

Faculty of Education and Human Studies Graduation Theses in English Language, Linguistics, Literature, and Education

Compiled and Edited by WAKAARI Yasuhiko and Ben GRAFSTRÖM

In this issue, and for the first time, *Akita English Studies* will showcase the fine efforts of young scholars preparing to graduate from Akita University by listing the titles of their graduation theses along with their abstracts. In so doing, the Akita Association of English Studies hopes to provide its members and readers of the journal with information regarding the most current scholarly research being conducted by Akita University students, many of whom will continue on to become English language educators or to pursue careers in related professional fields. The following theses deal wholly or in part with English language and literature as well as with connected fields like film, education, and cultural studies. The editors of *Akita English Studies* hope that publishing this will encourage the new graduates to continue to be active in their academic pursuits as well as provide fresh ideas to senior scholars and educators.

(Note: Theses are listed alphabetically by author's family name.)

AKATSUKA REN (赤塚 練)

Arthurian Romance and Medieval Europe: Influences of Christianity and Ideal of Medieval People

Arthurian Romance is remarkably fictional. In fact, there are some differences between recently published stories and the original legends. I analyzed how stories changed in medieval era. I studied by the comparison between Geoffrey's text and Thomas Malory's text. The differences were separated into three main categories: Christian elements, the Knights of the Round Table, and courtly romance. Then I saw that some elements were strongly related to the transformation of Arthurian romance, for example, Christianity and people's desires. It seems that some Christian monks distorted the story of King Arthur to match their beliefs. On the other hand, some stories reflected the reality and ideals of medieval European people.

HARATA Kazuki (原田 一輝)

Relative Clauses in English

I researched relative clauses in English for my thesis in order to understand this complex grammar better. In order to deepen my understanding of relative clauses, I examined and compared Japanese textbooks and English grammar books. I also researched relative clauses in actual communication. Through this research, I found relative clauses can be thought of in terms of linguistics and communication.

The findings that I determined are not treated in Japanese textbooks, but are useful for English learners to understand relative clauses. Therefore, my findings can be utilize for teaching English grammar more effectively.

IYANAGA Maori (彌永 万緒里)

Logical Essay Writing and Extemporaneous Communication Activity for Basic Debate Education in Junior High School

The purpose of this study is to find a way method for English teachers to introduce basic debate skills to junior high school students. This study suggests that brainstorming and flowchart activities have a positive effect on making students' opinions more logical as well as promote extemporaneous communication, more focus on organizational structure, logical reasoning, and their counterarguments. The participants in the study were 3rd year students in junior high school. Argumentative essays and rebuttal essays in pre-/post-tests, handwriting debates, and questionnaire were used as collecting data. The results show a huge gap between students' impression of those two activities in the questionnaire and actual tests results.

MATSUDA Ayumi (松田 歩)

The influence of Adaptation

The main theme of my graduation thesis is "Adaptation." I examined the influence of adaptation on the audience and on the original text by researching the differences between the original work and its movie adaption. I choose *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* as targets because there are many adaptation works of these. I focused scene adaptation in *Romeo and Juliet*, and characters adaptation in *Hamlet*. Directors make changes in movie adaptations by introducing their interpretations into the movie or by introducing ideas that span across the ages. As a

conclusion, adaptation introduces new readings and new readers to the classical literature.

OTO Kosuke (大戸 幸介)

The creation patterns of new rock music named “alternative”

This is a study of the word “alternative” as it is used to describe music genres. In order to provide background to my research, I researched 1970’s and 1980’s culture in the United States and the United Kingdom. There appears to be a difference between how the word “alternative” is used as an English word and as how it is used to describe the music genre. The word “alternative” in its relation to the music genre appears to rely more on its semantic meaning.

SASAKI Rina (佐々木 梨奈)

What factors demotivate Japanese university students on spoken interaction in English classes at junior and senior high school?

As globalization progresses, English speaking skills become more and more important. However, some people feel demotivated when it comes to spoken interaction in English. This study tries to grasp the factors that cause demotivation based on Tsuchiya’s (2006) nine factors: 1) Negative attitude toward English community, 2) Lack of positive English speaking model, 3) Negative attitude toward English itself, 4) Negative group attitude, 5) Teachers, 6) Ways of learning, 7) Compulsory nature of English study, 8) Classes, 9) Reduced self-confidence. My study’s result shows that factor 6 is the strongest factor.

SHINDO Erina (進藤 恵莉菜)

A comparison of the effects of item format in a listening cloze test

There are gaps between students’ actual skills and test performance. The gap can be exaggerated by poor test format. I was interested in the gap and thus studied about the relationship between the test format and test scores. In order to solve my research questions about testing format, I conducted four kinds of listening cloze tests. Then I analyzed and compared the tests’ average scores, item differentiation, and some other statistics. In conclusion, through conducting my research, I found that the testing format affects students’ performance a lot even though the difference of format is small.

TODA Keiko (戸田 慶子)

Measuring the effects of interactional modifications on learners' understanding of a picture book story using comprehension tasks

The purpose of this research is to clarify the method of English teaching using effective task based language teaching in elementary schools. In particular, I focused on comprehension tasks using a picture book and interactional modifications. Comprehension tasks seem more appropriate for beginner learners than production tasks. Interactional modifications, for example, gesture, repetition and paraphrasing, seem to promote learners' negotiation of meaning.

I carried out a comprehension task in which research participants guessed the title of the picture book. The participants were elementary school 4th graders. The research consisted of pre- and post- comprehension tests, and questionnaires. I then analyzed their results.

TOMAKI Shiho (戸巻 志穂)

American university students' cultural perceptions of politeness levels in Japanese English textbooks

My thesis consists of two questions: 1) what are American university students' cultural perceptions of politeness levels in Japanese English textbooks; and 2) what is the influence of cultural perceptions of politeness. The research shows that American university students think that the politeness level is more than acceptable but less than polite, which is against my hypothesis that they would say it is too polite. The American students do not seem to take into account the listeners' age when they talk, unlike Japanese students. According to the results and their comments, the Japanese students tend to speak more politely in English when they speak to older people, just as they do when they speak Japanese. This shows that their cultural perceptions of politeness influence the way they speak English.