Justifying pedagogically DVDs in the EFL communicative language classroom: A Japanese university context

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Abstract

Since university classrooms in Japan are more often that not equipped with DVD playing facilities, their use is becoming more widespread. As DVDs are not produced with language education in mind, they are considered *authentic* material. However, using this type of *realia* prompts questions regarding a DVD's pedagocial merit for language learning and acquisition, plus in - class teaching methodologies. Hence, the pedagogical links that can be made between DVDs and classroom teaching will be explored. This will be done under the auspices that *internationalisation* requisites higher levels of English fluency in terms of communication from Japanese graduates. The theory of *communicative competence* and how it can be related to genre, intertextuality and interdiscursity will provide the basis for this article's suggestions for recommended communicative English coursework applications.

Key words:

DVDs; *authentic*; pedagogy; language learning and acquisition; *communicative competence*; intertextuality; interdiscursity; coursework applications

1．Introduction

Are Japanese English language learners' communicative skills being enhanced by DVDs in EFL university classrooms? How? And can this be supported by educational

pedagogy? After all, it is, rather than a static text or CD, a medium which can provide a unique dynamic to a communicative lesson. Enveloping numerous contexts, DVDs offer countless opportunities for a teacher to exploit its rich sequences of live communicative situations. However, the key to making the lesson educational rests with the ability of a teacher to generate pedagogically sound activities. This essay aims to address how this can be done in the following ways. First and foremost, to provide justification for DVD use, it is considered essential to look at the broader theories pertaining to second language acquisition, which include implicit and explicit learning. Then, the nature of the contemporary communicative classroom is able to be highlighted. Next, the general aims of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) Action Plan are believed relevant, and will be brought to the fore by pointing out its plans for the future of English language education in Japan. Thirdly, it should be noted that the communicative context and its place in the classroom is central to this paper's argument. Furthermore, it is considered to support genre approaches which advocate intertextuality and interdiscursity. This discussion will be embellished and followed by an examination of *communicative competence* and some examples of practical applications for the classroom. Moreover, it is considered valuable to include an opinion survey that was administered to students, which represents their personal attitudes to in - class DVD use.

2．Literature review

2.1　Second language acquisition: two stances

Gass and Selinker (2001, pp. 198-206) discuss Krashen's assumption that second language learners have, in order to develop second language knowledge, two independent means to do so. 1) Acquisition, or "picking up" the language' and, 2) learned, a level of consciousness. Additionally, these researchers draw attention to some inadequacies for assuming this "polarised" stance, putting forward an alternative description of language knowledge. For their argument, language is situated on a

continuum which ranges from implicit learning to explicit learning. Also, in their book they cite N. Ellis' (1994, p.1) definitions, which are as follows: implicit learning is "the acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations". Explicit learning, however, is "a more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypothesis in a search for structure" (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 206). Richards (1999) provides definitions for these terms as they apply to the classroom context, that is, instruction by the teacher. Explicit instruction occurs in cases when "a target form may be presented formally together with information about how it is used, followed by practice." Whereas implicit instruction often happens as "students' attention may be drawn to a target form and they may have to induce the rule or system underlying its use (p.158)."

2.2 The implicit verses explicit debate

The debate between "language" and acquisition, and explicit and implicit learning is not new. In general, two main positions are found to exist in the literature which have been summarised by Lommel et al. (2006). These are, interface and non - interface. Interface advocates that implicit knowledge, which is less conscious for a learner than explicit, is attributed to the SLA function of automaticity (McLaughlin, 1978 as cited in Lommel et al, 2006; Gass & Selinker, 2001, p.209). Automaticity is "the degree of routinised control that one has over their linguistic knowledge" (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 451). Non - interface on the other hand, stems from Krashen's research (1981, 1985) that proposes explicit knowledge is learnt in formal settings but language is acquired in more naturalistic settings. This type of implicit knowledge is seen by some as "true language knowledge" (Lommel et al., 2006). From this point of view, the learned and acquired systems exist separately. As a result, the influence of explicit learning is limited in terms of its impact on competence. However, to endorse either stance is not the purpose of the article. Instead, it is viewed necessary to present

an unbiased account of what is often argued in the literature before examples of the more practical applications that can be incorporated into the communicative English language classroom are given.

3．The classroom context

For context, Batstone (2002), as cited in Collentine and Freed (2004), states there are essentially two types that language learners are confronted by: learning and communicative. In short, the learning context aims to fashion lesson input and learners' subsequent output in a manner that improves their linguistic ability (Collentine & Freed, 2004). For the communicative context, however, the student focuses less on their linguistic development and more on using their L2 as a tool to exchange information and participate in functions that are social and hence communicative. It is said a true communicative environment is not found in the EFL environment, rather the ESL, such as study abroad programs. Thus, it is argued by this essay that the communicative EFL teacher, on behalf of the students, should provide ample exposure to real - time English communicative language.

4．MEXT guidelines: Action Plan

In March 2003, MEXT established an Action Plan to cultivate "Japanese with English Language Abilities". This was done in light of the need for Japanese to recognise the place of English in globalisation. In the preamble of the Action Plan, it recognises the pivotal role that English plays to link Japanese people with not only native English speakers, but also those who have a different mother tongue and use English in the international arena. Moreover, it acknowledges that often in international situations the opinion of the Japanese is at times not conveyed or evaluated correctly due to insufficiencies of their communicative English language ability. Thus, the Action Plan was established, implemented in 2003, and will be reassessed in 2008. It is divided into two major sections. Section I: Goals to cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"

and Section II: "Action to improve English education." Both are further divided into subcategories. Particularly relevant to this article is Section II, which lists seven recommended areas of improvement and of which number 1: "Improvement of English classes", is focussed on in this paper. A extract from this part of the Action Plan is found below:

"In order to be able to "make use of English", it is necessary not only to have a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use English for the purpose of actual communication. Thus, in English classes, instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher - centred classes are not recommended...

To carry out such instruction effectively, it is important for teachers to establish many situations where students can communicate with each other in English and routinely to conduct classes principally in English. Through such opportunities, learners can experience the fulfilment of expressing themselves and understanding others, and feel the joy of learning English. Furthermore, it is also important to devise creative teaching methods so that learners can become interested in the importance and necessity of acquiring English, which can broaden the student's world and possibilities." MEXT Action Plan (2003)

Pertaining to the above quote, it is believed it bears most relevance to this article in three main ways. The first, due to its references to the movement away from an absolute grammar focus of lessons, to enhancing English communicative opportunities. Secondly, the Action Plan calls for teachers to facilitate lessons in which students can enjoy the English language. Third, and likely of most significance to this paper, is that these quotes state creative teaching methods can promote awareness of the importance of English language acquisition, simultaneously expanding a student's international outlook.

5．DVDs in the classroom in Japan

5.1　The argument for the use of DVDs in the classroom

This article proposes that English language teachers are able to introduce an innovative and stimulating language teaching pedagogy into the classroom via DVDs. It also suggests that the DVD genre introduces more socio - linguistics aspects into the class. One could even go so far as to support King (2002), who believes that for English communication lessons, the DVD is an invaluable resource. Another researcher in this field, Tschirner (2001), claims that a DVD enables viewers to "read" communicative situations as if they were reading a more traditional form of text. In other words, manipulations, such as the replaying of scenes or slowing down of scenes, could be likened to rereading a passage in the quest for a deeper understanding, or looking for more specific details (scanning). Moreover, King (2002) believes that the "real - life" contexts used in DVDs expose students to a wide range of accents, including a particular linguistic group's idiosyncrasies, for instance, dialects. Several researchers (Braddock, 1996; Stempleski, 2000; Wood (1995), cited by King (2002)), believe the realism of movies to provide "a wealth of contextualised linguistic and paralinguistic terms and expressions, authentic cross - cultural information, classroom listening comprehension and fluency practice" (p. 510). Thus, for all intents and purposes, playing a DVD in class places students in a situated learning environment. In line with this, Tschirner (2001) considers that a teacher should facilitate a method of learning which is application oriented and also creates "authentic" learning environments. In short, "knowledge and skills are acquired in the same way they are expected to be used".

5.2　*Authenticity* and DVD use in the classroom

It is generally claimed by prominent researchers such as Nunan (1998) and Lee (1995), as cited in Tatsuki (2006), that *authenticity*, taken in a general sense, refers to the extent which material used in the classroom reflects the language of the target

language use situation (TLU) (McNamara, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 1996) (see Table 1). Further, these researchers state *authentic* materials are those which have not been written specifically for the language classroom. Hence, *authentic* materials such as DVDs are considered "real - life" examples. According to Tatsuki (2006), when using *authentic* materials in class, the notion of the real world existing outside the classroom is challenged. In other words, it can be brought into the classroom. As this researcher points out, importing *realia* into the classroom is a feature of (CLT) communicative language teaching. *Realia* is tangible, such as *authentic* texts, music CDs, objects, etcetera. With classroom technology continuing to improve, the use of film in DVD format within institutional English language lessons is becoming more widespread. According to Tatsuki (2006), DVD scenes can be of great benefit for the teacher and students since they model "real - life" conversations.

Authenticity	of text used as input data for learners
	of the learners' own interpretation of such texts
	of the tasks conducive to language learning
	of the actual social situation of the language classroom

Table 1. Facets of *authenticity* relevant for classroom materials
Source: Adapted from Breen, M. (1985). *Authenticity* in the language classroom. Applied Linguistics, 8, 60-70. As cited in Tatsuki (2006).

Pertaining to Tatsuki's (2006) authenticity and pragmatic research, it showed a multitude of similarities when comparing films to "real - life" in terms of naturally occurring data. In saying that, this research also demonstrated some differences, and therefore raises the issue of whether or not these are significant enough to undermine the pedagogical value of this teaching medium. One example follows: for natural speech there are the "big 5 adjectives" - good, nice, beautiful, great and pretty - which represent two thirds of all adjective use in American English. Yet in the films analysed

for this researcher's project, the number of times that the "big 5 adjectives" were used, consistently accounted for only one third. Pedagogically, the researcher claimed this to be no different from what is already common practice in textbooks. Thus, if the lesson was on adjective use, since the film provides a richer source of exposure to contextualised adjectives, the researcher advocates that it is an entirely credible option to use DVDs over textbooks (Tatsuki, 2006). Nonetheless, it is not the aim of this essay to critique the linguistic value of using DVDs in class, rather how the DVD medium can be used to teach aspects of communicative language. This encourages movement away from a strict adherence to discrete grammatical teaching practices, and refocusing by mobilising and linking DVD usage with other methodologies such as: genre approaches, intertextuality and interdiscursity, and *communicative competence*. These will be readdressed in more depth in the following sections of this article.

6．Genre approaches, and DVD use

This paper supports Bronia's (2005) stance that genre - based pedagogy "helps learners realise how schematic structure and linguistic features are related to social context and purpose" (p. 68.). From this quote, to use a DVD as a stand alone educational language tool in the classroom would not be sufficient. More exactly, it is a teacher's responsibility to embellish the DVDs worth for in - class educational material. Hence, it is proposed that if the teacher plays DVDs with CLT goals in mind, then the pedagogical foundation which can support this in the EFL classroom context is genre. Theoretically speaking, genre approaches could be said to be similar to product approaches which are not new to (English) language teaching. Product approaches adhere to "linguistic knowledge, with attention on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices" (Badger, et. al, 2000, p. 153). For instance, a classroom application of the product approach could be as follows: writing a description of a Hollywood actor who appears in a scene that students watch from a DVD. This description would follow the product writing steps of: familiarization, controlled

writing, guided writing, and free writing (Badger, et. al, 2000). The genre approach is considered an extension of the product approach, yet differs because of its emphasis on the social context in which the genre is produced. An example which builds on the product approach given could be a writing assignment entitled, "How to get a positive attitude" for the advice column of an international best - selling girls' magazine, based on the Hollywood star's observable character traits featured in the DVD. That is, the same conventions for writing descriptions apply but this time it is inserted into a "real - world" genre.

6.1   Genre, DVDs and language production

The genre approach classifies a group of communicative events that share a conducive set of similar, communicative purposes (Badger et. al, 2000). Before continuing, it is important to mention a criticism of this approach. This becomes prominent with a particular genre's inextricableness from the situation. As a result, digression can occur too far from language and text (underscored by instructional and disciplinary context construction) (Kamler, 1995 as cited in Badger et. al, 2000). However, this point of view is not necessarily supported by Muncie (2002), who believes that it is actually the grammatical peculiarities of a genre's text which is under study. Nevertheless, ultimately, genre approaches support output oriented learning (output processing), that is, productive competence. The role of the DVD, as Tschiner (2001) states, is to provide the context and stimulate reason to engage in communication. This can be done due to the fact that they are an excellent model which frames exactingly how to deal with the situation at hand, socio - linguistically. Furthermore, output processing differs from receptive ability where functions are mapped to forms, or form first, meaning second methodologies. Rather, production requires that forms are mapped to communicative functions (Tschnier, 2001). Hence, for a communicative English language classroom, the link is clear.

6.1.1　Exploiting intertextuality and interdiscursity

Intertextuality and interdiscursity stem from the educational pedagogy of genre (Bronia, 2005). The educational merit and relevance of genre has already been established by this paper. How then can DVDs be used for inspiring intertextuality and interdiscursity applications? Intertextuality prompts us to look for connections between contextualised situations, different genres, and discourse. By presenting this in a classroom situation, the notions of language metafunctions can be addressed (Bronia, 2005). For instance, the Ocean's 11 DVD has a scene where Trump Tower (a real Las Vegas Casino) is visible. The owner of Trump Tower, Donald Trump, is a prominent American business tycoon. Thus, a link to the "real - world" can be made, and any number of intertextual activities designed, such as internet research to find out more about Donald Trump and his business interests. Interdiscursity, could include activities like reporting these findings in presentation style or examining the discourse required to write a pretend email to him. It can therefore be seen that a DVD is able to be utilised as a platform from which a plethora of other language activities can be generated.

7．Theoretical developments

7.1　Key terms

Returning to the contention of the two stances in the literature review regarding language acquisition, a relevant point which arose comes from the second perspective. According to Lommel et al. (2006), who cite Krashen's (1999) view, explicit learning has only a small impact on competence. Since competence, in a language sense, is quite a broad umbrella term, this article does not attempt to prove or disprove this statement. Instead it will endeavour to explain and explore competence and its relevance in the communicative English language classroom with the primary choice of authentic material being DVDs. Expansion on the term "competence" will nominally address the larger theory of *communicative competence*, which is relatively new to the research

field of CLT from where it originates. Within the literature, there are many definitions for this, since Sandra Sauvignon's publications are somewhat prolific, her definition of the term is cited. "CLT puts the focus on the learner. Learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence. This implies global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features." (Savignon, 1991, p. 266). In short, this definition signifies the digression from grammar - based instruction in classrooms to a teaching methodology which adopts communicative tasks. As a result, the focus is often on meaning, rather than the traditional focus on form (Nunan, 1989 & Skehan, 1996, as cited in Richards (1999)). Table 2 shows a more extensive breakdown and comparison of grammar focused activities (traditional language methodology) verses task - focused activities (CLT methodology).

Grammar-focussed activities (traditional language methodology):	Task-focussed activities (CLT methodology):
*reflect typical classroom use of language	*reflect natural language use
*focus on the formulation of correct examples of the language	*call on implicit knowledge
*produce language for display (as evidence of learning)	*elicit a vernacular speech style
*call on explicit knowledge	*reflect automatic performance
*elicit a careful (monitored) speech style	*require the use of improvising, paraphrasing, repair and organisation
*reflect controlled performance	*require the use of improvising, paraphrasing, repair and reorganisation
*practise language out of context	*produce language that is not always predictable
*practise small samples of language	*allow students to select the language they use
*do not require authentic communication	*require real communication

Table 2. Outline of the differences between grammar focused activities and communicative task work in the classroom. Source: Brumfit (1979); Ellis (1994); Skehan (1996) as cited in Richards (1999).

7.2 Contemporary methodologies

It is not the purpose of this essay to criticise one methodology in support of the other. In its place, this paper promulgates a hybrid which facilitates both teaching methodologies. Despite this, to incorporate DVDs into the classroom, practically, task - based activities are advocated. This gives rise to trace the historical background of where *communicative competence* emanated from. Richards and Renandya (2002) have compiled, Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice, which addresses CLT, a particular emphasis of language teaching methodology today. They have summarised this contemporary approach of language teaching as having syllabus design and methodology which predominantly focuses on genuine and meaningful communication. For the main part, yet not exhaustively, these approaches include: 1) *CLT*: The core assumption that teaching materials and classroom activities focus on communication; 2) *Task - based Language Teaching*: In - class, to use tasks facilitative of meaningful communication and interaction, for the larger methodology of task based instruction - derivative of SLA principles; and 3) *Content - based instruction*: A key for second language learning is to incorporate real - world content, and how information is understood and communicated through language (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p.93).

8. Communicative competence

8.1 Context and the beginnings of *communicative competence*

The notion of competence is said to have originated in 1965 when Chompsky proposed the term, *linguistic competence* which was claimed to not exist with contexts of use due to its innate, mental and structural systems (Hall, 1998). Therefore, this differs significantly from Hymes' (1971) *communicative competence*. A language theory, which had extensively much larger scope as it took into account language ability in context (Hall, 1998). Fundamentally, Hymes considered language to be a social behaviour (Sauvignon, 1991). That is, language was more than grammatical rules,

requiring knowledge also of culturally specific rules, which are believed to be highly related to those features demanded by a communicative context (McNamara, 2000, p. 16). The significance of this theory was to exert influence on both the teaching and testing worlds. Many studies attempted to empirically prove this claim, and have been successful in doing so (Hall, 1998, p.19; McNamara, 2000, p.16).

8.2   *Communicative competence* defined

According to Celce Murcia et al. (1995), who built on Hymes' work, *communicative competence* attempts to provide a model which encompasses the communicative skills and which should be addressed in the classroom if one were to implement CLT methodology. Because of this, it represents a marked digression from educating via the traditional classifications of receptive or passive skills - reading and listening, and productive or active skills of speaking and writing (Sauvignon, 1991). Although, to actually define *communicative competence* is no easy task, some consensus has been achieved by the following researchers: Goodwin (1990), Heath (1983), Philips (1983), Ochs (1988) and Schiefflin (1990), as cited in Hall (1990). Collectively, they consider that it is "inherently linked to the cultural, institutional and historical settings of our social worlds" (p.19). More succinctly, Pettis (1997) favours Tedick and Walker's (1994) definition, "the ability to communicate and understand messages across linguistic boundaries" (p. 394). Yet, to really unpack what *communicative competence* entails, one must further examine the five interrelated "sub" competencies that it has been broken into. These are: *discourse competency*, *linguistic competency, actional competency, socio - cultural competency* and strategic competency.

8.2.1   The five interrelated competencies of *communicative competence*

The five interrelated competencies of *communicative competence* are defined by Celce Murcia et al. (1995) in the following manner. *Discourse competence*: "the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, sentences and utterances to achieve

a unified spoken or written text (p.13)". *Linguistic competence*: "comprises the basic elements of communication: the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections and the lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems needed to realise communication as speech or writing (pp. 16-17)". *Actional competence*: "conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech act sets) (p.17)". *Sociocultural competence*: "the speaker's knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use (p.23)". *Strategic competence*: "strategies relevant to language learning, processing and production ... functions from the perspectives of psycholinguistic, interactional and communication continuity/maintenance (p. 26)".

8.2.2. *Communicative competence*: diagram

In terms of classroom applications, how can the five competencies be addressed? It may go without saying, but each sub - competency does not operate in isolation (see Figure 1). For curriculum design and evaluation, Canale & Swain, in 1980, first developed a theoretical framework to represent *communicative competence*, which was in later decades built on by Bachman & Palmer (1990), and further enhanced by Celce - Murcia, Zoltan & Thurrel (1995), cited in Hall (1998). So far, it is the most comprehensive account. This framework is depicted by a triangle that encloses a circle, which is surrounded by another circle. The points of the triangle are *sociocultural* (context), *linguistic* (lexio - grammatical building blocks) and *actional* (organising skills of communicative intent) *competencies*, which are tied together by *discourse competence* (written or spoken). In short, the former three competencies shape *discourse* and vice versa. The larger circle, *strategic competence*, conceptualises a speaker's competence in being able to negotiate messages, resolve problems, and

use compensationary techniques (Hall, 1998). It could be surmised that this diagram effectively demonstrates the extent of the interdependency of the "sub" competencies in comprising the larger product of *communicative competence*.
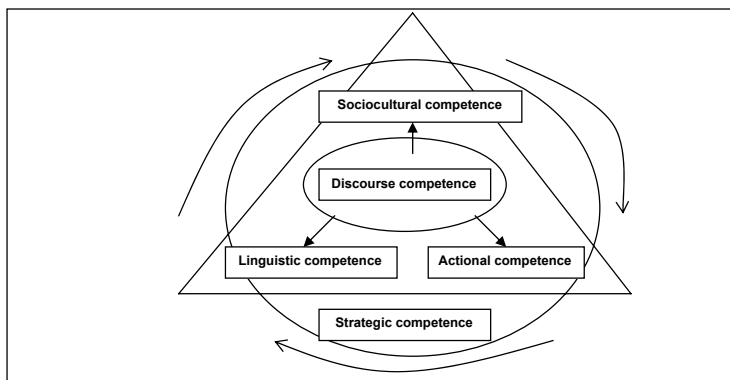

Figure 1. Communicative Competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) cited in Hall (1998)

9．The DVD as a teaching tool

Up until now this paper has put forward a number of theoretical arguments supporting the use of DVDs to teach language in the classroom. From this point on, theory will underscore some broader practical applications for in - class DVD use, especially regarding activity ideas. Firstly, it is deemed necessary to reiterate what sets a DVD apart from a written passage or an audio recording. In any one particular sequence or scene of a DVD, it involves not only words (more salient if subtitles are used), but also visual elements. This provides language learners with essential behavioural evidence, details on character traits of the English language speakers, and idiosyncrasies of the particular context (Stempleski, 1994). One sequence therefore may be enough, and it is not necessary to watch the whole DVD, depending more so on one's particular English communicative language focus, student level, or course structure (King, 2002). DVD usage in the classroom is for the most part, not intended for entertainment

purposes, although students can enjoy it. Hence, in order to teach communicative aspects of the English language, even one scene, if appropriately selected, can provide for a multitude of in - class activities. In saying this, pedagogical underpinnings need to be established to provide the reasoning for the activities that are selected for students to complete in the communicative English language classroom.

Stepleski (1994) puts forward, that in order to encourage active DVD viewing and to enhance learners' comprehension in lessons: 1) previewing, 2) viewing and 3) postviewing activities should become the norm. Previewing could include schema activating exercises such as brainstorming for background knowledge and to draw on known vocabulary. For the viewing stage, students may have to look for certain answers to questions that the teacher asks prior to watching a scene from a DVD, for example, "Where is this scene taking place?"   After observing the selected scene, postviewing might include any number of activities, either to answer a worksheet individually, or complete it together in pairs or as group work. This allows them time to collect and process their thoughts on what they have just viewed.

10．Research questions

1. Are Japanese English language learners' communicative skills enhanced by using DVDs in EFL university classrooms?
2. How can DVDs be effectively utilised?
3. And can this be supported by educational pedagogy?

To answer these research questions empirically is unfortunately out of the scope of this paper, however, should not be ruled out for future research. Research question one has been addressed by presenting, initially, literature which outlines the debate surrounding the nature of language acquisition. Somewhat conclusively, other researchers, as discussed throughout this paper have found empirically positive effects for DVD use

in the classroom. In order to answer research questions two and three, it is necessary to look at them in tandem. This can be done systematically by first, for the case of context, foregrounding the communicative aspect, rather than the language. Then, genre approaches which support the notions of intertextuality and interdiscursity have been promulgated as an effective framework for in - class activities to support this. For this paper, it is *communicative competence* that is believed to reinforce the communicative dynamism. Mobilising it, generates CLT activities in Japanese English language classes based on DVDs.

11．Practical classroom applications:
a *communicative competence* DVD hybrid

11.1　Grammatical competence

An example of a grammatical exercise that could be applied in the communicative English language classroom in Japan is as follows. The DVD chosen is Mr and Mrs Smith, and the scene is the opening interview scene, where the husband and wife are being interviewed. In this 4 minute sequence, the use of 5 adverbs is salient. Therefore, in the first viewing, students could be asked to write down the adverbs as they hear them. Then, in the next viewing, write down the word that the adverb affects. This would provide the basis for another activity where students must use the adverbs that they have written down in their own sentences.

Genre, intertextuality and inter discursity: The lead roles in Mr & Mrs Smith are played by iconic Hollywood movie stars know worldwide. Students could be required to imagine that they are a reporter for an international magazine based in Tokyo when a famous Hollywood actor (English speaker) is coming to town. For this international magazine, it is the students' job, due to their English ability, to compose interviews as if they were to actually interview the celebrity in "real - life". Further extension, and for students to primarily answer their own celebrity interview questions, could be to

encourage them to look up an international multi - language website such as Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) to find out some background information on this person. Then, print out the English version of the web page and bring it into class for discussion. It might be an idea to also write down the interview and perform it with a partner, in class, for speaking assessment.

11.2   Discourse competence

An example of a discourse exercise that could be applied in the communicative English language classroom in Japan is as follows. The DVD chosen is Legally Blonde, and the scene selected is the opening sequence of the film itself. This shows a day, as it happens, in the life of Elle, the main protagonist of the film. A jumbled schedule of Elle's daily activities, featuring aspects of discourse, such as temporal deixis (for example: now, then, before, after), yet not in the correct order compiled by the teacher could lead to an activity to put her daily movements back into the correct order, as per the DVD. That is, writing them down and linking them with temporal deixis.

Genre, intertextuality and interdiscursity: An application may be a diary entry, where students are required to put themselves in Elle's shoes. Or for a more technically hued activity, students could be expected to write a class diary blog on their own daily activities or a member of their family etcetera, on line. These activities can be designed to be fully assessable.

11.3   Socio - cultural competence

An example of a socio - cultural exercise that could be applied in the communicative English language classroom in Japan is as follows. The DVD chosen is the Titans. This movie is a modern day Hollywood account of the time when black and white integration began in tertiary institutions in America. As a whole, it focuses on one football teams' efforts to come together, regardless of race. It is envisaged that this

theme could prompt some classroom brainstorming or discussion as interracial mixing is an issue of social equality, peculiar to countries such as America. In the same vein, another social issue which is again strong in certain nations is feminism. The DVD, Herbie, Fully Loaded, takes a slapstick view of this topic, with respect to the main character's (a female) aspirations to become a race car driver. These social - cultural topics could provide basis for good in - class teacher - centred, student - centred, individual, or group orientated thought - provoking discussion and opinion generating conversation, and hence, communication.

Genre, intertextuality and interdiscursity: Some students could be asked to make contact with an American (preferably a teacher or exchange student within the university), and interview them about growing up in a society which is expected to be more tolerant of racial and female equity than others. This could then be followed up by students talking about their interview findings in class, and embellishing these by conducting their own library research on racism or feminism for a group project. A group assignment to round off such a course focus may be a power - point presentation with a seminar - type atmosphere in mind.

11.4 Strategic competence

An example of a strategic exercise that could be applied in the communicative English language classroom in Japan is as follows. Students may have to analyse a certain scene where there is an issue pertaining to human relationships and communication. For instance, as in the DVD, Life or Something Like It. In this film, two employees are called into their boss' office to discuss some problems regarding their current working arrangement. Due to past history, both employees (one male, one female) do not want to work together on the project that they have been collectively assigned. They use certain linguistic strategies to plead to the boss, in order to get their boss to change his mind and let them work with different people. The female uses a slightly different

method to do this than the male. These male/female communication strategies could be compared. It is then suggested students might be required to identify how the boss makes his final decision.

Genre, intertextuality and interdiscursity: Students could then use the communicative strategies that they have observed and noted from the film and reproduce them in a role play. Using these strategies, yet for different contexts, which are more applicable to their lives. For example, trying to get their shift changed at their part time job at the last minute, or getting an extension on an assignment and giving reasons why it is required. Once students have written a script, performance based assessment is recommended.

11.5   Actional competence

An example of an actional exercise that could be applied in the communicative English language classroom in Japan is as follows. Predicting the next lines of the sequence has proved a fun group activity. One DVD which lends itself particularly to this is Reality Bites. In one sequence a newly graduated female university student drives while smoking. When disposing of her cigarette, flicks it accidentally into the adjacent business man's car – a convertible, with the hood down. The cigarette begins to burn the CD cases on the empty passenger seat, however, since he is on his mobile phone, he does not notice for a while. When he does, he gets a shock and swerves into the car of the girl. They have a car accident. Up until this point the students have been reading the subtitles from the DVD. Here the teacher can pause the DVD and ask groups of students to come up with the ensuing dialogue between the two people involved in the car crash.

Genre, intertextuality and interdiscursity: Students might write a letter to the council, insisting that smoking while driving should be outlawed, trying to convince them that this endangers other motorists. Again this could be submitted for assessment.

12．**Student opinion survey research regarding in - class use of DVDs**

12.1　**The research method**

Towards the end of the academic year in Japan, a questionnaire was administered to seventy - five, second year Komazawa University students (see Appendix). These students were management majors who took English conversation class on Friday, periods three, four, and five. This questionnaire was conducted in the final ten minutes of each of these lessons. On the day of the questionnaire, the number of students in the three classes was relatively even, give or take five or so students. The response method, a 5 - point Likert scale, was explained to the class. Students were told that one tick on one of intervals, per arrowed line, would be sufficient to indicate their opinion for each of the five questions. No questionnaires were invalid. The Likert scale was chosen as the best measurement since it is a summated rating scale that is used to ascertain favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards a particular object of interest (Cooper & Schindler, 2003, p. 253). For this case, DVDs and asking students' opinions and impressions of their in - class use in English communication lessons.

Other important factors regarding the procedure believed important to note, follow. The questions were simplified, and graphical representation supported the response choices in order to alleviate the language burden of the questionnaire being written in English - a smiley face for a "Yes" response and an unhappy face for "No" response. Additionally, throughout the courses' duration (a full academic year), students had been exposed to at least one scene from a different DVD for more than half of their classes. These particular classes were mainly in lessons conducted towards the middle of the year, as the textbook featured more predominantly in initial classes and group work towards the end of semester. Each time the DVD was shown, it was done so only in English, and with English subtitles, which they were encouraged and required to read in order to be able to answer a worksheet or complete an activity. Depending on the post - viewing activity or worksheet, the amount of times that the scene was

played, varied. Usually it was twice, but not just on the odd occasion, once or thrice. King (2002) advocates the appropriateness of playing short sequences, especially since DVDs are divided into chapters like that of a book.

12.2 The results

12.2.1 Student opinion

Overall, the results of the questionnaire demonstrate that students are happy with the DVD medium as an integral part of their English communication lesson. However, these results are not without idiosyncrasies. The more outstanding of which, pertaining to each of the five bar graphs, have been discussed in the following systematic manner. First, a short summary of the bar graph results for the question will be presented. Then, a brief description and analysis of some of the more salient and relevant points will be outlined.
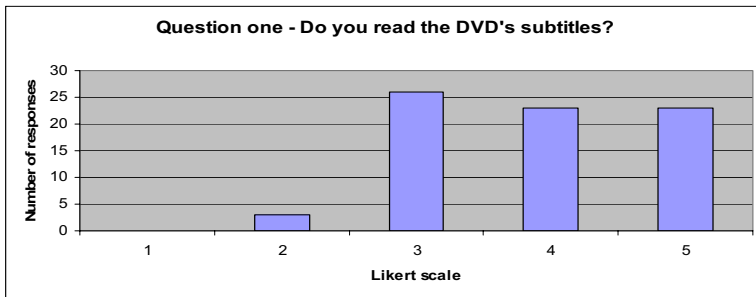

Bar graph 1. n=75
Likert scale codes: 1= No; 3=Sometimes yes/sometimes no; 5=Yes

Bar graph 1.

From this bar graph, most students seem to read the subtitles as requested by the teacher prior to DVD viewing activities (see responses 3, 4 & 5). More notably is response 3, "Sometimes yes/sometimes no", where twenty-six students, the largest number of responses, was recorded. The number of responders in this area may

be considered significant. That is, if the class was a reading class, then the high number for 3 may be of concern. Yet, for responses 4 and 5 – both had twenty-three responders, the lesser amount of students is most probably attributed to activities which did not focus explicitly on reading the DVD subtitles. These figures therefore, lesson the significance of 3. This fits with the communicative classroom, where reading can often be presented implicitly. Due to this, and to sum up, the mixed responses for this question which span across 2, 3, 4, and 5, with the responses spread relatively evenly over 3, 4 and 5, may in fact be sound.
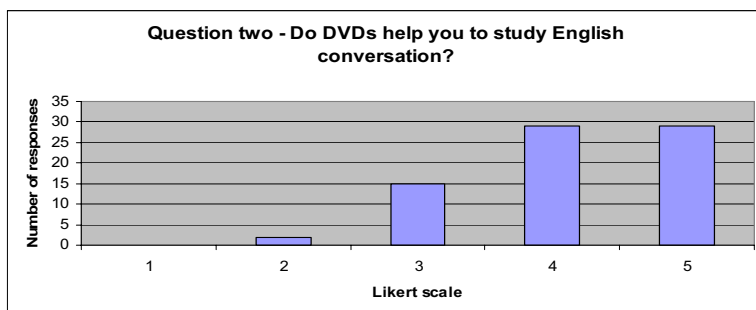

Bar graph 2. n=75
Likert scale codes: 1= No; 3=Sometimes yes/sometimes no; 5=Yes

Bar graph 2.

The overall results for this bar graph show that responses 4 and 5 are noticeably higher bars. That is, for each, both had twenty-nine students select them, which combined, is over three quarters of all respondents. Thus, on the whole, bar graph 2 could be said to reflect clearly a positive attitude towards DVDs, meaning this medium is considered useful by students in the classroom for studying English communication.

Question three - Can you learn about another country's culture from DVDs?
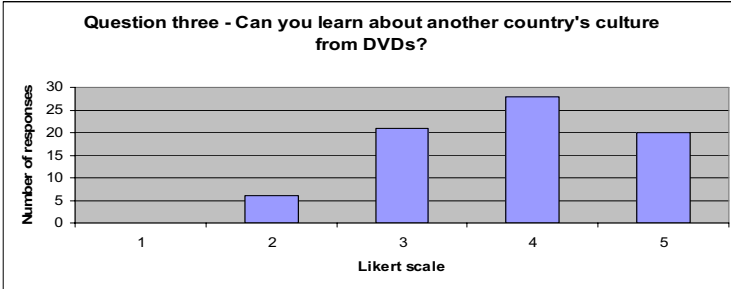
Bar graph 3. n=75
Likert scale codes: 1= No; 3=Sometimes yes/sometimes no; 5=Yes

Bar graph 3.

For this graph, the largest number of responses was found to be for 4, which lies between 3: "Sometimes yes/sometimes no" and 5: "Yes". This might imply that the DVDs chosen to play in class by the teacher had some sort of cultural emphasis. If the course was culture focussed, then a higher bar for 5 would be expected. However, this course did not have an explicit culture focus. For that reason, the highest number of negative responses out of all the graphs for response number 2 (six respondents), and the large number of responses for 4 - in other words a semi - inconclusive result - could be interpreted as a good reflection of the implicitness of culture in this particular course. For future courses that had a more explicit culture focus, to compare those research results with these results might be of interest.

Question four - Do DVDs help you to study/review grammar?
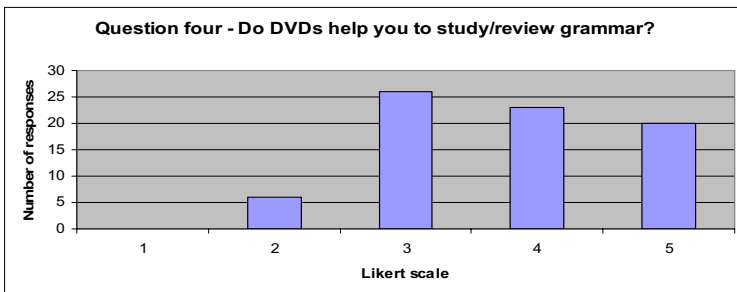
Bar graph 4. n=75
Likert scale codes: 1= No; 3=Sometimes yes/sometimes no; 5=Yes

Bar graph 4.

Again the results of this particular question are dependent on the viewing activities required for completion by the teacher. If these activities explicitly focused on grammar for every lesson when a DVD was watched, then the results for this question would be expected to demonstrate higher bars for responses 4 and 5. Since the majority of the responders answered 3 (twenty-six in total) to "Sometimes yes/sometimes no", it in all likelihood, indicates that grammar was at times addressed explicitly, and at times expressed implicitly. As the DVD related activities were not always grammar - orientated, then these results seem fair.
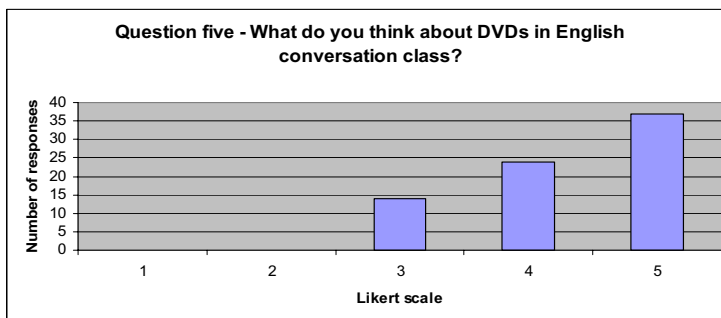
Bar graph 5. n=75
Likert scale codes: 1=Doesn't help my English; 3=Sometimes helps my
English; 5=Really helps my English

Bar graph 5.

Bar graph five clearly displays the majority of responses to have been 5, with thirty-seven, about half of the students, electing to choose what it represents - "[DVD] Really helps my English". Certainly, this is a positive result, interpreted as students enjoy studying English communication from DVDs. In terms of student motivation, this is good feedback. Motivation is typically divided into two clear arguments, those who are motivated instrumentally, that is, they wish to pass a test, and those who are motivated integratively, in other words, they wish to identify with the culture and

target community of the target language (Gardner, 2001). It is believed the later, may be of more relevance here. Motivation is also a key issue according to MEXT's Action Plan. Yet, as the question asked here does not reflect motivation per se, future questionnaires should be more indicative of this.

12.2.2 The effect of Likert scale errors on the primary data

It is vital to mention that in using a rating scale such as a Likert, errors may arise. These are: (1) leniency, (2) central tendency, and (3) halo effect (Cooper & Schindler, 2003, pp. 256-257). Unfortunately, this paper's results could have been affected by all three. However, the most salient is in terms of leniency for which a practical solution is put forward for future research efforts. As for leniency, there is *negative leniency* (hard rater) and *positive leniency* (easy rater). The later is in particular applicable, which can be shown by students' reluctance to say anything negative. That is, select an option below the mid level of 3 on the Likert scale. In other words, to increase the reliability of these questionnaire results, an asymmetrical distribution of results should be aimed for (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Cooper & Schindler (2003) recommend offering only favourable responses, such as: okay, good, great, very good and excellent. Hence, symmetrical distribution is anticipated, which has not been adequately displayed for any of the five questions.

12. Conclusion

This paper's literature review, classroom research and suggestions for practical in - class teaching applications of DVDs - backed by pedagogy, argue that DVDs are a credible choice for communicative English language classes in Japan today. The main supporting reasons for this, as discussed in the article, follow. First and foremost, DVDs provide a rich tool to inject into the communicative classroom's context by modelling conversations, "as they happen", more so than traditional mediums, such as audio CDs and textbooks. Additionally giving the class more breadth and depth, in terms of the

sense of realism that DVDs promote, via encouraging students to observe and analyse English conversations, in light of the situations in which they occur in "real - life" . Thirdly, the authentic communicative displays that DVDs sport provide excellent language models by laying a fundamental base from which teachers and students alike can build from. Furthermore, from these models, if genre approaches are used, then interdiscursity and intertextuality already have their foundations laid. Moreover, if from these classroom activities, further subdivision takes place by addressing the five interrelated categories of *communicative competency* (grammar, discourse, action, socio - linguistic and strategic), it is proposed that communicative methodology can be introduced successfully into the Japanese EFL university communicative classroom. Finally, *communicative competence* has been incorporated and English language knowledge for English communication can be enhanced, if not acquired. Thus, if these pedagogical bases can be persistently attended to by teachers, and continue to consistently underline classroom activities, then the DVD medium as a education tool in the classroom can be highly beneficial in terms of improving communicative English language abilities among Japanese university students.

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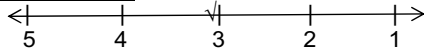
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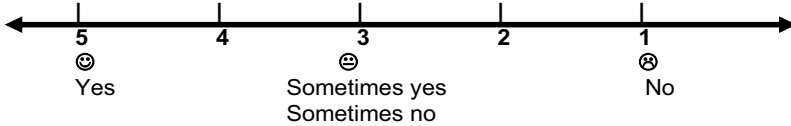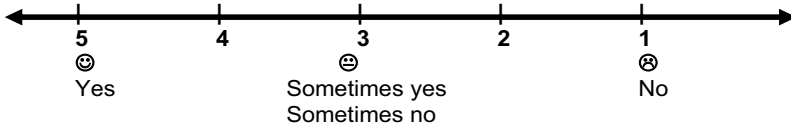
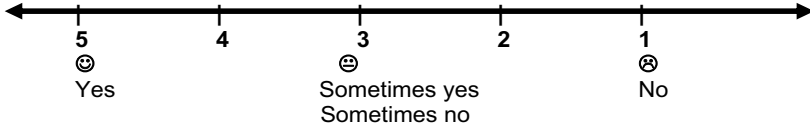Kristie Sage

Appendix

__In-class DVDs: A questionnaire__

Please tick a number:

```
  ⇐|——————|————√|————|————|⇒
   5      4     3     2     1
```

Q1. Do you read the DVD's subtitles?

```
◄——————|——————|——————|——————|——————►
   5       4       3       2       1
   ☺              ☺               ☹
  Yes         Sometimes yes      No
              Sometimes no
```

Q2. Do DVDs help you to study English conversation?

```
◄——————|——————|——————|——————|——————►
   5       4       3       2       1
   ☺              ☺               ☹
  Yes         Sometimes yes      No
              Sometimes no
```

Q3. Can you learn about another country's culture from DVDs?

```
◄——————|——————|——————|——————|——————►
   5       4       3       2       1
   ☺              ☺               ☹
  Yes         Sometimes yes      No
              Sometimes no
```

Q4. Do DVDs help you review/study grammar?

```
◄——————|——————|——————|——————|——————►
   5       4       3       2       1
   ☺              ☺               ☹
  Yes         Sometimes yes      No
              Sometimes no
```
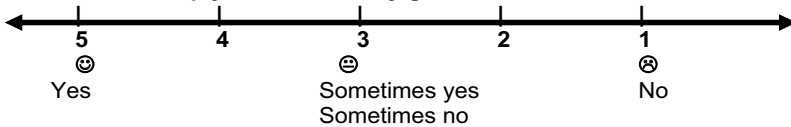
Q5. What do you think about DVDs in English conversation class?

```
◄——————|——————|——————|——————|——————►
   ☺              ☺               ☹
   5       4       3       2       1
 Really helps   Sometimes helps   Doesn't help
  my English      my English       my English
```

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