

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

Compiled and Edited by WAKAARI Yasuhiko and Ben GRAFSTRÖM

With great pride, the editors of *Akita English Studies* would like to share with readers the fine efforts of young scholars preparing to graduate from Akita University. In the following section we have listed the names of the graduates along with the titles of their graduation theses and 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 the broader topics of social and cultural studies. The editors of *Akita English Studies* hope that publishing these abstracts will encourage the new graduates to continue to be active in their intellectual pursuits as well as provide fresh ideas to senior scholars, educators, and the next crop of undergraduate students.

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

KUDO Fumika (工藤 文華)

An Opinion Survey of Pre-service Teachers about Teaching Foreign Language Activities

This paper explores how university students who will be elementary school teachers feel about teaching Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Activities and what they think they have to learn and acquire in university in order to teach Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Activities. This paper also aims to serve as a guide for establishing ideal teacher-training in Akita University based on students' opinions and actual conditions.

A questionnaire survey was used in this study based on the core curriculum of Foreign Language for training elementary school teachers (Tokyo Gakugei University, 2017). In the title, I used the word "pre-service teachers" to suggest the participants will actually become elementary school teachers.

NAGAI Yuzuki (永井 柚紀)

Communication activities to improve pragmatics abilities for junior high school students

My research topic is about how to improve junior high school students' pragmatic competences. For this research, I conducted a class for 2nd year junior high school students that including role playing activities focusing on interlocutors' intentions. Then, I analyzed the responses to questionnaires that were distributed both before and after the lesson. This research helped me understand the importance of providing opportunities to students to use English in order to improve their competence. In addition, this research leads me to believe that teachers should set the situations portrayed in the activities to be closely connected to students' actual daily life.

In further research I would like to consider how to teach the variety of ways of communication in order to improve students' communication ability.

OUKI Shiori (黄木 史織)

The discrimination in *Harry Potter*

My thesis topic is "Discrimination in *Harry Potter*". When I read the series, I thought that the *Harry Potter* series included discrimination everywhere. I considered discrimination from three points.

The first point is about racial discrimination, including discrimination based on blood and on the designations of being humans and non-humans. Blood is important because it directly affects one's treatment from other classmates. Furthermore the characters' race reflects England's traditionally local people.

Second is about class discrimination, which varies from family to family.

Third is about solutions to discrimination, namely through friendship and love of parents. These two are countermeasures to discrimination.

In conclusion, discrimination is immoral, so readers should consider how to approach it. I think this idea is what the author wants to convey to readers.

SHIBUYA Yume (澁谷 優夢)

CLIL with the picture book *Elmer*

I designed a CLIL class based on the picture book *Elmer* by David McKee. I carried out the research class with 90 fifth-grade students who served as participants. The main theme of the class was the importance of differences, and the picture book was related with colors. Then,

I had two research questions: 1) Can children learn how to ask their classmates about their personality and image colors, and can they answer the questions about them?; and 2) Do children understand the relationship between colors and personality in each country and each people? Based on the results of the questionnaire and comprehension test, 80% of the students answered the questions correctly and reported that they understood the differences. From these results, it is shown that the class I designed influenced on learning language and understanding these differences.

SATO Ayaka (佐藤 彩佳)

A comparison of sentence stress between Japanese teachers of English and native speakers of American English

The target of this research was the sentence stress in English utterances by Japanese teachers of English. Two research questions were set to examine teachers' pronunciation skills focusing on sentence stress: 1) how does the pitch contour (which indicates sentence stress) between Japanese teachers of English and native speakers of English differ?; and 2) to what extent do participants know about sentence stress?

The most remarkable finding was that Japanese teachers' output better knowledge than native speakers even though Japanese teachers have less pronunciation skills. It is required for them to convert the knowledge into the skill.

SATO Miyu (佐藤 美由)

Message of Dickens behind Scrooge's Conversation

The novel *A Christmas Carol* contributed a great deal to the construction of present day Christmas celebrations. This means that Dickens' messages have stuck in readers' hearts for a long time.

This thesis analyzes the author's messages from two aspects: the author's life on the one hand, and roles of the three Ghosts on the other. In short, his experience of poverty in childhood especially influenced his lifelong perspective and is reflected in the story. Also, messages conveyed by the Spirits (e.g. the importance of charity for the poor) are still relevant even today because of the problems caused by extreme capitalism. This is why the work has been favored by people for such a long time.

SUZUKI Aoi (鈴木 葵)

Effects of English Pronunciation Practice with a Smartphone Application.

According to the course of study for foreign languages, to improve students' oral communication ability is one of the important objectives. In addition to what is taught in school, some students need more time to practice their English pronunciation. In this thesis, I focus on smartphone applications as tools for students' to use for self-practice. Six participants took part in this research. They took a pre-test, pre-questionnaire, did self-practice for four months, followed by a post-test and post-questionnaire. In both tests, participants recorded themselves reading 25 words and 8 sentences. By comparing the pre- and post-test results, it seems as though the participants' did not improve their pronunciation. In future research, I will collect more participants and recruit more native English-speaking checkers, and would like to gather more general results.