mentioned earlier was achieved, that

is, the students took the opportunity to gain some basic knowledge of applied linguistics and participated in discussions in English about related issues and put together their ideas about what they would need to improve to be a good teacher and how they should teach English to help their future students become good communicators. Last but not least, readers of this article should be aware that the ideas presented here came from inexperienced students who just learned basics of applied linguistics to a limited degree and it is much appreciated if they could tolerate any naïve opinions they may encounter. Having said that, it is hoped that the current students will continue their studies while equipping themselves with thorough and comprehensive knowledge of English language education and keep questioning and exploring the best possible teaching methods, materials, tools, and assessment criteria for both themselves and their prospective students to flourish in English.

Notes

1. This article was co-authored by Fuuka Osanai, Lira Kimura, Naoya Kamada, Remi Sugo, Sora Michishita, and Yuuri Hama, the students who took the course. All of them agreed to have their essays appear in this article as mentioned above. The article was compiled and edited by the author.

2. Address correspondence to Takayuki Miura; e-mail: t-miura@hakodate-u.ac.jp.

REFERENCES

Asher, J. J. (1965). The strategy of the total physical response: An application to learning Russian. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 3,* 292-299.

Atkinson, R. C., & Shiffrin, R. M. (1968). Human memory: A proposed system and its control processes. In K. W. Spence & J. T. Spende (Eds.), *The psychology of learning and motivation* (Vol. 2, pp. 89-195). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Bialystok, E., & Hakuta, K. (1994). *In other words: The psychology and science of second language acquisition*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Brooks, N. (1964). *Language and language learning: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching and assessment*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Language Policy Unit.

De Jong, N. H. (2018). Fluency in second language testing: Insights from different disciplines. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 15*(3), 237-254.

Dewey, J. (1899). *The school and society: Being three lectures*. University of Chicago Press.

Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, P. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C. J. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 589-630). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Eghlidi, M., Talebinezhad, M. R., & Fard, Z. R. (2017). Psycholinguistic perspectives and contributions of ELL and ELT. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 4*(7), 317-335.

Engle, R. W. (2002). Working memory capacity as executive attention. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 11*(1), 19-23.

Erard, M. (2019). Language aptitude: Insights from hyperpolyglots. In Z. Wen, P. Skehan, A. Biedroń, S. Li, & R. L. Sparks (Eds.), *Language aptitude: Advancing theory, testing, research and practice* (pp. 153-167). New York: Routledge.

Feddermann, M., Möller, J., & Baumert, J. (2021). Effects of CLIL on second language learning: Disentangling selection, preparation, and CLIL-effects. *Learning and Instruction, 74,* 101459.

Feez, S. (1998). *Text-based syllabus design*. Sydney, Australia: Macquarie University/ AMES.

Foley, J. (2021). CLT using CEFR and EIL in Southeast Asia and East Asia in the English language classroom. *RELC Journal,* https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688221998079.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology, 13*(4), 266-272.

Gass, S., Behney, J., & Plonsky, L. (2013). The transition period. In S. Gass, Behney, J., & L. Plonsky (Eds.), *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (pp. 129-137). London: Routledge.

Gattegno, C. (1963). *Teaching foreign languages in schools: The silent way*. Reading, UK: Educational Explorers.

Google. (2021, September). *Google Classroom*. Retrieved on September 29, 2021 from the World Wide Web: https://classroom.google.com.

Griffiths, R., & Sheen, R. (1992). Disembedded figures in the landscape: A reappraisal of L2 research on field dependence/independence. *Applied linguistics, 13*(2), 133-148.

Hinds, J. (1986). *Situation vs. person focus*. Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.

Hyltenstam, K. (2021). Language aptitude and language awareness: Polyglot perspectives. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 41,* 1-21.

Ishikawa, S. (2017). *A basic guide to applied linguistics*. Tokyo: Hituzi Shobo.

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned* (4th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lomb, K. (2008). *Polyglot: How I learn languages*. TESL-EJ.

Mache, J, Tan, N, Shoemaker, G, & Weiss, R. (2017). Pear Deck: An interactive classroom response system to encourage student engagement. *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges, 33*(1), 156-158.

Majima, J. (1998). Learner difference and Japanese language education: A study of field dependence/independence cognitive styles and Japanese language learning. *Publications of Osaka University of Foreign Studies, 18,* 1-151.

Palmer, H. E. (1921). *The oral method of teaching languages*. Cambridge, UK: W. Heffer and Sons.

Pear Deck Team. (2021, September). *Pear Deck*. Retrieved on September 29, 2021 from the World Wide Web: https://www.peardeck.com.

Purdue University. (2021, September). *The Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved on September 29, 2021 from the World Wide Web: https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html.

Quizlet. (2021, September). *Quizlet.live*. Retrieved on September 29, 2021 from the World Wide Web: https://quizlet.com/live.

Richards, I. A. (1945). *The pocket book of basic English: A self-teaching way into English.* New York, NY: Pocket Books Inc.

Schmitt, N., & Celce-Murcia, M. (2020). An overview of applied linguistics. In N. Schmitt & M. P. H. Rodgers (Eds.), *An introduction to applied linguistics* (3rd ed.) (pp. 1-15). London: Routledge.

Skidmore, M. (1917). The direct method. *The Modern Language Journal, 1*(6), 215-225.

Terrell, T. D. (1977). A natural approach to second language acquisition and learning. *The Modern Language Journal, 61*(7), 325-337.

Turker, S., & Reiterer, S. M. (2021). Brain, musicality and language aptitude: A complex interplay. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 41,* 95-107.

Wilson, R. J. (2008). *"Another language is another soul": Individual differences in the presentation of self in a foreign language* [unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of London.