Quaderno n. 3 di «AGON» (ISSN 2384-9045)
Supplemento al n. 7 (ottobre-dicembre 2015)

Damien Okado-Gough

DOES L2 WRITING IN PREPARATION FOR SPEAKING ACTIVITIES INCREASE STUDENT MOTIVATION AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE?

ABSTRACT. This study investigates if and how writing as a pre-task planning activity influences student motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC). In preparation for speaking activities, Japanese university students wrote questions and answers to use in the conversations. They were then asked to complete a questionnaire, which sought to ascertain what effect, if any, the writing exercises had on their general motivation to study English and their willingness to communicate (WTC) in class discussions. In their responses, the majority of students indicated that the writing increased their motivation to study English in general, and their WTC in particular.

Keywords: Motivation, L2 writing, Language anxiety, Willingness to communicate.

Introduction

The failure of the Japanese education system to produce students who can proficiently and confidently communicate in English has been highlighted repeatedly over the years (for example, Doi, 1994). More recently, Japan's Ministry of Education (MEXT) have themselves taken issue with this problem, pointing to a lack of communicative activities within second language education in the country. MEXT have also pointed out that many Japanese people cannot speak English despite having received six years of formal English language education at junior and senior high schools (Shimomura, 2014). In response to this, more communicative approaches to language learning have been included in the most recent MEXT courses of study for junior and senior high schools.

However, many first-year university students have little or no experience in spoken or written English communication, despite having some knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. These students are also often demotivated to learn English (Sawyer, 2007) or feel uncomfortable engaging in communicative activities (Osterman, 2014). Coupled with this, studies on the characteristics of Japanese students (Dorji, 1997; Karan, 2005; Dorji, 1997) suggest that they tend to be quiet and reserved, and that they find it difficult to express their opinions, debate, or even discuss issues (Allen, 1996).

The present study was conducted in three similarly taught university first-year English oral communication classes across two Japanese universities. Over the course of a 15-week semester, students (n=41) sat three speaking exams. At the beginning of the semester, the students displayed low general motivation and low willingness to engage in English speaking activities. In response, writing activities were provided to help students plan their speaking better, with the assumption that this would lead to an increase in proficiency, which in turn would encourage the students to engage in speaking activities more readily. The study is an attempt to better understand how, if at all, writing in preparation for conversation activities affects students' general motivation to study English, as well as their willingness to participate in speaking activities. The study will first explore motivation, WTC, language anxiety, and writing's role in language

learning, and then, after outlining the study's methodology, present and discuss the results.

Motivation

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) argue that there is no one theory of motivation that has managed to offer a comprehensive and integrated account of all the main types of possible motives. Most researchers would agree, they argue, that motivation concerns the "direction and magnitude of human behaviour" (pp. 4-5). They say that motivation is responsible for: why people decide to do something; how long they are willing to sustain the activity; and how hard they are willing to pursue it. Teachers can employ many different methods to raise their learners' motivation (Dörnyei, 2001), but perhaps the greatest impact a teacher can have on what happens in the classroom is by choosing the activities for the students to engage in. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p.108) outlined what they believed to be motivational teaching practices for generating initial motivation: making materials relevant to the students, increasing the learner's goal-orientatedness, increasing the learner's expectancy of success and creating realistic learner beliefs. They argue that teachers can further maintain and protect motivation by making learning stimulating and enjoyable; setting specific learner goals; creating learner autonomy; protecting learner's self-

esteem and increasing their self-confidence; and promoting cooperation among learners.

Language Anxiety and Japanese EFL Learners

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) define language anxiety as the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient. Helgesen (1993) claims that anxiety affects Japanese language learners, inhibiting them from initiating conversations, raising new topics, challenging their teachers, or asking for clarification and volunteering to answer questions. As noted in the introduction, other studies (e.g. Allen, 1996; Dorji, 1997; Karan, 2005) have also suggested that Japanese students tend to be quiet and reserved, and that they find it difficult to express their opinions, debate, or even discuss issues. Cutrone (2009) offers several reasons for Japanese EFL learners' anxieties:

> (a) Inexperience and cultural inhibitions in dealing with western teaching methods. For example, Japanese students see their role as being passive, obedient and quiet learners, and that the western norms of individualisation and expressing opinions are difficult for them to adhere to.
>
> (b) Interactional Domains: Japanese language learners tend to see classrooms as being places of highly guided behaviour, formalities, and

conventional rules, none of which tend to be present in a communicative language teaching environment.

(c) Shyness: Whilst shyness tends to be seen as a very positive trait in Japanese culture, it has little or no place in an L2 communicative environment.

(d) Evaluation Paradigm: Japanese language learners are taught within a system that often uses evaluation to determine their futures. For many, being evaluated by others is a source of anxiety. Samimy and Kobayashi (2004) point to the use of English language in Japan as primarily taking the form of "English for entrance examinations," with the effect of there being a focus on grammar, vocabulary and comprehension in Japanese classrooms, to the detriment of communicative language teaching methods through interactions in classrooms. Cuontrone (2009) says that some of his students cited their fear of making mistakes as the greatest cause of their anxiety in the language classroom.

Willingness to Communicate

An important development in the field of motivation research has been the emergence of the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC). McCroskey and Richmond (1991) introduced the concept to try to understand the processes behind communicative anxiety in an L1 context. Working within an L2 context, Kang (2005) identified three variables that contributed to students' WTC: security, excitement, and a sense of responsibility. Similar to the students in the present study, the participants in Kang's study, four male Korean EFL students

studying in the USA, had learned mostly written English at school. All four reported that they felt anxious, and therefore less willing to communicate if they perceived the other group members as being more fluent in the target language than they were. The study also found that the greater the level of interest in and familiarity with the topic, the lower the level of feelings of insecurity or raised excitement, so participants expressed a greater WTC. Kang defined responsibility as a "feeling of obligation or duty to deliver and understand a message, or to make it clear," which arises out of "personal, interpersonal, or intergroup motives," (p. 285). Leger and Storch (2009) found that learners' confidence was eroded in whole class discussions where learners felt 'exposed', and when they perceived the classroom environment as competitive or threatening.

Building WTC in a Japanese EFL Context

In research conducted on 377 information science students in Osaka, Yashima (2002) concluded that international posture influences motivation, which, in turn, predicts proficiency and L2 communicative confidence, which leads to WTC in an L2. Like the students in this study, Yashima's subjects had studied English as a school subject for six years at junior and senior high schools. About one third answered that they had taken private English lessons before learning English at school. She describes international posture as an

interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, hopefully, an openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures. Yashima argues that students who are motivated to study a language will increase their proficiency, which builds their self-confidence, which in turn leads to WTC. Where WTC is lacking, it can be acquired through building proficiency and confidence.

The Role of Writing in Language Learning

Williams (2012) argues that two inherent features of writing demonstrate a facilitative effect of written production: firstly, the permanence of its record; and secondly, its slower pace in comparison with speaking. These permit more learner control over 'attentional resources' as well as more need to attend to language both during and after production. More specifically, she notes Swain (1998) who argues that students have more opportunities to notice gaps in their grammar and vocabulary in their L2 writing than in their L2 speaking. Whilst noticing gaps in vocabulary and grammar knowledge does occur during speaking, it is a more fleeting event, whereas noticing during writing activities offers the opportunity to address those problems there and then. Also, she points to a body of research that suggests that writing can facilitate knowledge creation.

There is also evidence that learners can co-construct knowledge when they participate in scaffolded or collaborative tasks. In many studies that demonstrate this (Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Storch, 1999, 2001; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 2002), new knowledge creation was prompted by collaborative tasks that involved writing. Although such new knowledge creation can occur during activities other than writing, the permanent record or production that writing allows seems to provide an ideal environment for co-constructed knowledge. Furthermore, several studies have compared writers working alone and together, and the majority have found that the latter produce superior results, particularly regarding accuracy (Brooks & Swain, 2009; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki & Brooks, 2009). Furthermore, writing encourages 'focus on form'. Whereas learners may process input for comprehension while listening and reading, they may encode form, as well as meaning, during output activities (Swain, 1985). Studies also suggest that writing requires a greater need, and offers a better opportunity, for focus on form than does speaking (Ortega, 2005, 2010; Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson & van Gelderen, 2009).

Research Questions:

This study set out to find answers to the following two questions:

1. Does writing in preparation for speaking activities affect the motivation of low proficiency Japanese university students to study English, and, if so, why?
2. Does writing in preparation for speaking activities affect the willingness to communicate of low proficiency Japanese university students, if so, why?

Background to the Study

This study came about as an attempt to better understand how, if at all, writing activities done in preparation for conversation activities affects students' general motivation to study English, and their WTC. The study was conducted in three similarly taught university first-year English oral communication classes across two Japanese universities. Over the course of a semester, students sat three speaking exams. In the exams students had four-minute conversations in pairs, which were observed and graded by an examiner. Students were graded on fluency, grammar accuracy and complexity, vocabulary range and appropriateness, pronunciation, and communicative ability (turn taking, using fillers, shadowing, eye contact, and appropriate responsiveness). Topics for conversations were preset, and were related to the students' personal lives, such as their childhood, their university lives, and their plans and dreams for after graduation.

At the beginning of the semester, after having spent 10-15 minutes preparing in groups of four by discussing the topic in the L1 and noting relevant L2 vocabulary, students were paired and asked to talk freely for four minutes about their childhood. In all three classes, the students were unable to continue talking in English for four minutes, with many conversations breaking down after short exchanges of less than a minute, after which many students seemed uneasy and shy, and sat in silence. The content of the conversations suggested a poor command of spoken English, with simple grammar structures being used inaccurately and repeatedly, often by both partners, for example:

Student A: "What do you like school?"
Student B: "High school. I like high school."
Student A: "That's great! [long pause]
What do you like class?"
Student B: "I like English."
Student A: "That's great! Me too, me too!"
Student B: "That's great, that's great! [long pause]
What do you like sport?"

The students were asked why they were not able to complete the task. Two main reasons were reported: (a) they believed they did not have a good enough command of English; and (b) they felt that they did not really know what to talk about. Many students reported that it was the first time they had tried to have a conversation in English. When asked how they felt about the first exam, which

was five weeks away, many expressed a lack of confidence in being able to sustain an L2 conversation for that length of time.

Writing was then introduced as a means to help the students prepare for their conversations. It was believed that writing would help them in two ways: (a) give them the opportunity to plan what to talk about; and (b) help them acquire the necessary vocabulary and grammar. What happened, however, was a discernable increase in the level of motivation in the class generally, as well as less reticence to engage in L2 conversations. Students worked hard at their writing activities, engaged more actively in group-work, and seemed to enjoy the conversation activities.

Classroom procedures

In preparation for class conversations, students were given a list of eight questions on the topic for the next exam. Students had to write answers for each of these prescribed questions. They were encouraged to use grammar reference books and dictionaries while composing their answers and work collaboratively if they wanted to. They could ask the teacher questions about grammar and vocabulary appropriateness, but not to translate their writing from Japanese to English. When the students had finished writing their answers, the teacher sat with individual students, read their answers and corrected grammar and vocabulary errors. Students were also encouraged to work together to help each

other through peer editing, however, there was a mixed response with many students vouching to work alone, while some did work together. Common errors produced by the students included incorrect sentence structure, incorrect use of tenses, subject-verb disagreement, omission of articles, and the use of only singular nouns. Students were also able to give more thoughtful answers and generate more content for their conversations. Initially, the students' answers were very brief, often being only one word. Writing, as well as teacher encouragement, helped them to develop their answers. For example, an early spoken exchange about their childhoods would have resembled the following:

Student A: What was your favourite food?
Student B: *Nikujaga*. Delicious!

However, following the writing exercises, students were producing fuller answers, such as:

Student A: What was your favourite food?
Student B: It was the *nikujaga* my grandmother made.
It was delicious.

The students were then required to memorise the answers and drill the prescribed questions and answers in paired conversations, with each taking turns to ask and field the questions.

Next, students were asked to work in groups of three or four to write their own unique questions on the topic for their conversations. The class was

required to produce around ten of these student-generated questions. The teacher wrote the questions on the board, correcting grammar and vocabulary mistakes. Each student had to randomly select at least four of these unique questions to ask their partners in the practice conversations and the exam. Answers to these questions were not written in class, or checked in any way by the teacher. This was to make students engage in a more open-ended conversation during the speaking tests, and the students' ability to do this was assessed. Students were encouraged to use the grammar and vocabulary from their written answers to answer the student-generated questions.

In the first two speaking exams, students were required to follow a set conversation pattern to answer both the prescribed and student-generated questions over a four-minute period. Student A asked a question, Student B answered, and then asked the same question back to Student A. Student A answered and then asked the next question. For example:

Student A: What were you like when you were a kid?
Student B: I was shy. I played alone indoors a lot.
How about you? What were you like?
Student A: I was outgoing. I often played with my friends in the local park. Did you enjoy school?

Students had to ask and answer the prescribed questions before asking each other the questions they had generated themselves.

In the third and final exam, there were only four prescribed questions, with much more emphasis on student-generated questions. Students could ask questions in any order, with the students who would ask the questions first. During the practice for the final exam, students were encouraged to write independently of class activities in preparation for their class conversations. The teacher did not check any of the students' writing. In effect, the initially high level of teacher input into their writing had ended, leading to higher levels of student autonomy, yet with the scaffolding of some written preparation for the speaking tests still in place to provide the students with some sense of support. In all three speaking exams, students were required to focus on fluency and pronunciation, as well as communication tactics such as turn-taking, using fillers, shadowing and assisting their partner when her/his participation in the conversation was breaking down.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 41 first-year students were surveyed from the two universities. One class was made up of 19 English major students (11 females, 8 males) in Aichi Gakuen University (Uni A), and two classes were Chinese major students at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (Uni B) taking English as a minor subject. One class had 10 students (7 females, 3 males), and the other had 12

students (7 females, 5 males). Test scores and empirical observation showed that there was an evenly matched range of abilities across the three classes. About two-thirds of the group reported having started formal English education at elementary school and 31% at junior high school. 85% had taken classes outside school, 58.5% had attended cram school and 27% attended English conversation school.

The Questionnaire

The study used a questionnaire containing open-response and closed-response questions. It consisted of three parts: (A) biodata; (B) assessing motivation to learn English, and the students' pre-task levels of WTC; and (C) assessment of how the writing activities affected motivation to learn English, and the students' levels of WTC. The biodata is detailed above in the *Participants* section. Parts B and C included both closed-response and open-response questions. Each closed-response question was followed by an open-response question, which asked the respondents to give reasons for their answers to the closed-response questions. The closed-response questions used a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was written in English and translated into Japanese by a Japanese person who is also teacher of English. The students received the Japanese version. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

Data Collection

Data were collected at the end of the 15-week semester. First, the students were asked to engage in three four-minute paired conversations on a topic not previously covered in class. Pre-task planning took the form of a vocabulary and grammar, group brainstorming. Students identified language they thought they would need for the conversations, which was written on the board by the teacher. The students did not have the opportunity to prepare for the conversation by writing as they had done for the class conversations and exams. Then, students had three four-minute conversations, each with a different partner. After that, students completed the questionnaire.

Ethics

Neither university required permission be sought from their respective ethics committees. However, permission was obtained from the students. Before completing the questionnaire, students were given a form explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and how the data would be treated. They were reassured that their participation would be anonymous. The students were told that they had the option not to participate in the study; however, all of the students completed and submitted the ethics form and participated in the study.

Results

The results section is divided into two sections. In the first section, students' feelings about studying English are presented (Part B of the questionnaire). In the second section, students' feelings about writing in preparation for conversations are described (Part C of the questionnaire).

Students' feelings about studying English

Part B sought to ascertain students' motivation to learn English and their levels of willingness to communicate in English by asking three questions, which students answered on a four-point Likert scale, the results of which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Feelings about English

Question	I like it a lot. (4)	I like it a little. (3)	I don't really like it. (2)	I don't like it at all. (1)	Mean (out of 4)
B1. How do you feel about studying English?	20	17	2	2	3.34
B2. How do you feel about writing in English?	9	15	15	2	2.75
B3. How do you feel about speaking in English?	17	20	3	1	3.29

Source: Questionnaire, Part B

Question B1: How do you feel about studying English?

Most students had very positive feelings towards studying English (mean = 3.34). Demonstrating international posture, six reported wanting to be able to communicate with foreign people, and a further six wrote that speaking English would enable them to gain intercultural understanding. Two wrote that speaking English would allow them to work abroad. Three wrote that they thought English 'is cool'. These answers indicate that for these students, WTC was based upon imagined future experiences or language communities outside the classroom.

Question B2: How do you feel about writing in English?

Students had less positive feelings about writing in English (mean = 2.75).

Students wrote that they found English grammar difficult, which can be assumed is related to the higher demands made by writing for accuracy. However, others expressed a more positive view, with three reporting that writing in English is a good way to study English, five that writing in English is enjoyable, three that it helps with spelling, and a further three that it gave them a sense of achievement. Two answered that writing enables them to communicate with foreigners, and two reported that writing gives them time to express themselves more than when speaking.

Question B3: How do you feel about speaking in English?

Generally, students also had quite positive feelings about speaking in English. Echoing answers to earlier questions, almost half of the students wrote that speaking English enables them to communicate with foreigners, and around a quarter wrote that they think it looks 'cool' if someone can speak English. The only negative comments were from two students who wrote that they found speaking English to be very difficult.

The results of this section suggest that there was a high level of motivation to study and speak English within the group, but less so for writing.

Students' feelings about studying English

In Part C, students were asked about how they felt about writing in preparation for conversations.

The results are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

C1. Would you rather have class conversations after having prepared for them by writing, rather than without having written anything?	17	21	2	1	3.31
C2. Do you feel more motivated to study English if you spend time preparing for conversations by writing?	14	19	5	3	3.07

Source: Questionnaire, Part C

Question C1: Would you rather have class conversations after having prepared for them by writing, rather than without having written anything?

Students clearly prefer to have class conversations after first writing (mean = 3.31), with over 90% of the students expressing a preference for writing in preparation for speaking activities. Eleven students wrote that writing activities helped them to improve their grammar, with four of the eleven writing that it helped them to identify and review their mistakes. Nine students noted that writing helped them to develop and organise content. This might offer some insight into the success of introducing writing to the class, insofar as the students had stated early in the semester that one of the problems they were having with the speaking activities was that they were not really sure what to talk about. Six students wrote that it helped them to improve their fluency, and we can assume this was because it helped free up their cognitive resources to concentrate on other aspects of the activity, such as their pronunciation or partner's answers. Finally, one student stated that writing helped build her confidence, and five said that it generally aided learning. So, students strongly felt that writing helped with their speaking.

Question C2: Do you feel more motivated to study English if you spend time preparing for conversations by writing?

Generally, writing before speaking increased students' motivation to study English (mean = 3.07). When asked why, six students wrote that writing helped them build their confidence with English. This may be because it aided memorisation, as one student wrote, or aided their learning English overall, as six students noted. On the other hand, nine of the students wrote that being able to plan the content of their conversations increased their motivation because it gave them a sense of achievement. Together, these factors may go some way to explaining the discernable increase in motivation after the writing exercises were introduced. Students displayed a more 'can-do' attitude towards the activities, and the atmosphere of the class became generally happier and more buoyant. Students were clearly more enthusiastic about their work, and their increased proficiency in the speaking exercises seems to fuel this new classroom dynamic.

Question C3. How do you feel about speaking English in class after having written about the topic?

Table 3: Attitudes towards speaking after writing

Question	It was a lot easier. (4)	It was easier. (3)	It was more difficult. (2)	It was a lot more difficult. (1)	Mean (out of 4)
C3. How do you feel about speaking English in class after having written about the topic?	16	24	0	1	3.34

Source: Questionnaire, Part C

Students felt very positive about speaking after writing (mean = 3.34). Nine students wrote that they knew that their grammar was better. This might be explained by the students'' concerns about looking bad in front of their peers and teacher being assuaged. Six students noted that writing aided their memory of English and therefore made speaking easier. Writing also allowed students to concentrate less on grammar and more on pronunciation, which was also an assessment criterion in the exams, three students commented. Finally, one student wrote that without writing, the class 'becomes pointless' for those with low English ability.

Discussion

This section states the answers to the two research questions, linking the results back to the ideas explored in the literature review.

The first research question asks if writing in preparation for speaking activities affects the motivation of low proficiency Japanese university students to study English, and, if so, why? When asked if they preferred doing writing activities in preparation for speaking activities, 33 of the 41 students reported that it did. Nine stated clearly that being able to plan the content for their conversations in advance increased their motivation, and six claimed that it helped them to build confidence and a further six reported that writing aided their English learning overall.

However, care needs to be taken when trying to identify what facets of the tasks gave rise to this increased sense of motivation. For example, Dörnyei's (2001) assertion that the relevance of the materials to the students enhances motivation may have played a role. Topics for conversations were related to the students' personal lives: their childhood, their university lives, and their plans and dreams for after graduation. The students spoke with each other about their shared experiences, something that they often clearly enjoyed. Yet, this would be the case whether the students had planned the contents of their conversations by writing or speaking with peers, or not at all. However, we can see how writing had a motivating effect, according to other of Dörnyei's criteria. For example, writing increased the students' expectancy of success, protected their self-esteem and increased their confidence by helping them reduce the amount of mistakes they might otherwise have made. There was also cooperation with other students in elements of the syllabus, for instance when formulating the unique questions and during the writing of their answers when they were encouraged to peer edit each other's writing. So, a combination of being able to plan both the content and the language before speaking increased the students' motivation to speak.

The second research question asks how students feel about the speaking activities after doing written preparation. Almost all students responded positively, stating a clear preference for writing in preparation for speaking

activities. Nine wrote that they felt better about speaking because they knew that their grammar was better. The noticable increase in the students' complexity of grammar and length of sentences corresponds with Williams's research (2012) that writing requires a greater need, and offers a better opportunity, for focus on form than does speaking. Students' belief that writing increases their proficiency would, according to Yashima's model (2002), give rise to greater confidence in their L2 communicative ability and therefore their WTC. This is also supported by six students reporting that writing aided their memory of English and therefore increased their proficiency. Moreover, three students noted that writing allowed them to concentrate less on grammar and more on pronunciation while speaking. The one student that commented that without writing the class 'becomes pointless' for those with low English ability illustrates the central and crucial role that writing plays.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative data point to writing as a significant driver of increased proficiency in lower proficiency students. Many of the students also expressed a belief that writing increased their confidence by helping them to identify their grammar mistakes, and develop and organise content, which in turn increased their motivation. The increase in the students' complexity of grammar and length of sentences corresponds with Williams's research that writing requires a greater need, and offers a better opportunity, for focus on form than does speaking. Students' belief that writing increased their

proficiency would, according to Yashima's model (2002), give rise to confidence in L2 communication and, therefore, WTC. This assertion is also supported by Leger and Storch's findings (2009) that, as learners' self-confidence increases over time, so does their willingness to engage in L2 use in the classroom. This phenomenon of rising self-confidence is also supported by Cuontrone's finding (2009) that some of his students cited their fear of making mistakes as the greatest cause of their anxiety in the language classroom. Given the opportunity to notice their mistakes in the writing, students were able to work to lessen the possibility of making mistakes in their conversations.

Furthermore, there might also be an added factor that in preparing by writing, students felt that any perceived distance between their abilities and those of their peers was reduced. This reduction would overcome the dynamic identified in Kang's study (2005), whose students felt anxious and therefore less willing to communicate if they perceived the other group members as being more fluent in the target language than they were. Furthermore, Kang found that students who felt security and excitement were more inclined to feel willing to communicate. This is consistent with the findings of this study, in which students reported feeling more secure in their communication abilities after having prepared by writing.

Conclusion

Further research could be done to look more closely at how the scaffolded nature of the speaking activities, underpinned by the written preparation, affected the students in terms of their WTC. As Cuontrone (2009) noted, Japanese EFL students tend to be prone to anxiety for cultural reasons, such as being unused to the individualistic nature of western teaching methods, being used to "highly guided behaviour", "formalities", and "conventional rules", and seeing shyness as a positive thing while at the same time also fearing evaluation. It may well be that writing affords such students a means to overcome anxiety around expressing themselves, but that it also, to some degree, formalises classroom procedures, and offers much more concise guidance than usual communicative language teaching environments.

The understanding garnered by this research of the possible effects that writing has on students' speaking proficiency hinges on the self-reporting by students of their own perceptions of their proficiency levels, as well as empirical assessment by the teacher. However, it could well be the case that this is an unreliable means of establishing how writing effects speaking proficiency. Future research could use a more objective measure of proficiency by assessing students before and after tasks are completed, and also by establishing a control group and measuring results and comparing with a second group which did not

write as pre-task preparation. Proficiency could be also more broadly defined as fluency, range of lexical content, and range and accuracy of form.

Care also needs to be taken given the small sample size and the fact that only one teacher was involved in the study. Any future study seeking to replicate or explore the results of this study further would benefit from a larger sample size and the involvement of more than one teacher to protect against any potential teacher bias.

Finally, it would be an interesting exercise to see if the results of this study were reflected in a further study looking at two groups of students with different levels of English proficiency. The students surveyed here were of a lower intermediate proficiency. It could be that students of a higher level or lower level of proficiency might have a different experience of writing in preparation for classroom speaking activities. Nonetheless, for these lower proficiency students, writing was a crucial factor in increasing their motivation and willingness to communicate.

REFERENCES

Allen, K. (1996). Interference from Japanese: A positive view. *The Japanese Learner*, *10*(2), 135-152.

Brooks, L., & Swain, M. (2009). Languaging in a collaborative setting. In A. Mackey & C. Polio (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on interaction: Second language research in honor of Susan M. Gass* (pp. 58-89). New York: Taylor & Francis/Routledge.

Cutrone, P. (2009). Overcoming Japanese EFL Learners' Fear of Speaking. *Language Studies Working Papers*, *1,* 55-63

Doi, A. (1994). Rich but mute: Japan's internationalization is one-way. *Japan Update*, 16-17.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*, (2nd Ed.). London: Longman.

Dorji, L. (1997). A comparative analysis of Japanese students' learning styles and British TEFL teaching styles. *The Japanese Learner*, *11*(1), 30-45.

Gardner, R., & MacIntyre, P. (1993). A student's contribution to second language learning. Part II: Affect variables. *Language Teaching 26*, 5.

Helgesen, M. (1993). Dismantling a wall of silence: The "English conversation" class. In P. Wadden (Ed.) *A Handbook for Teaching English at Japanese Colleges and Universities* (pp. 37-49). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kang, S. (2005). Dynamic Emergence of Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language. *System*, *33*, 277-292.

Karan, P. (2005) *Japan in the Twenty-First Century: Environment, Economy and Society.* Lexington, University of Kentucky Press.

Leger, D. &and Storch, N. (2009). Learners' perceptions and attitudes: Implications for willingness to communicate in an L2 classroom, *System*, *37*, 269-285

McCroskey, J. C. & Richmond, V. P. (1991). Willingness to communicate: A cognitive perspective. In M. Booth-Butterfield (Ed.), *Communication, Cognition and Anxiety* (19-37). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Nassaji, H., & Tian, J. (2010). Collaborative and individual output tasks and their effects on learning English phrasal verbs. *Language Teaching Research*, 14, 397-419.

Ortega, L. (2005). What do learners plan? Learner-driven attention to form during pre-task planning. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language* (pp. 77-109). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ortega, L. (2010). Exploring interfaces between second language writing and second language acquisition. Paper presented and Symposium on second language writing, Murcia, Spain.

Osterman, G. (2014). Experiences of Japanese university students' willingness to speak English in Class: A multiple case study. *Sage Open*, July-September 2014, 1-13.

Samimy, K. K., & Kobayashi, C., (2004). Toward the development of intercultural communicative competence: Theoretical and pedagogical implications for Japanese English teachers, *JALT Journal*, *26*(2), 245-261.

Sawyer, M. (2007). Motivation to learn a foreign language: Where does it come from, where does it go? *Gengo to bunka, Kwanseigakuin Daigaku* (*Language and Culture, Kwaseigakuin University*), *10*, 71-79.

Schoonen, R., Snellings, P., Stevenson, M., & van Gelderen, A. (2009). Toward a blueprint of the foreign language writer: The linguistic and cognitive demands of foreign language writing. In R. Manchón (Ed.), *Writing in foreign language contexts* (pp. 77-101). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Shimomura, H. (2014). Statement by Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan on the October 12 International New York Times article "Japan's Divided Education Strategy". Retrieved February 2, 2016, from http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/1353287.htm

Storch, N. (1999). Are two heads better than one? Pairwork and grammatical accuracy. *System*, *27*, 363-374.

Storch, N. (2001). How collaborative is pair work? ESL tertiary students composing in pairs. *Language Teaching Research*, *5*, 29-53.

Storch, N., & Wigglesworth, G. (2007). Writing tasks: The effects of collaboration. In M. García de Mayo (Ed.), *Investigating tasks in formal language learning* (pp. 157-177). Clevedon, Avon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235-253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Swain, M. (1998). Focus on form through conscious reflection. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 64-81). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1995). Problems in output and the cognitive processes they generate: A step toward second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, *16*, 371-391.

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2002). Talking it through: Two French immersion students' response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *3/4*, 285-304.

Swain, M., Lapkin, S., Knouzi, I., Suzuki, W., & Brooks, L. (2009). Languaging: University students learn the grammatical concept of voice in French. *Modern Language Journal*, *93*, 5-29.

Williams, J., (2012). The potential role(s) of writing in second language development. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *21*, 321-331.

Yashima, T., (2002). Willingness to Communicate in a 2nd Language: The Japanese EFL Context. *The Modern Language Journal*, *86*(i), 54-66.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A: Please tell me about your experience of learning English before coming to this university.

A1. When did you first start studying English at school?
at elementary school at junior high school

A2. Have you been to English classes outside of school, e.g. at cram school?
Yes No

Where did you take classes: _____

From what age? _____

Part B: Please tell me a little about what you think of English as a subject.

B1. How do you feel about studying English?
I like it a lot. I like it a little. I don't know.
I don't really like it. I don't like it at all.

What do you like or dislike about studying English?
_____
_____

B2. How do you feel about writing in English?
I like it a lot. I like it a little. I don't know.
I don't really like it. I don't like it at all.

What do you like or dislike about writing in English?
_____
_____

B3. How do you feel about speaking in English?
I like it a lot. I like it a little. I don't know.
I don't really like it. I don't like it at all.

What do you like or dislike about speaking in English?

_____
_____

Part C: Please tell me about your experience in this class.

C1. Would you rather have class conversations after having prepared for them by writing, rather than without having written anything?

Yes, very much. Yes, a little. No, not really. No, not at all.

Why/Why not?

_____
_____

C2. Does preparing by writing make you feel more motivated to learn English?
Yes, very much. Yes, a little. No, not really. No, not at all.

Why/Why not?

_____
_____

C3. Do you feel more willing to communicate in English in class if you have spent time preparing by writing?
Yes, very much. Yes, a little. No, not really. No, not at all.

Why/Why not?

_____
_____