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

Compiled and Edited by Ben GRAFSTRÖM

Every year it is a delight for the editors of *Akita English Studies* to share with the members of AAES the theses written by the graduating seniors in Akita University's Faculty of Education and Human Studies who major in English language, linguistics, literature, and education. Of course this past year was not ideal for learning, teaching, or conducting field research; however, the following abstracts show the resilience of Akita University students and their eagerness to learn and grow as scholars.

The following 15 abstracts represent the wide variety of interests held by the education and humanities-faculty students. Their graduation theses topics range from elementary school education, to bilingual parenting, and from 16th century British theater to 20th century children's literature. While some of the theses grapple with age-old topics like how to interpret the relevance of the supporting characters in *Hamlet*, or how readers should respond to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, other theses deal with more current social and educational issues like MEXT's revised curriculum for schools and modern approaches to language education, like CLIL.

The methods employed by the students to accomplish their research also varies a great deal. Their methods represent those commonly used in both the humanities and social sciences, such as the use of questionnaires, key informants, close textual analysis, text comparison, and participant observation—to name a few. These numerous methods reflect the students' diverse research skills and data gathering abilities.

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

ABE Kanae（阿部 叶愛）

An analysis of communication activities of teaching materials used in elementary schools in Japan

From fiscal year 2020, the new Course of Study started in elementary schools. According to the new Course of Study, there are some changes in foreign language education in elementary schools.

One question educators have is, how does the changes in the Course of Study affect foreign language teaching materials used in elementary schools? To answer this question, I analyzed three teaching materials that are edited by MEXT: *Hi, friends!* (2017), *Let's try!* (2019), *We can!* (2019), and one new teaching material that is adopted by over 80% of the elementary schools in Akita: *New Horizon Elementary* (2020). In this analysis of the teaching materials, I focus on communication activities since the new Course of Study states the importance of language activities. I evaluate communication activities of these four teaching materials based

on the criteria suggested by Usuda (2014). Finally, I compare the results from three viewpoints: the average scores of the whole teaching materials, the average scores of each unit, and the scores of units in which students learn the same expressions.

The results show that there are some improvements in the foreign language teaching materials. The scores of *Let's try!* (2019) are higher than those of *Hi, friends!* (2017). In addition, the average scores of units indicate that *New Horizon Elementary* (2020) is more consistent than other teaching materials.

ARITA Hinako（有田　日菜子）

What kind of effect will schema have on listening comprehension of junior high school students?

This study attempts to measure the following research questions: (1) What factors affect the listener's listening-accuracy in English? (2) To what extent does the listener's feeling that a listening item is "difficult" correspond to the rate at which they actually answer correctly? And, (3) if listeners feel the question is difficult, what is the cause of its difficulty? The data I use comes from listening tests and questionnaires.

From this study, I was able to obtain various valuable results. A number of junior high school students responded that the schema helped them make the correct answer, and many other students cited the ease of vocabulary that was used. It was also found that there was almost no correlation between the junior high school students' feeling of the items' difficulty-level and their grades. The results show that it may be necessary to improve the vocabulary of junior high school students to make listening easier.

These results were different from what I expected, which gave me a new perspective. I found that as listeners, junior high school students are likely to use the schema for listening to English, but they may not necessarily be using the schema consciously, but rather unconsciously.

CHIDA Akihito（智田　晃仁）

Supporting Characters in *Hamlet*

Hamlet is a Shakespearean tragedy. While the main character is Hamlet, the plot involves a lot of supporting characters who have no connection with Hamlet's revenge. Within the play, audiences may have some doubts about how to handle these supporting characters, so I examine some of the potential intentions Shakespeare may have had when creating these supporting characters.

I have divided the thesis into three chapters: the first dealing with Gertrude and Ophelia, the second dealing with Polonius and Claudius, and the third dealing with Horatio, Laertes, and Fortinbras. I then analyze each character from the following perspectives:

・Gertrude: Why Hamlet is so angry with Gertrude?
・Ophelia: Why does Shakespeare treat the heroine's death so carelessly?

・Polonius: Why did Polonius have to be killed in the plot?
・Claudius: Why is Claudius portrayed as an arch villain?
・Horatio, Laertes, and Fortinbras: Why is the comparison between reason and passion such significant motif in their characterization?

All of the characters I analyze influence the tragic elements in *Hamlet.* I argue that the supporting characters are indeed an essential element in *Hamlet* to make the play a true tragedy.

HASEBE Kasumi（長谷部 花澄）

The Garden and Children in English Children's Literature

In this thesis, I study *The Secret Garden*. This novel is about the growth and regeneration of children, which is reinforced through garden imagery. I focus on the power of gardens and the process by which the two main characters heal their desolate hearts through their relationship with the garden.

First, I study about the symbolic meaning of gardens and roses. Through understanding these, I can make conclusions about the meaning of the secret garden (which is a rose garden) in this novel and determine what kind of power it is that heals the characters. Second, I study two main characters. Studying their relationship with the garden and other key characters, I can organize the process of their growing throughout the plot.

In conclusion, I suggest that the rose garden symbolizes motherhood. It also symbolizes the love of oneself and others, and for Mary and Colin—who have minds like desolate gardens. *The Secret Garden* is a story of love and regeneration with the garden as the true main character.

ITO Mayu（伊藤 真由）

Logic, Meaning in Language, and Set Theory

Stemming from my interest in semantics, this paper, focuses on logic, meaning in language, and Set Theory. Knowing that Set Theory is effective to capture meanings in language, I began to wonder how we can use Set Theory to capture meanings in language and how effective it is. In an attempt to answer this, my discussion and thesis is divided into three topics. In the first, I discuss a way to show meanings of noun phrases in language by means of Set Theory. By using a set, speakers can express meanings. Also, we can consider a relationship between sets. Next, I discuss the meanings of words that have no visual images such as the logical connective word *not*. Upon analyzing it, I found that *not* has an important role, which is that *not* reverses the truth value of sentences. This means that if a sentence is true, the sentence with *not* becomes false, and vice versa, both of which can be expressed by means of a set. Lastly, I analyze logically valid and invalid arguments. The arguments look a little difficult, but observers can consider whether the argument is logically valid or not by using a set and its figure. In conclusion, this Set Theory analysis shows the various ways to express meaning in language.

KATO Reina（加藤 礼奈）

How Should Polysemous Words be Taught?: With a Focus on Core Meaning

The number of English words in the junior high school curriculum will increase (MEXT, 2017), so junior high school students' study-burden will be heavier, especially if the added words are polysemous. As an effective way of learning vocabulary for junior high school students, Mitsugi and Nagashima (2015) presented the concept of core meaning, so I decided to research the effectiveness of using the concept of core meaning when learning polysemous words in junior high school.

The aim of this study is to investigate junior high school students' ways of learning vocabulary and the elements that help them understand the meanings of words. To achieve this purpose, I used the concept of a core meaning to make explanations of the meanings of ten polysemous verbs and then conducted a questionnaire for first-year junior high school students.

The results reveal that students tend to focus only on the translation of vocabulary in English and Japanese, not on the meaning of words when they learn vocabulary, whether at school or at home. Therefore, their burden increases especially when learning the meanings of polysemous words. The research also shows that many participants think the combination of an illustration and an example sentence with Japanese explanation is the most effective element to understand the meanings of words.

MATSUYAMA Sumika（松山 澄香）

An investigation of teacher talk in classes of Foreign Language Activities at a Japanese elementary school

Although the new Course of Study was implemented in fiscal year 2020, many elementary school teachers seem to have little confidence in speaking English. With this in mind, this paper explores how to produce a sufficient amount of English utterances as comprehensible input; how to maintain English interactions in the classes; and, what role Japanese utterances made by teachers play in a lesson. To answer these questions, I observed and recorded three Foreign Language Activity classes and conducted a questionnaire survey to check students' degree of comprehension and interest after each class. I then transcribed the utterances of the HRT, ALT, and the students and calculated their utterance time and percentages of each. In addition, I classified the utterances into the six categories as suggested by Rob (2018) to show the ratio of English and Japanese utterances and also categorized them into seven types following MERRIER Approach—as proposed by Watanabe (2003)—to investigate comprehensible teacher talk in interactions. The results show that a large amount of English input was produced by the teachers in the first period and then gradually the amount of students' output increased through the three classes. In terms of types of input, most of the English teacher-talk was considered to follow MERRIER Approach. As for the students' view, their comprehension levels and interest became higher. Based on these results, I suggest increasing English utterances of directions, using Redundancy and Expansion, and continuing interactions to make more sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

NAKAZAWA Keita（中澤　啓太）

A relationship between motivation and language activity in English language learning at elementary school

With the change brought by the new curriculum for elementary schools, has come an increase in the demand for higher quality Foreign Language Activities and Foreign Languages classes. As a university student majoring in English education, I am interested in motivation in English learning. For this reason, I decided to conduct a study about motivation for elementary school students. Since there is sparse literature on this topic, I conducted my study by using an educational-psychology approach that as proposed by Japanese psychologists. In advancing my study, I decided on four research questions. Then, I conducted a questionnaire survey to 5th-grade students in elementary school and analyzed the data. The results showed mainly two findings. The first finding is teachers should give students more trial and experiences, and the second one is the teachers' role is to keep a balance between teachers' leading and students' free participation. I would like to apply what I learned in this study to teaching English in the future.

NARUMI Aika（鳴海　愛香）

Perceptional Differences Between a JTE and Students About Roles of an ALT in an Elementary School Foreign Language Class

This study explores what students think about the roles of assistant language teachers (ALTs); what a Japanese teacher of English's (JTE) intentions were behind designing an elementary school foreign language class; and the perceptional differences between the students and the JTE in an elementary school. To explore the students' thoughts and JTE's intentions, I asked the participants to respond to a questionnaire while watching a video about a foreign language class. The video showed a team-teaching class that the JTE and an ALT taught to the students in 2019.

This study has three major findings. First, this study found that the students' motivation to speak in English was increased when they were required to interact with foreign people. Second, the students felt that it was fun to have real English conversations with foreign people. Third, the students understood the JTE's intentions about each activity, although there were some differences between the JTE's intention and the students' understanding about the ALT's roles.

SASAKAWA Naruki（笹川　成希）

How do teachers teach phrasal verbs effectively?

In English education in Japan, students study a lot of idioms. However, a lot of students report that they are not good at using them—myself included. Using a questionnaire, I tried to reveal the state of teaching idioms and the problems related to it, and then determine how to better teach them.

Using the questionnaire, I researched how students memorize idioms and make sentences with them and how they are taught in class. The participants were 94 students in Akita University. More than 60 percent of the students said they are not good at memorizing idioms and making sentences with them. Regarding input, the highest cause of the problem is that the idioms' similarities confuses them. As for output, the highest cause of the problems was that they do not understand when idioms are being used. Moreover, this questionnaire reveals that they have few opportunities to use idioms in context when studying them in class and out of class. As for the data of regarding input, I focus on a category of idiom, "phrasal verbs" and design a class in which there are a lot of similar idiomatic forms.

Based on the analysis and discussion of these ideas, teachers should give more opportunities to use phrasal verbs in class to expand student's schema. In this research, I defined their schema as a frame work constructed by our experience like conversation. It helps us to recognize them.   Also, teachers need to review teaching methods to teach not only phrasal verbs but convey the core meanings of the individual words to help them understand their idiomatic meaning.

SASAKI Tomomichi（佐々木 朋道）

The Relationship Between the Amount of Input and Language Acquisition in Bilingual Parenting

As globalization progresses, being able to use several languages is becoming increasingly important. This paper investigates the relationship between the amount of input and children's language acquisition. I gave a questionnaire made with Google Forms to 3 inter-cultural families living in Japan and analyzed the data on how the parents support their children's multi-lingual acquisition. Though the number of parameters is not large, the results demonstrated   that it could be concluded that there is a connection between the amount of input and language acquisition. In addition, there is a time gap between mother and father spending with children, and it could be one of the factors of the affecting the differences in language usage. The results suggest that there is a strong relationship between the amount of input received and children's language acquisition.

SASE Koya（佐瀬 広弥）

What problems do Japanese learners have in English pronunciation: With a focus on linking

Japanese English ("Japanglish") has been a problem in English education in Japan. The course of study for junior high schools (2017) refers to the importance of teaching authentic and practical English. In this thesis, therefore, I focus on "linking (liaison)," which is considered to be one aspect of authentic and practical English, and set the following two research questions: (1) What factors affect problems of Japanese learners of English in liaison?; and (2) What "liaison" elements are they not good at?

To answer these questions, I conducted a questionnaire and a test for university students who want to be an English teacher in the future. The questionnaire is designed to investigate their experiences of learning "liaison" during classes from junior high school till university and the test is adopted to analyze weakness of Japanese learners of English in "liaison" by recording their pronunciation with an IC recorder.

The results concerning the first research question reveal that there are limited opportunities and contents in learning "liaison", which are considered to be main factors for the "liaison" problem. The participants did not seem to have any outstanding experiences of learning "liaison" at school.

As for the second research question, the results show that the participants have weakness in the area of reduction. This is perhaps because almost all words end with a vowel in the Japanese language, which causes a tendency for Japanese people to pronounce English with an unnecessary vowel at the of a word.

SATO Haruto（佐藤　遥斗）

The Comparison of Junior High School English Textbooks for Japanese and Korean Students: From the Viewpoint of Communication Activity

The new Course of Study, which was revised in 2017, promotes developing students' communication abilities through communication activities. And in general, from the viewpoint of communication abilities, Korean students have higher English abilities than Japanese students do. To explore what factors make this difference I compared English textbooks that are used in junior high school in Japan and Korea. The comparison was made in the differences of the unit organization, the number of the communication activities, and communication activities in terms of Interaction, Meaning, Outcome, Completion, and Authenticity. The results showed that units in Korean textbooks were made up of more components than units in Japanese textbooks. As for the number of the communication activities, only the number of activities in the textbook for the eighth grade in Japan was too small. Regarding the differences of communication activities, the activities in the textbook for the seventh grade in Japan were rated least task-likely. With respect to each item, there were large differences especially in Interaction, and Outcome. Based on these results, I suggest that textbooks used in Japan should refer superior elements of textbooks used in Korea.

SATO Miharu（佐藤　美晴）

CLIL Class Designs for Integrated Development of Students' Intercultural Understanding and English Language Skills

This thesis attempts to prove the effects of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in English classes. Also, an element of intercultural understanding was brought into this study as a main theme of an experimental class. This thesis focuses on how students' integrated skills of the language and the content can be cultivated through CLIL class. In order

to collect data, the author asked the elementary school for the teaching practice and conducted an experimental CLIL class and a questionnaire survey by using teaching materials from Ethics class. Although, unfortunately, there were some limitations and sudden changes because of the influence of COVID-19, the experiments yielded enough data for the study.

As a result, this study has revealed that a CLIL approach would provide the chances of intercultural understanding and also, it would sharpen students' linguistic sense by dealing with variety of teaching materials such as poetry, short stories, or worldwide topics. That is how communicative activities in CLIL gives students the motivation to think and learn in English.

SHIMADA Nichika（嶋田　日佳）

Unravelling *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from the Faust Legend

The Picture of Dorian Gray is the only novel that Oscar Wilde ever wrote. The story represents the fall of a young man's soul from innocence because of the influence of good and evil. He mentally suffers between both influences, but he chooses the evil side for craving his desire and dies at the climax.

I propose that Wilde wrote his novel following the frame of the Faust Legend, especially *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe because both of stories have the same pattern of the temptation and fall of the human soul. I would like to unravel the author's technique and intention in this novel through this framework of the Faustian legend.

In Chapter 1, I write about the religious background of Oscar Wilde; Chapter 2 is for description of Dorian's fate along the frame of the Faust Legend, and think about the effect of using it.

In conclusion, I suggest why the Faust Legend is necessary for this novel and what the author wants to tell us through it.