

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

Compiled and edited by Adrian PATERSON

In recent years, *Akita English Studies* has showcased the abstracts of undergraduate theses written in English by students of Akita University's Faculty of Education and Human Studies. The theses cover a wide range of topics within the fields of English education, English linguistics, and English literature. The purpose of the graduation thesis research project is to encourage students to question something that they have learned about, and then to investigate it more deeply. It is fascinating to see the different ways students go about this process, and to see which aspects of the program pique their interest. It is one of the great things of teaching at university to see how students develop during their time here, both as people and as English speakers.

Most of the graduating class of 2024 started their university life in 2020, just as the pandemic and lockdowns were getting into full swing. This was brought home to me when, just before their interim report presentation, one of the students told me that she had never actually spoken in front of a live audience. This class of graduates have had to overcome many obstacles, including, COVID-19 restrictions, teachers license examinations, job hunting, not to mention the amount of effort required to conduct the research and then write about it in depth.

The following 14 abstracts are the result of a lot of hard work on the part of the students. Through their research, students investigated English education, special needs education, English linguistics, and English literature related topics such as; pronunciation, incidental vocabulary learning, Katherine Mansfield's short stories, group learning dynamics, reading comprehension, relative clauses, CLIL, self-esteem, the relationship of form and meaning, speaking skills, women's issues, movie adaptations of short stories, and semantics.

Please enjoy reading the abstracts and join us in congratulating all of the recent graduates. Congratulations! Thank you all for your hard work. It has been a privilege to see you all mature into young adults. We wish you all the best for the future, and hope that you will include your work in future AAES Journal issues and participate in future conferences.

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

Comparison of views about teaching pronunciation between JHS teachers and prospective teachers: With a focus on liaison

HASEGAWA Miyu

Pronunciation teaching, especially liaison, is not widely implemented in many English classes in Japanese junior high schools at present. Taking this issue into account, this study compares the perspectives of both prospective and current junior high school English teachers on teaching pronunciation, especially liaison,

and researches the teachers' current pronunciation teaching practice with the following two research questions: (1) "What do junior high school teachers and prospective teachers think about teaching pronunciation?" and (2) "What do junior high school English teachers do in relation to pronunciation teaching?"

The results for the first research question revealed that the prospective teachers were more motivated to teach pronunciation than the teachers, while the teachers had experiences that changed their mind about their teaching. In addition, the prospective teachers tend to feel that implicit phonetic teaching is more effective, such as shadowing, whereas the teachers tend to feel the importance of both explicit and implicit phonetic instruction.

Concerning the second research question, the teachers utilize both explicit and implicit teaching methods for pronunciation teaching. The teachers also mentioned that environmental factors, such as the teaching curriculum and limited class time, prevent them from teaching pronunciation, especially liaison.

These results suggest a necessity to deal with issues which lessen opportunities to teach pronunciation by exploring how to reduce the burden of teaching pronunciation.

Incidental learning of vocabulary and grammar using a picture book for elementary school students' English language learning: its design and exploring case study

HIRAIZUMI Suzuki

In recent years, English communication skills have become necessary for many people, so many students have started learning English in elementary school. However, the number of students who dislike learning English has been increasing since students began learning English as a subject. This study attempted to reveal the effectiveness of incidental learning using picture books for students' English learning.

In this study, I conducted a class for elementary school students by using a picture book. This class used "Pete the Cat and his four groovy buttons." Before and after the class, vocabulary and grammar tests and questionnaires were conducted.

The results of the vocabulary and grammar tests showed that overall scores increased, especially the vocabulary test scores increased. This study revealed that incidental learning using picture books was influential for vocabulary learning. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed by a co-occurrence network. These analyses showed that students' interest in picture books increased compared to the pre- and post-questionnaire. Students' interest in picture books was due to their intention to learn English and their interest in their contents. Furthermore, picture books satisfy students' needs to learn English and different cultures. In addition, there are some points of storytelling and choosing picture books when teachers use them in English class.

Issues of Class in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories

IGARASHI Yuina

Mansfield is a well-known novelist and in some of her works, she deals with some kinds of disparity such as rich and poor. I explore the class issue through Mansfield's short stories and I believe the kinds of stories were made based on her experience. When she was in New Zealand, she spent a rich life without any worries. However, after moving to England, she was discriminated against by the British people because Mansfield was from the colony. This experience influenced her works. In "The Doll's House," the main character, Kezia, is well-known to be the alter ego of the author, but I believe the Kelvey sisters, the poor family's daughters are also the author's alter egos. About "The Garden Party," the main character, Laura, is same as Kezia, but there is a difference. Laura is more matured than Kezia, and she can act accordingly. The biggest difference is that Laura states her opinion to her mother clearly and if she rejects her opinion, she asks the reason and restates her opinion repeatedly. In contrast, the main character, Rosemary, in "A Cup of Tea," is a different type of person from Kezia and Laura. She is a self-centered and selfish person. When she is asked for money for a cup of tea by a poor girl, she invites to her house and treats her well. Mansfield depicted Rosemary ironically as saying that if she behaves as she likes, she will receive retaliation. Mansfield's stories convey the message that all people are equal, and her works offer a chance to contemplate it.

How do JHS students' speaking abilities change and what happens to their conversation when they are paired with those with the same or different levels?

ISHII Nanae

In 2017, the Course of Study was revised, and the word "improvisation" became the focus in the field of speaking. Students are expected to talk in English without preparation, but current speaking activities are done with preparation time. Therefore, I analyzed unrehearsed speaking activities in English classes in junior high school and clarified characteristics of each pair from quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

I set two research questions, the first one is how the students' ability to react changes in one-minute talk, the second one is how the interaction patterns differ in pair activities, depending on the level of the students' abilities. I recorded a speaking activity called "one-minute talk" in junior high school and analyzed the results.

As a result, from a quantitative perspective, it was clarified that the learning outcomes of students' speaking abilities are sometimes decided by topics. When the topic is difficult students struggled to keep talking in English and could not come up with words and phrases, the amount of speaking became less and the length of pause between utterances became longer. In addition, when the levels of speaking abilities of each student in a pair were different, the amount of speaking were also different. From a qualitative perspective, knowledge of useful phrases in English conversation helped students respond to their partner's utterances and keep talking in English, and also broaden and deepen the conversation.

Effects of modified input and interaction on junior high school students' reading comprehension

KOKUBUN Haruka

I chose this theme because I was interested in learning how to effectively teach reading comprehension, which is often discussed in teaching practice, for students. I investigated the interactions between teachers and students in reading comprehension classes, and specifically what kind of modified input is effective for students. In two junior high school classes, the control class had a class that included comprehensible input, and the other class had a class that included modified input and interaction. Based on the percentage of correct answers to questions related to the text and the post-class questionnaire, it was found that group activities and emphasis when the teacher speaks were effective.

Causes of Katakana Pronunciation

KONDO Seima

In this study, I would like to know the causes of katakana pronunciation. I have met a lot of people who use katakana pronunciation, including me. The purpose of this study is to know the main causes of katakana pronunciation and how we can correct it.

In this study, a spelling test and a recording test were designed and examined for a relationship between both results. It seems to show that if the results of the spelling test are better, the recording test is better.

From this study, I suggest that affective factors related to acquiring English pronunciation. It seems possible to split people into two types based on the results of recording test. The first type is the people who try to speak English fluently. The second type is the people who gave up on speaking English fluently. I predict that the latter types of people probably have a negative image of speaking English.

In my opinion, the main causes of the katakana pronunciation are phonemes that the Japanese language does not have and affective factors. The effective way of correcting this is to give students a positive image of their pronunciation. English teachers have an important role in creating a good atmosphere in English class.

Forms and Meanings of Relative Clauses in English

KUDO Moeka

In university English class, students including me, felt difficulty understanding relative clauses, so I thought that I should understand the forms and meanings of relative clauses, in particular I was interested in the “gap” of relative clauses. In this thesis, I aim to explain elements in sentences with relative clauses, to clarify links between those elements, and to clarify forms and meanings of relative clauses focusing on the gaps in the relative clauses. Firstly, I explain four types of pronouns with particular focus on relative pronouns. Important elements of a sentence with a relative clause are an antecedent, a relative pronoun, and a gap. The choice of relative pronoun depends on the meaning of antecedent, namely an anaphoric

link. A relative clause functions as a modifier, and always has a missing word, namely a gap. The relative pronoun and gap are a wh-gap link. Therefore, a relative clause always has a gap, and understanding the gap is connected to understanding relative clauses.

The Relationship Between Content and Language Integrated Learning and Students' Motivation in Junior High School English Class

MURAKAMI Yuki

“Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)” is a teaching method that combines content and language in class. Furthermore, motivation in class is essential to foster understanding of contents. In this research, the relationship between CLIL and student’s motivation in junior high school was explored. This research conducted two types of classes: a CLIL class and a textbook-based class. To compare the two classes, a questionnaire and reflection were written by the students. Surveys were administered to 44 second-grade students in a junior high school in the south of Akita prefecture. The questionnaire and reflection the students answered, were analyzed using three methods: multiple regression analysis, neighborhood component analysis, and extraction of words. By employing these analyses, and extraction of words, some findings were revealed from these results. Firstly, students were motivated to interact and consider content in the CLIL class. Secondly, in this research, the CLIL class affected students’ motivation. On the other hand, the textbook-based class in this research had little relationship with the students’ motivation. Thirdly, the students who participated in the CLIL class wrote in their reflections about their satisfaction with and accomplishment in the CLIL class. Therefore, these results suggest the significance of CLIL classes to students’ motivation.

The Relationship between Sensory-processing Sensitivity and a Sense of Self-efficacy: A Survey of Students and Self-esteem-enhancing Measures in School life From the Perspective of HSP

ONO Haruka

In this study, I focus on the unique temperament of highly sensitive persons (HSPs), who are people susceptible to strong influence from their surroundings, and often triggered by personality traits or traumas from childhood. The purpose of study is to consider trends in psychology and pedagogy to investigate if there are actions and or factors that could help to improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy in order to create a positive school environment.

In addition, this research is useful to for carrying out educational methods that make use of children’s characteristics in a school environment where children with various characteristics exist.

Regarding the method of research, I mainly conducted questionnaire surveys of subjects and conducted statistical analyses on their responses. Subjects were divided into four groups based on two factors: HSP or Non-HSP and high or low Self-esteem on the Emotion Scale. After that, I conducted a co-operation network analysis with the above four groups as external variables, and examined the characteristics of each

group's educational response based on their answers to the questions about teacher's good words, bad behaviors, and evaluations about school life.

As a result, characteristics of each of the four groups were identified, and I found characteristics differed depending on high and low scores on the self-esteem emotional scale. In addition, I was able to consider the school environment from the point of view of HSPs based on the temperamental characteristics of being sensitive and delicate.

Understanding Relationships between Forms and Meanings:

From a Study of Active and Passive Clauses

OTANI Naoko

In this thesis, I studied the relationships between forms and meanings from the pairs of active and passive clauses. The reason why I chose this topic is that I was interested in Jackendoff's (2012) puzzling question. My aim was to clarify relationships between arrangements of semantic roles and sentence meanings, by focusing on active and passive clauses. In order to research this, I read some previous studies, Wittgenstein's (1953) and Jackendoff's (2012) puzzling questions. Wittgenstein's (1953) puzzling question is that even if dictionary definitions are enriched, **Real Meaning** of the pronoun "this" is hard to capture. Jackendoff's (2012) puzzling question is that the **Real Meaning** of sentences are also difficult to capture. Following these materials, I started this study. My research question is what makes the positions of semantic roles different in active and passive clauses. The results of the research question are "verb form" and "positions of semantic roles". By changing the form of verb, the positions of semantic roles change without changing the meaning of active and passive clauses. Therefore, "verb form" and "positions of semantic roles" are related to the meanings of the pairs of active and passive clauses.

What does an English teacher do to improve students' speaking skills?:

From the perspectives of class design and teacher's utterances

SATO Ami

The purpose of this study is to identify what kind of lesson designs and teacher's utterances are used in current English education, and to identify effective lesson designs and utterances to improve students' interaction skills, through an interview to find the teacher's intentions. To analyze this, I set the following two research questions; (1) How is the lesson design to improve students' English skills and what is the teacher's intention in adopting the lesson design? and (2) What are the teacher's utterances used during the English classes, and what is the intention behind making the utterances? In addition, I analyzed the lesson design based on Ikeno (2017) focusing on language use by the teacher and students. I also analyzed video recordings of lessons and classified the teacher's utterances based on Nomura (2017) and Takanashi (2004). The effective lesson design to improve students' speaking skills is based on self-determination theory. The activities of skimming and scanning textbook, mini-debate, and 1-minute speech can be effective for

motivating students to speak English. From the results of the analysis of ratios of teacher's utterances and the interview, I found that content-based utterances and open questions occupied half of the teacher's utterances. By interviewing the participant, I learned that content-based utterances and open questions are effective for encouraging students to express their opinions and consider the contents of textbook as their own.

Judy as a "new" Woman: American Women's Education in *Daddy-long-Legs*

TAKAHASHI Ayano

Consultations on international higher education quality assurance are underway. Educational opportunities are open to all, and scholarships, financial aid, and free college education are being discussed. However, it was very hard for those who were not wealthy to get the opportunity for an education without financial resources. Jean Webster's novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* illustrates the difficulties faced by non-wealthy people to attend college without financial resources. I focus on the relationship between education, economy, and gender differences in this work. Few studies have examined how they are simultaneously related to each other.

In Chapter 1, I consider the perspective of "how the economic situation changes educational opportunities and gender differences". *Daddy-Long-Legs* provided economic support to orphaned boys. In this case, the story starts from his financial support for Judy, the female protagonist. I examine my perspective of the view on American education in 19th and 20th century and the actions of the person called Daddy-Long-Legs.

In Chapter 2, in relation to "Education, Economy, and Gender," we test the hypothesis that there may also be conditions where the economic circumstances change educational opportunities and gender differences. I discuss what we can expect when Judy meets these conditions, given that she is a person of outstanding ability and demonstrates it.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the possibility that a "new" image of women might be expected of Judy because she overcame various difficulties. I do not mean the "new" women with short hair and smoking that were common at the time, rather a meaning of "new" based on the descriptions in the novel.

War in "The Birds": A Study of Du Maurier and Hitchcock

TAKAHASHI Yuto

I would like to discuss the issue of war lurking in the last scenes of the short story "The Birds" and the movie *The Birds*, concentrating on the description of the birds and the actions of the main characters. The wars in this case are the Second World War and the Cold War, respectively. The discussions of the connection between each work and war have been done by many researchers. However, they often treated each work as different things. In addition, we do not have any studies that clear up and reconsider two works in detail. I would like to consider the issue of each specific war while rethinking the historical context

with a focus on the last scenes of each work. I focus on the descriptions of the birds in Chapter 1 and the actions of the main characters in Chapter 2. I argue that the air raids in the Second World War and the nuclear threat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War have a big impact on the last scenes of each work based on an analysis of each chapter. And I also find the new interpretation of the action of Cathy, who is one of the main characters in the movie, by reconsidering the historical contexts. Therefore, the perspective of war is an important element in common between each work. I consider the issue of war lurking in the last scenes of the short story and the movie as one of the important issues that have to be considered.

Pursuing Relevance and Multiplication Effects in Semantic Investigations

WATANABE Yuki

In an attempt to show the importance of Relevance Theory and multiplication effects, in this thesis, I conduct semantic investigations on lexical meaning and sentence meaning. Starting from the introduction of the principle of relevance and multiplication effects, I first attempt to show how Jackendoff (2012) developed Fregean compositionality into his Enriched compositionality, based on his data. Second, I try to argue that we still have to develop Jackendoff's (2012) compositionality based on Lyons's (1981). I then attempt to return to Relevance Theory by focusing on the results of the first and second semantic research. In conclusion, these semantic investigations show: (i) Sentence meaning is determined by lexical meanings in a bottom-up manner (cf. Fregean compositionality); (ii) Contexts decide sentence meaning (cf. Jackendoff 2012); (iii) Lexical meaning could be determined by sentence meaning in a top-down manner (cf. Lyons 1981). Importantly, I argue that Jackendoff (2012) does not clarify in his compositionality that lexical meanings determine sentence meaning. Relevance becomes a hint to find the result of the semantic investigations above. Pursuing relevance and multiplication effects is significant not only in my semantic investigations but also in our life.