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This article is part of a collection of practitioner research on the theme of “Engaging With and Exploring Autonomy, Creativity, and Well-Being for Learner Development” for Issue 9 of the Learner Development Journal (LDJ9), edited by Stacey Vye, Robert Moreau, and Ivan Lombardi. Published once a year, each issue of the Learner Development Journal follows a Community of Practices approach over a period of approximately 18 months in which contributors work together, under the guidance of the editors, to share, respond to, and develop their research and writing.

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Communication for Learning and Well-Being: A Reflective Story of Practice of an EFL Teacher and Researcher

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This reflective story details the practice of an EFL teacher/researcher in Japan, whose focus on classroom well-being was prompted by personal struggles following multiple losses and a subsequent depressive episode. The study investigates how mandatory university English conversation courses can foster social connections and learning among post-elementary students at a national university. The research involved implementing theory-based pedagogical interventions, including metacognitive reflection through self- and peer-assessment of speaking performance using video recordings and transcriptions, and peer interaction strategies. The methodology included survey responses, student reflections, and follow-up interviews with five participants. Reflexive thematic analysis identified four themes: *making connections* through English conversation; *learning collaboratively*; *social well-being* around English conversation; and *difference in learning focus*. Findings show the course successfully served as a vital means of social networking, enabling students to develop friendships and collegial working relationships, especially since these courses were implicitly intended for first-year social networking. Students commonly demonstrated an orientation toward kindness and concern for peers' feelings in their feedback, which led to positive emotions like confidence and motivation, and reduced the fear of failure associated with L2 speaking. This emphasis on praise, though sometimes shallow in linguistic detail, supported social and emotional well-being. The study highlights the tension between facilitating meaningful, socially oriented communication and promoting linguistic risk-taking essential and critical feedback for L2 development. Ultimately, the teacher-researcher concludes that embracing diverse forms of feedback and maintaining open dialogue are crucial for supporting both students' development and their well-being.

本省察的実践報告は、日本在住のEFL教師兼研究者の活動を詳述するものであり、私的な喪失体験とそれに続く抑うつエピソードがきっかけで、教室でのウェルビーイングへの意識を高めることに焦点を当てた。本研究は、大学の必修英会話コースが、初級レベルを終えた学生たちの社会的つながりと学習をどのように育むかを調査した。研究には、ビデオ録画と文字起こしを用いたスピーキング・パフォーマンスの自己評価および相互評価、そして仲間との交流戦略を含む、理論に基づいた教育的介入の実施が含まれた。手法には、アンケート、学生の振り返り、および5名の参加者へのフォローアップ・インタビューが含まれた。内省的なテーマ分析により、4つのテーマが特定された: 1) 英会話を通じた「つながりの形成」、2) 「協調的な学習」、3) 英会話をめぐる「社会的ウェルビーイング」、4) 「学習焦点の相違」である。調査結果は、このコースが学生のソーシャルネットワーキングの重要な手段として機能し、友人関係や協力的な関係を築くことを可能にしたことを示した。学生たちは、フィードバックにおいて、親切心と仲間への配慮を示す傾向があり、これが自信やモチベーションなどの肯定的な感情につながり、L2スピーキングに伴う失敗への恐れを軽減させた。このような賞賛を重視する姿勢は、言語的な詳細さに欠けることがあっても、社会的および感情的なウェルビーイングを支えていた。本研究は、社会志向のコミュニケーション促進と、L2言語学習の発展のための批判的なフィードバックや言語的リスクテイクの奨励との間の緊張関係を浮き彫りにしている。最終的に、教師兼研究者は、多様な形式のフィードバックを受け入れ、オープンな対話を維持することが、学生の成長とウェルビーイングの両方をサポートするために不可欠であると結論づけている。

Keywords

well-being, EFL teacher reflection, peer feedback, social networking, collaborative learning
ウェルビーイング、EFL教師の内省、ピアフィードバック、ソーシャルネットワーキング、協働学習

Sixteen years ago I moved from the United States to Japan. The year before I moved I lost a close friend to suicide. The loss was not the reason I moved, but it may have been why I stayed. In the time since then, I went from being a visiting foreigner doing some work while exploring the country, to settling down and starting a family. During the last 16 years, while living far from my home country and the friends I grew up with, I gradually lost more of those friends to different causes. For a time, the losses, although they were people I had been close to, still felt distant—an ocean and most of a continent away.

More recently, I began teaching university English courses, and then my boss encouraged me to pursue postgraduate studies in TESOL. Soon after beginning my studies I was faced with a serious downturn in my own well-being. All of those losses finally caught up to me. Learning to cope has become a newfound impetus for maintaining a well-being-conscious classroom.

Well-being and Ill-being

Losing someone close is never easy, and loss can erode your sense of well-being. The news alone can be overwhelming,

Whether a classmate, "Britney took her life."

A soccer teammate, "Aaron took his family's shotgun and used it to end his life."

A college dormmate and clubmate, "It sounds like Stephen probably took his own life."

A nextdoor neighbor and soccer teammate, "Nick's heart stopped, but the doctors were able to bring him back."

The same friend, again, "In the end, Nick died from the cancer."

A best friend, "Agee died in a car accident. It seems that he was driving tired."

A student, "Yuto drowned after biking all the way to the river and trying to cross alone."

Or an in-law, "Mark, Michiko is dead."

This last shocking news of the death of my wife's close relative must have reminded me of all those earlier losses. Dealing with the loss along with anxiety surrounding the pandemic, stress from work, study, and childcare responsibilities, and meeting my standard for a decent lifestyle mounted into a depressive episode which resulted in sudden hearing loss, permanent tinnitus, panic attacks, and considerable stress on my relationship with my wife.

It is unfortunate that many teachers, myself included, tend not to take action for our well-being until after a major negative event has occurred (Ončevska Ager, 2024; Sulis et al., 2024) when a proactive approach may be beneficial (Roffey, 2012). In my case, even after reaching out for help, getting medicated, reducing my workload, and lowering my standards, many stresses continue to present challenges for my physical and emotional well-being. Fortunately, I have become aware of them as a result. In my experience, it can be difficult to realize the enormity of the pressures we are facing until we buckle beneath them. This is one of the reasons why I think the social aspect of well-being is so important—our network can help us see what we cannot.

I am foregrounding the details of this downturn in my life to give context as to why well-being is now similarly foregrounded in my teaching practice. Another reason is that much of the literature on well-being has an overwhelming slant toward positivity from positive psychology research. While I appreciate this approach, I also think that it is critical to take time and space to share our difficulties and listen with respect to the sometimes haunting lived experiences of members of our communities. Being open about such issues has led to others in my professional community opening up about their own challenges and our developing stronger relationships and support networks. If we can catch one friend, teammate, or student before they fall, it is worth it.

My story explores my journey to understand the relationships between the wellbeing of my students, myself, and our classes together, and also how we can develop social connections for learning and being well. In what follows, I will first explain my teaching context as I have grown to understand it. I will then discuss the triggering effect of the pandemic on both wellbeing and my understanding of the class and learners. After sharing how my approach to fostering learners' English development formalized during my MA

studies, I will introduce the results of that more formal inquiry through reflexive thematic analysis. Before concluding, I will discuss how my understanding has changed and what the results may imply for my own practice as well as more generally.

Teaching Context and Background

I teach four sections of a mandatory English conversation course at a national university. Class sizes are usually under thirty students. The students are mostly post-elementary level English users. To illustrate this context, I describe below an imaginary student who is typical of my classes.

Ryotaro has just begun university. He does not yet have strong relationships with his peers. He is from outside of the prefecture, and has no local social network beyond school. He has formally studied English for six years but has limited oral proficiency (also see Kikuchi & Browne, 2009). He has experience studying English for standardized tests, which are a recurring part of Japanese education (also see Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). He is disinclined to volunteer answers to questions fielded to the class at large. On the other hand, he is comfortable doing group work and consulting with his peers.

I began teaching university in spring of 2019, believing that students like Ryotaro primarily needed practice with speaking and listening. So, I provided opportunities for speaking and listening without much attention to form. I found that through a conversation-heavy, topic-based syllabus they seemed to develop some confidence and fluency, but not much in terms of grammatical accuracy. I also wondered what was actually happening in group conversations, because often when I came to observe, the students would become tense or quiet or shift to engage me in the conversation. These early reflections became part of the impetus for more formal inquiry and pedagogical design described later.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Raised Awareness of Student Well-Being

Less than one year after I started teaching at university, the pandemic erupted. Institutional responses varied around the world. Some programs responded with an explicit focus on teacher well-being (Ončevska Ager, 2024). At my institution there was limited support for instructors. We were given access to Moodle, started asynchronous online lessons, then shifted to synchronous lessons when they became an option.

I later learned that online lessons may have had a significant negative impact on the students' socially situated well-being. Colleagues informed me that face-to-face English conversation courses at my university were implicitly intended as a means of social networking for first-year students. Accordingly, these courses were some of the first to return to face-to-face format even before the measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 had been lifted. Furthermore, many other courses have stayed online even after a general return to campus life, potentially limiting students' opportunities for developing peer relationships.

There were challenges for me too. Fear of contracting or spreading the virus, maintaining understanding and congeniality with students despite masks muffling their voice and hindering facial expression, and trying to avoid showing how scared I was that any of us might be carrying the disease was hard. I regularly did mindfulness meditations in my car before classes when we returned to face-to-face lessons. My anxiety did not fade until after getting medicated for depression and experiencing (fortunately mild) COVID-19 multiple times myself.

For me, the pandemic served as an initial trigger for awareness and reflection on well-being, following Sulis et al.'s (2024) understanding of teacher agency for well-being. The

discussions with colleagues that I mentioned above only happened because of the concern that many of us had for our students. Teaching online, we could not see, hear, or check in on them unless they decided to turn on their cameras and mics or contacted us first. Still, I wanted to know how they were doing.

Reflective Teaching While Studying

I began studying for a master's degree in TESOL in 2023. This coincided with the events that led to my depressive episode. Reflecting critically on my teaching was an aspect of my studies and became a part of my course planning process. Consideration for my own stress was part of that, and concern for students' well-being emerged as a factor as well.

During the pandemic I had used audio-video recordings to review and assess their speaking performances. Initially, I was giving individualized corrective feedback to all of my nearly 100 students. This was an unsustainable practice. Besides the time and energy required, I found myself repeatedly giving similar feedback.

Through my studies I learned of teaching approaches that might address this and other issues I had encountered such as gaining a perspective into group interaction. These included focus-on-form and tasked-based language teaching (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996/2023), metacognitive reflection through self-assessment (Butler, 2023; Hosseini & Nimehchisalem, 2021; Huang, 2016) and peer-assessment (De Grez et al., 2012; Little et al., 2025; Patri, 2002), and instruction of language learning strategies (Oxford, 2017) and grammar learning strategies (Pawlak, 2020) in particular.

In the fall of 2023, I recorded student performances again, but as a means for formative self- and peer-assessment rather than reviewing them myself. I also integrated language learning strategy instruction in reflective prompts and began to shift some of the responsibility of finding areas for improvement onto the learners themselves, as in "Write 3 mistakes or things you can do better" from Extract 1.

Extract 1. Fall 2023 Self- and Peer-Assessment Prompts

Self-assessment prompts	Watch the video recording of your performance. Use comments in Microsoft teams. Write 3 points about what you did well. Write 3 mistakes or things you can do better.
Peer-assessment/ feedback prompts	Watch some of your classmates video recordings. Use comments in Microsoft teams. Give them feedback about their English, especially positive feedback! Comment about the content too!

I felt justified in using theory-based pedagogy to simultaneously encourage learners' development and reduce my workload. These activities required students to review the recordings and engage with the language they produced by fixing automatic software transcriptions. (For pedagogic discussions about using speech transcriptions, see Cooke, 2013; Cowie, 2018; Huang, 2008; Lynch, 2001, 2007; Stillwell et al., 2010; York, 2020.) Through such close review of their speech, I hoped they would identify specific errors or concrete areas for improvement. Unfortunately, their reflections were very general and shallow, such as "my pronunciation was poor" or "bad sentences," and did not demonstrate the level of engagement I hoped to encourage.

So, in the spring of 2024, I modified reflective prompts to highlight common errors and difficulties my learners face, with directions to identify specific errors from the transcriptions (see Appendix A). I had hoped that these prompts would scaffold learner awareness which

they could then apply not only to their own performance, but also that of their peers. This did not go as well as I had hoped.

Many students were unable to effectively use the grammar guidance integrated in the reflective prompts. The complexity of the prompts was likely one hurdle (compare Extract 1 and Appendix A). This was true for self-assessment and peer feedback. The peer feedback that was shared was primarily praise with little constructive criticism.

Reflecting on these problems, I simplified as many processes as possible and aligned the self- and peer-assessments directly to the final summative assessment rubric (Nunn, 2000) (compare Appendices B and C). I also implemented peer interaction interventions based on research by Masatoshi Sato and his co-researchers (Sato, 2011, 2013; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Sato & Perry, 2011; Sato & Lyster, 2012) to draw attention to the value of collaborative learning and encourage learners to see errors as learning opportunities and classmates as potential sources of correction and assistance. By the end of the semester I was pleased with what I saw as improvement in oral performance and use of communication strategies.

I also began to ask students about their experiences. Volunteers participating in my research during the spring of 2024 answered survey questions throughout the semester. Their responses served as a pilot study, based on which I modified the surveys and prepared interview questions (Appendix D). During the fall of 2024 I adapted my data collection method to an opt-out for recording data and reflective activities, and an opt-in for follow-up interviews. Five participants volunteered for interviews. All data from those who opted out have been removed from the following analysis.

Thematic Analysis of Student Reflections and Interviews

The questions I asked in interviews (Appendix D) sought to understand the peer relationships and how those might impact their learning in the class. With a consideration for how these relationships impacted social aspects of well-being, I made meaning of student reflections and interview data using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This involved phases of familiarization through careful reading and re-reading, coding the data, comparing and modifying those codes, identifying salient themes, and writing them up for presentation. I will present the themes and address how these reflect my own changing understanding of my students, our well-being, and the collaborative learning opportunities emerging in my courses. The four themes identified were (a) making connections through English conversation, (b) learning collaboratively, (c) social well-being around English conversation, and (d) difference in learning focus.

Making Connections Through English Conversation

Since the English conversation course had been implicated as a means of social networking for students, this was one of the propositions I explored through the surveys and interviews. The students' responses painted an interesting and complex picture of how the course served this purpose. Through taking the course, many students made both friendships and collegial working relationships, not all of which overlapped. Interviewees described a variety of social networks developed both on and off campus. For some, English conversation was one of a few spaces on campus to develop their social network. This was afforded primarily by opportunities to communicate with each other through conversation activities and other collaborative classwork. Some students said they wanted to or appreciated the chance to talk to as many classmates as possible. The autobiographical content of conversation

activities in particular led to students connecting with each other on the basis of their backgrounds and shared interests.

In inquiring as to the actual status of friendships among class members, of those who answered, most reported having made just two, three, or four friends in the course. Answers, such as the following from a follow-up interview, suggested that in some cases this was sufficient.

Aoma¹: Actually, I don't want to make new friends.

Me: Oh, really?

Aoma: Because I want to stay now. Now's point.

Aoma made a few good friendships and was not looking for more. Another interview response led me to realize how I facilitated this networking through my role as a teacher.

Me: What helped you to make new friends with your classmates?

Airi: In [English conversation]² 2 class? You said to make new friends in group. So, I can make new friends to talk.

The wording I used when directing students to change groups during class was, "Change groups, make new friends." It seems that, although my intent was to clarify my directions through elaboration, this student took my words literally, leading her to developing a new friendship. It seems that in facilitating collaborative learning, teachers may become social matchmakers without intending to do so.

Learning Collaboratively

Students' reflections gave considerable insight into the quality and impact of such collaborative classroom work, peer-feedback, and peer-assessment. On the whole, a large portion of the students reported feeling classmate relations helped their English development. (Specific collaborative learning results are substantial and may be addressed in a future publication.) The qualities that interviewees reported desiring in their groupmates varied from person to person, but included empathy, proactivity, communicativeness, and motivation.

When assessing each other's speaking performances, many students expressed a clear concern for each other's feelings, even when feedback was anonymous.

Kei: I felt like a teacher to tell other person's [sic] scores. But... そんなたぐがないようにするのは難しい [It is difficult to be impartial because I want to consider their feelings].³

This was realized in a tendency towards leniency in the scores or comments that they offered each other, and summarized succinctly by the following interviewee.

Asato: Student is kind, but 点数 [scores] up.

On the receiving end there were those who mentioned that more critical feedback might be more useful. Some noticed and tried to offer detailed feedback where they could, as seen in the following extract.

Airi: Many people [give the] same [score] so different I I want different score もっと細かく [more detailed].

1. All student names are pseudonyms.

2. Bracketed text has been changed or removed for contextual reasons.

3. The students' comments in Japanese have been translated by the author.

It seems that my observation about the limited extent to which peer feedback offered constructive criticisms was echoed in the students' reflections. However, the data also showed how this kindness and concern for feelings were valuable for the class in terms of social and emotional well-being. Following these observations, I would like to move forward by bringing all of the students into a discussion of the importance of balancing kind and caring comments with constructive criticism and thus raising their awareness while still giving them the agency to give feedback as they think best.

Social Well-Being Around English Conversation

In response to "What kinds of feedback did you give your classmates throughout this unit?", two responses in particular were representative of this orientation toward encouraging praise as feedback:

good things to make happy

これから英語に対して積極的になれるように、その人自身の良い点を人よりも多く見つけるつもりで感想を送った。[I gave feedback with the intention of finding more good things about the person than others could so that they would become more proactive towards English.]

The overall student focus on peer praise is perhaps unsurprising considering the threat to face involved in presenting publicly in a second language. In unit-end reflections immediately following those presentations and peer feedback, students often reported positive emotions such as happiness, relief, satisfaction, fun, confidence, and motivation. These reports of confidence and motivation were heartening for me as a teacher. Though fewer in number, negative emotions were also expressed. A few, such as boredom, tiredness, worry, and nervousness were among those mentioned. It seems from the point of view of many of the students these presentations were valuable growth experiences, and perhaps aided by the support of encouraging peers. One comment reflected this positive impact of peer interaction quite clearly,

失敗しても笑われないため、失敗を恐れないようになった。[They didn't laugh at me even when I failed, so I'm not afraid of failing anymore.]

Other student reflections suggested failures in establishing collaborative relationships due to communication difficulty or awkwardness. One student reported having been left out of a three-person group. Whether they meant they were sitting alone instead of in a group, or they were unable to engage with their group members is impossible to determine in retrospect, but it does suggest the importance of finding ways to keep dialog open between the students and the instructor, such that these issues could be prevented or mitigated. These reflective reports are one, albeit tardy and insufficient, means of doing so.

Concerns about peer relationships were also present in the reflections. The following student expresses concern regarding the social chemistry, acknowledging that just meeting people alone is not sufficient for developing social relationships.

積極的に話しかけることが大事。ただ、相性もあるため注意が必要。[Being proactive in talking is important, but it's also necessary to be careful of how we get along.]

The following student expressed anxiety about over-reliance on their peers.

あまりよく思われていないと思う。毎回のように友人になんて言っているのかを聞いていたため。[I don't think they thought very well of me. The reason being that I asked my friends what was said almost every time.]

These voices of concern and negative experiences are welcome. I am encouraged that the students felt open in sharing them. I feel sure that other students had similar or other problems but did not voice them. This variability in voice and sharing connects to the final theme.

Difference in Learning Focus

In reviewing the reflections, it became clear to me that learners' focus throughout the course was highly variable and depended upon the learner's individual experience with the task, content, and peer learning context. This aligns with the pedagogical principle that students do not necessarily learn what is presented to them, but instead learning takes place according to their own stage of development (Ellis et al., 2019, p. 155).

The rubrics used for self-, peer-, and instructor assessments (Appendix B) broadly addressed five areas—vocabulary, grammar, content, pronunciation, and conversation management. The most common linguistic focus in reflections was on vocabulary, followed by grammar, content, and then pronunciation. A large number of reflections focused instead on aspects of public speaking and presentation skills such as physical behavior, vocal quality, and speaking speed. It became clear that for some of those who avoided giving feedback on the linguistic aspects, it was due to a lack of confidence in their own L2 knowledge:

自分は文法が正しいかどうかははっきりわからないので、声の大きさや表情、話す内容などについて書いた。[I didn't know for sure whether the grammar was correct or not, so I wrote about volume of voice, expression, and the content of the speech.]

Concrete linguistic feedback from peers was seen as extremely valuable, but rare:

クラスメイトからのフィードバックで新たな表現や、文法・発音の間違いなどのフィードバックをされたときはとても役に立ったがその様なフィードバックは少なかった。[It was really useful when I got feedback from classmates on new expressions or things like grammar and pronunciation mistakes, but there wasn't much of that kind of feedback.]

This provides a segue into the difference between the students' focus and my own as an instructor, interested in both ensuring students' well-being and learning. As a language teacher, I was primarily interested in fostering my students' English development in terms of contextual appropriateness and lexico-grammatical complexity, accuracy, and fluency. In the past I was frustrated by shallow, public-speaking oriented peer feedback because of the intentions mentioned above. However, from this study I have grown to appreciate the reason for it.

Now, realizing more fully the value of diverse types of peer feedback, I would like to legitimize the varied types of feedback that students give. The motivational "make them happy" feedback seems to play an important part in creating a supportive classroom climate where people can overcome socially challenging, face-threatening speaking tasks (Gregersen, 2023; Horwitz et al., 1986). The reports of success, satisfaction, and confidence offer some evidence that the peer feedback was related to positive experiences of success. Further, reports of growth, learning, and raised awareness support the value of peer feedback throughout the course. I personally cannot provide intensive comprehensive feedback for all students throughout all tasks, but I can try to create situations and tasks where students are more confident in providing the feedback they are able and perhaps suggest more effective forms of praise that may contribute more to growth (Zarrinabadi et al., 2023). With more hands on deck, we can cast a wider net catching both more non-target

like language products and unhelpful social situations and then reel them in to see what that net caught, and talk about it together.

Further Discussion and Areas for Future Research

I approached this study from a place of wanting to know how my students were doing in this context and to what extent I should be concerned about their well-being. Having seen what can happen when our network fails us, I wanted to evaluate that which my students were developing. Thus, it is deeply grounded in this context and therefore limited in the degree to which the findings might be generalized. Having said that, there are several tensions apparent in the data, my observations, and the literature that may be relevant beyond my local context.

First, students show a strong desire to communicate with each other, partly because the class serves as one of few such opportunities on campus. However, this communication is sometimes prioritized over content learning, meaning learners employ various face-saving and communication strategies including avoidance as opposed to taking risks with using English. Trying new structures and playing with language is important for L2 development (Cook, 2000). So, I want to explore ways of respecting this need for meaningful socially oriented communication and at the same time fostering learners' desire and willingness to experiment and play with spoken English both individually and socially.

I believe that the peer interaction interventions did contribute to a positive collaborative mindset as suggested by Sato (2017). I also think that regular use of self- and peer-assessment that was aligned with instructor assessment encouraged students' monitoring of their own output and metalinguistic awareness. Considering the positive results of similar practices for encouraging L2 production (Murakami et al., 2012), it would be worthwhile to investigate the results of this implementation of assessment more rigorously. Challenges that remain include reducing the hurdles for learners to approach me with questions about language or concerns about the (collaborative) learning situation in the course. As it is, students rarely approach me on their own accord except to ask about homework details or deadlines, so asking them through surveys and reflection prompts was critical.

Several new questions have also arisen for me. Where does the line between friendship and effective group member overlap and where does it conflict? Can this tension be managed organizationally by varying group composition? I can speculate that very close friends may make less constructive learning relationships, in part because so much is already shared between them. Having room to explore connections through communication may be part of the benefit of less developed relationships. Also, based on the students' comments, I wonder if alternatives should be offered for students who find group work categorically off-putting. Further, what might that look like? I find it hard to imagine a face-to-face communication-based class without direct oral communication, but digital media might afford a feasible alternative through recording and publishing, especially since these are tasks my students already perform.

Asking questions has improved my awareness of the social situation in my course and how it interacts with student well-being and development. Answering those questions may also have increased the students' awareness as well. I would like to continue to ask these types of questions and involve students more, as they are willing, such that they might become more engaged in creating a positive learning environment for themselves and their peers. Such participatory research may also motivate students to share valuable information which can help me as a teacher-researcher to understand and take action to

serve their needs. Ultimately, I think the most important take-away from this has been a focus on keeping the dialog open.

Conclusion

I want to bring the story back to me now at the end of this article. One reviewer suggested about an earlier draft of this article that I was oversharing and that readers may be worried about my well-being. I want to firmly push back against this suggestion to refrain and hold back from sharing. Sharing is what allows us to become aware of each other's needs and abilities, this very much arose in the students' voices in this study. Worry and concern are part of social relations, an important part.

Four years before Britney chose to end her life, she told me that she had been thinking about it. I knew that was serious, even then as a high schooler. However, I did not know what to do. I tried my best to support her alongside our mutual friends. What I know now is that I should have asked for professional help. One of the hardest parts about loss is wondering if there wasn't something more you could have done. If I had worried more and forged a stronger network of connections with some of the people that I lost, I might have helped them to find the help they needed, whether from me or some more capable other. I am happy to say that I feel well supported by my network now, but that was not always the case. It was by sharing and connecting that I forged those supportive relationships.

AI Usage Disclosure

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Review Process

This article was blind peer-reviewed by members of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. (*Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.*)

Author Bio

Mark Johnson works in Kochi, Japan, in multiple educational settings. His research has two main strands. The first, including this article, emerges from his learners' needs and teaching context. The second is focused on stories, play, and their intersection in collaborative storytelling games. When not teaching, he is often playing tabletop games, tending his permaculture garden, or making things. Whenever possible, he cycles to work.

マーク・ジョンソンは日本の高知県で複数の教育現場に携わっている。彼の研究には二つの主な流れがある。一つ目は、本稿を含む学習者のニーズと教育現場から生まれた研究である。二つ目は、物語と遊び、そして協働的ストーリーテリングゲームにおけるその交差点に焦点を当てた研究である。教鞭を執っていない時は、テーブルゲームを楽しんだり、パーマカルチャーの畑の手入れをしたり、ものづくりに没頭したりしている。可能な限り自転車で通勤している。

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Appendix A. Spring 2024 Reflection Prompts

Self-assessment prompts	<p>C. Next, review the video recording and transcript of your performance. Find and write three things that you did well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 🍌 _ 2. 🍌 _ 3. 🍌 _ <p>D. Next, think about how you could have improved your performance. Do any of the following apply? Read the prompts. Find three (or more) that match your thoughts about your performance. Finish them by filling in the blanks. You can use the same prompt again with different details. Feel free to copy and paste.</p> <p>“I was very concerned about _____”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remembering what to say. b. Using correct grammar. c. Using good pronunciation d. My posture, body language, or eye contact. e. Other _____ <p>“I [sometimes / often] forgot to use _____”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> f. Sequence words [順序を表す句] (first, next, then, after that, etc.) g. Articles [冠詞] (a/an/the) h. Counters [数えるための名詞] (a bowl of, a piece of, etc.) i. Plural forms [複数形] (cats, children) j. Subject pronouns [主語の代名詞] (I, he, you, they) k. Subject/Verb agreement [三単現の「s」] (He likes cheese) l. Other [他] _____ <p>“I used the [expression / word] _____ too much. I could have also said _____”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> m. “very” / “really”, “pretty”, “quite” n. “maybe” / “I think ~”, “might (be)”, “could (be)” o. “[I/he/she] like(s)” / “~ is interested in ...”, “~ is into ...”, “~ prefers ...” p. Other _____ <p>“I forgot to put clauses after the words they modify [後置修飾を忘れた], for example _____”</p> <p>“I used the wrong [word/expression]. I said _____, but I should have said _____.”</p> <p>“This sentence was very short: _____. I could have also added _____.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 🍌 _ 2. 🍌 _ 3. 🍌 _
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Peer-assessment / feedback prompts	<p>Watch your classmates' performances. Give them feedback about their English, especially positive feedback! Comment about the content too!</p> <p>C. Write things that they did well.</p> <p>D. How could they have improved the performance. Do any of the following apply? Use the prompts to give constructive feedback. Feel free to copy and paste.</p> <p>"They seemed concerned about _____"</p> <p>Remembering what to say. Using correct grammar. Using good pronunciation Posture, body language, or eye contact.</p> <p>"They [sometimes / often] forgot to use _____".</p> <p>Sequence words [順序を表す句] (first, next, then, after that, etc.) Articles [冠詞] (a/an/the) Counters [数えるための名詞] (a bowl of, a piece of, etc.) Plural forms [複数形] (cats, children) Subject pronouns [主語の代名詞] (I, he, you, they) Subject/Verb agreement [三単現の「s」] (He likes cheese) Other [他] _____</p> <p>"They used the [expression / word] _____ too much. They could have also said _____"</p> <p>"very" / "really", "pretty", "quite" "maybe" / "I think ~", "might (be)", "could (be)" "[I/he/she] like(s)" / "~ is interested in ...", "~ is into ...", "~ prefers ..." Other _____</p> <p>"They forgot to put clauses after the words they modify [後置修飾を忘れた], for example _____"</p> <p>"They used the wrong [word/expression]. I said _____, but I should have said _____."</p> <p>"This sentence was very short: _____. They could have also added _____."</p>
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Appendix B. Self-assessment rating scales (English and Japanese)

Self-Assessment Criteria: Rating Scales

Keeping Going: Turn-taking and Initiative

0-1	Did not join in a conversation or discussion with others.
2-3	Could not keep the conversation going at all. Needed help all the time. The conversation stopped many times.
4-5	Rarely started a new topic or question. Responded minimally to other speakers. Sometimes supported other speakers. Communication sometimes stopped.
6-7	Responded fully to other speakers. Supported other speakers. Sometimes started new topics or questions. Communication almost never broke down.
8-9	Took initiative. Started new topics or questions when appropriate. Helped others to join in. Interrupted politely when appropriate.
10	Did not hesitate to engage, start new topics, or yield turns when appropriate. Could hold ground even when others attempted to dominate the conversation.

Keeping Going: Negotiation

0-1	Did not join in a conversation or discussion with others.
2-3	Could not keep the conversation going at all. Needed help all the time. The conversation always stopped.
4-5	Negotiated rarely. Used only a very limited repertoire of conversational techniques. Communication sometimes stopped.
6-7	Used a few different techniques for negotiation. Communication almost never broke down.
8-9	Could negotiate whenever necessary. Used a wide repertoire of expressions and techniques.
10	Could negotiate with appropriate techniques and expressions to match any situation that came up.

Content: Information

0-1	Did not attempt to share information.
2-3	Could not communicate basic information such as age, price, etc.
4-5	Could only communicate very basic information.
6-7	Could communicate information on a reasonable range of topics.
8-9	Good ability to communicate information on a variety of topics.
10	Could communicate information on any general topic without trouble.

Content: Ideas and Opinions

0-1	Did not attempt to express ideas or opinions.
2-3	Could not even express basic likes or dislikes.
4-5	Could only express ideas or feelings about the most basic everyday topics.
6-7	Could express opinions, feelings and ideas to a certain degree on a limited range of topics.
8-9	Good ability to express feelings, opinions, and ideas on a variety of topics.
10	Can express feelings, opinions, and ideas on any general topic without trouble.

Intelligibility: Pronunciation of Individual Sounds

0-1	Did not speak.
2-3	Voice is too quiet or unclear for listeners to hear.
4-5	Poor pronunciation of individual sounds. Compensated for pronunciation problems with gestures, other language, or other means.
6-7	A reasonable pronunciation of individual sounds. Some pronunciation problems with wrong sounds.
8-9	Accurate pronunciation of individual sounds. Very few pronunciation errors with wrong sounds.
10	Native-like pronunciation of individual sounds. No errors stood out.

Intelligibility: Pronunciation of Stress/Prominence

0-1	Did not speak.
2-3	Voice is too quiet or unclear for listeners to hear.
4-5	Not enough use of stress/prominence. Compensated for stress/prominence with gestures, other language, or other means.
6-7	Tried to make important syllables prominent. Some problems with missing or misplaced stress/prominence.
8-9	Good use of stress/prominence. Very few pronunciation problems with missing or misplaced stress/prominence.
10	Native-like stress/prominence. No errors stood out.

Intelligibility: Grammar

0-1	Did not speak.
2-3	Poor grammatical structure.
4-5	Grammatical structure has problems. Compensated for structural problems with gestures, other language, or other means.
6-7	Grammatical structure is mostly appropriate for the task. Some errors. Errors are not major.
8-9	Good use of grammatical structure. Very few errors. Errors are minor.
10	Native-like use of grammatical structure. No errors stood out.

Intelligibility: Vocabulary

0-1	Did not speak.
2-3	Not enough vocabulary. Inappropriate use of vocabulary.
4-5	Limited vocabulary. Compensated for lack of vocabulary with gestures, other language, or other means.
6-7	Vocabulary is mostly enough for the task. Some errors. Errors are not major.
8-9	Good use of vocabulary. Very few errors. Errors are minor.
10	Native-like use of vocabulary. No errors stood out.

Keeping Going: Turn-taking and Initiative

0-1	他の人との会話や議論に加わらなかった。
2-3	会話が全く続かなかった。常に助けが必要だった。会話が何度も途切れた。
4-5	ほとんど新しい話題や質問を始めなかった。他の話者への反応は最小限だった。他の話者をサポートすることもあった。コミュニケーションが時々止まる。
6-7	他の話者に対して十分に反応した。他の話者をサポートした。新しい話題や質問を始めることがあった。コミュニケーションが途切れることはほとんどなかった。
8-9	積極的に発言した。適切な場合、新しい話題や質問を始めた。他の人の参加を助けた。適切な場合には礼儀正しく中断した。
10	適切な場合には、参加したり、新しい話題を始めたり、順番を譲ったりすることをためらわなかった。他の人が会話を支配しようとしても、その場を守ることができた。

Keeping Going: Negotiation

0-1	他の人との会話や議論に加わらなかった。
2-3	会話が全く続かなかった。常に助けが必要だった。いつも会話が止まっていた。
4-5	ほとんど交渉しなかった。ごく限られた会話テクニックのレパートリーしか使わなかった。コミュニケーションが時々止まってしまう。
6-7	交渉のために数種類のテクニックを使った。コミュニケーションが途切れることはほとんどなかった。
8-9	必要であればいつでも交渉できた。幅広い表現やテクニックのレパートリーを使った。
10	どのような状況にも適切なテクニックと表現を使って交渉することができた。

Content: Information

0-1	情報を共有しようとしなかった。
2-3	年齢、価格などの基本的な情報を伝えられなかった。
4-5	ごく基本的な情報しか伝えられなかった
6-7	それなりの範囲の話題について情報を伝えることができた。
8-9	様々な話題について情報を伝える能力がある。
10	一般的な話題であれば、問題なく情報を伝えることができた。

Content: Ideas and Opinions

0-1	アイデアや意見を表現しようとしなかった。
2-3	基本的な好き嫌いさえ表現できなかった。
4-5	最も基本的な日常の話題についてしか、考えや感情を表現できなかった。
6-7	限られた範囲の話題について、ある程度意見、感情、考えを述べることができる。
8-9	様々な話題について、感情や意見、考えを表現する能力がある。
10	どんな一般的な話題についても、問題なく感情や意見、考えを表現できる。

Intelligibility: Pronunciation of Individual Sounds

0-1	話せなかった。
2-3	声が小さすぎたり、不明瞭で聞き取りにくい。
4-5	個々の音の発音が悪い。ジェスチャーや他の言語、その他の手段で発音の問題を補った。
6-7	個々の音の発音が妥当である。発音に問題がある。
8-9	個々の音の発音が正確。間違った発音がほとんどない。
10	個々の音の発音がネイティブに近い。目立った間違いはない。

Intelligibility: Pronunciation of Stress/Prominence

0-1	話せなかった。
2-3	声が小さすぎたり、不明瞭で聞き取りにくい。
4-5	強弱の使い分けが不十分。ジェスチャー、他の言語、または他の手段で補った。
6-7	重要な音節を目立たせようとした。強弱の使い分けに欠落や配置ミスがある。
8-9	強弱の使い分けががうまい。欠落や見当違いによる発音の問題はほとんどない。
10	ネイティブのような韻律。目立ったミスはない。

Intelligibility: Grammar

0-1	話せなかった。
2-3	文法構造が悪い。
4-5	文法構造に問題がある。構造上の問題をジェスチャーや他の言語、その他の手段で補った。
6-7	文法構造はタスクに対してほぼ適切。多少の誤りがある。誤りは大きくない。
8-9	文法構造をうまく使っている。誤りはほとんどない。誤りは小さい。
10	ネイティブらしい文法構造の使用。目立った誤りはない。

Intelligibility: Vocabulary

0-1	話せなかった。
2-3	語彙が不十分 不適切な語彙の使用。
4-5	語彙が限られている。ジェスチャー、他の言語、または他の手段で語彙の不足を補った。
6-7	語彙は課題に対してほぼ十分。多少の誤りがある。誤りは大きくない。
8-9	語彙をよく使う。誤りはほとんどない。誤りは小さい。
10	ネイティブらしい語彙の使い方。目立った誤りはない。

Appendix C. Self-Assessment Form

Name:

Student Number:

Performance:

Area	Sub-area	Self-score (0-10)	Evidence
Keep Going	Turn-taking and Initiative		
	Negotiation		
Content	Information		
	Ideas and Opinions		
Intelligibility of Pronunciation	Individual Sounds		
	Stress/Prominence		
Intelligibility of Grammar/Vocabulary	Grammar		
	Vocabulary		

Appendix D. Interview Protocol

1. Thanks for coming today. How are you?
1 今日は来てくれてありがとう。お元気ですか？
2. I'm going to interview you in English and record the interview. If you have any questions, please ask. This isn't a test! We can use some Japanese to support understanding.
2 これから英語でインタビューし、録音します。質問があれば聞いてください。これはテストではありません！理解を助けるために日本語を使うこともできます。
3. What's your name?
3 お名前は？
4. How old are you?
4 何歳ですか？
5. Where are you from?
5 出身はどこですか？
6. Did you have a social network (friends, family, or other support) in Kochi when you came to KU?
 - a. Do you have such a social network in Kochi now?
6 KUに来たとき、高知にソーシャルネットワーク(友人、家族、その他のサポート)はありましたか？
 - a 現在、高知にそのようなソーシャルネットワークはありますか？
7. You wrote that you made about ~ friends through our English conversation course. Was that from this semester or last semester or both?
 - a. How does this number compare with the number of friends you made through:
 - i. other courses you were taking,
 - ii. clubs or organizations you participate in, and
 - iii. extracurricular activities like part time work?
 - b. (Did they?) What helped you to make new friends with classmates in our course?
 - c. What has helped make those relationships stronger?
 - d. Has anything in our course caused trouble for those relationships?
- 7 英会話コースで~人の友達ができたと書いていますが、それは今学期ですか、それとも前学期ですか？それは今学期ですか、前期ですか、それとも両方ですか？
 - a この数は、次のようなことを通してできた友達の数と比べてどうですか？
 - i. 他のコース
 - ii. あなたが参加しているクラブや団体、そして
 - iii. アルバイトなどの課外活動でできた友達の数と比べてどうですか？
 - b このコースでクラスメートと新しい友達を作るのに役立ったことは何ですか？
 - c また、そのような関係をより強くするために役立ったことは何ですか？
 - d 私たちのコースの中で、そのような人間関係に支障をきたすようなことがありましたか？
8. Are the kinds of relationships you made through our English conversation course similar or different from those you made through other courses and activities? In what ways?
8 英会話コースで築いた人間関係は、他のコースや活動で築いた人間関係と似ていますか、違いますか？どのような点でですか？
9. What kind of person makes a good friend, in your opinion?
9 どのような人が良い友達だと思いますか？
10. What kind of person makes a good class partner or group member?
10 どのような人が良いクラスのパートナーやグループのメンバーになりますか？

11. Does working with your classmates help you learn?
- If yes, in what ways?
 - If no, why not?
- 11 クラスメートと協力することは、あなたの学習に役立ちますか？
- 「はい」の場合、どのような点で役立ちますか？
 - 「いいえ」の場合、その理由は何ですか？
12. What did you think about the (score-based/comment-based) peer feedback about the self-introduction performance?
- Did this impact the way you think about your speaking? How?
 - Did it impact your confidence in your English?
 - Did it help you notice anything about your speaking or English?
 - Do you remember how you felt when you read the feedback?
 - Would you rather get (score-based/comment-based) peer feedback?
- 12 自己紹介のパフォーマンスに関する(点数ベース/コメントベースの)仲間からのフィードバックについてどう思いましたか？
- それはあなたのスピーキングに対する考え方に影響を与えましたか？どのようにですか？
 - 自分の英語に対する自信に影響しましたか？
 - 自分のスピーキングや英語について何か気づききっかけになりましたか？
 - フィードバックを読んでどう感じたか覚えていますか？
 - 点数ベース/コメントベースの)相互フィードバックの方がいいですか？
13. Did getting peer feedback impact how you give feedback to other students?
- 13 ピアフィードバックを受けることは、他の生徒へのフィードバックの仕方に影響しましたか？
14. What do you think would make English conversation class a more socially comfortable space to learn English?
- 14 英会話のクラスをより社会的に快適な英語学習の場にするにはどうしたらいいと思いますか？

Interview protocol translations by DeepL, reviewed and edited by the author.

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