Columbia, located in Vancouver, Canada. The participants in this study consisted of twenty-nine students participating in a six-week study-abroad program provided by The Language Institute of Thammasat University, Thailand. The questionnaire was used to survey the benefits of studying abroad in various aspects including cultural understanding. The study also revealed the benefits of participating in this program from the essay written by the students at the end of the program. Overall findings show that the majority of the participants mostly agreed that they had improved the English proficiency development, gained living experience from studying abroad and particularly had better attitudes about cultural understanding. According to the students’ perceptions in the essay, it was shown that the benefits from the program can be divided into three categories: the benefits to their confidence, independence and maturity, the benefits to their language development and the benefits to their intercultural competence.

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Research paper

The Motivation to Learn English is Predicted by Positive Attitudes towards the Increasing Population of Foreigners

Ito, Takehiko (The University of Tokyo)

We are living in a more and more globalized world. Therefore it is important that Japanese people learn English, the language most used for global communication. This has caused much research into the predictors for the motivation to learn English in Japan. However, sociocultural influences, such as the increase in the population of foreigners, as a predictor to the motivation have not been assessed. We hypothesized that positive attitudes towards foreigners is positively correlated with the motivation to learn English. To explore this hypothesis, this study conducted a questionnaire survey to 304 high school students from first year to third year. In this survey, we assessed the positive attitudes towards foreigners and the motivation to learn English. We applied factor analysis to the result of this questionnaire and found five relevant factors: “interaction value”: the value derived from communicating with foreigners, “learning content value”: how much the students like to learn languages in general, “self-respect value”: the value of improving intercultural confidence, “practical value”: the value derived from a competitive edge in the job market, “learning situation value”: how much valuable the learning environment is. We then analyzed the correlations between the positive attitudes and these motivation factors. As a result, we found positive correlations with “interaction value,” “learning content value” and “practical value” but no correlations with “self-respect value” and “learning situation value”. In addition to this analysis, we also assessed the qualitative responses (by open-ended questions) about the attitudes towards foreigners. Analyzing these responses told us what were the specific reasons that caused positive or negative attitudes towards foreigners. We suggest that one way to improve motivation would be by exposing Japanese students to more intercultural knowledge in the education system.

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Research paper

Comparability Study of PBT and CBT Speaking Test of English for EFL Learners

Nakamura, Keita (Eiken Foundation of Japan)

In this study, newly developed computer-based EFL speaking test was examined in terms of the comparability of the result against the result of the currently operationalized PBT speaking test. These two modes of tests are planned to be operationalized complementarily such that test takers who cannot take the currently operationalized PBT speaking would be able to take CBT speaking. In PBT, test takers and examiners would be in the same room, while in CBT, test takers look at the PC monitor and talk with the online-connected examiners who were at the test center remotely located from the test takers place. 109 EFL learners were recruited in this study as test takers. All test takers took both PBT and CBT, but in different order. Test takers were randomly assigned to one of the two groups.
One group went through the experiment starting from the PBT speaking, while the other group started from CBT speaking. Different test prompts were used for the PBT and CBT. In order to take the examiner’s rating severity and speaking test prompt difficulty into consideration before calculating test takers’ ability measures, multi-facet Rasch model analysis was used in this study. One-way repeated ANOVA was conducted with mode (CBT, PBT) as the independent and test takers’ ability measures as the dependent variables. In addition, test takers were asked to respond to a set of questionnaire after the experiment session. The result showed that there was not statistically significant difference between the test takers’ ability measures. However, questionnaire result showed that test takers felt they prefer PBT than CBT and would choose PBT if they had the choice. These results, together with other questionnaire survey results, suggested some points of revision to be made to CBT speaking.

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Research paper

Integrating Content and Language at Primary School in Japan

Yamano, Yuki (Utsunomiya University)

In many Asian countries, EFL education at primary school was implemented in the twenty-first century, and effective language teaching has therefore become a critical need. Japan is no exception. This session seeks to explore the components of an effective program and demonstrates how an innovative methodology, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), can be applied in order to facilitate L2 learning as well as intercultural competence among the pupils in primary EFL contexts in Japan. The presenter will elaborate on the strategies that were employed in the CLIL class and outline the potential for and problems of CLIL by analyzing the outcomes obtained from three different sets of data: classroom observations, a questionnaire survey administered to the pupils and semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers. One of the main findings of the study is that CLIL has the potential to provide learners with opportunities to engage in experiential language learning appropriate to their cognitive levels and interests. At first, the CLIL teachers were very anxious to undertake demanding CLIL tasks, as their pupils were absolute beginners in English. However, their concern was transformed into a more positive mindset as they observed the tremendous improvement in the pupils’ attitude toward English and intercultural issues because of CLIL. In fact, one of the pupils who displayed considerable improvement in a learning disability. In conclusion, it is hoped that through the session, participants will gain an understanding of the process of both learner and teacher development that occurred through the CLIL class, which in turn will enable them to enhance their pre- and in-service teacher education for primary ELT in Japan.

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Research paper

The Importance of Cultural Products as Teaching Materials for Foreign Language Learning

Smithers, Ryan William (Kwansei Gakuin University)

The issue of how best to motivate students has long been discussed in the literature on foreign language learning (FLL) theory because motivation has been widely acknowledged as greatest indicator of language learning success. From a more pragmatic point of view, having motivated students in the classroom makes the learning and teaching experience more enjoyable for all. Subsequently, educators are often mindful of the need to increase student motivation in the classroom. One way to do this is by selecting teaching materials that are culturally specific to the FL being learned (Melvin & Stout, 1987). Unfortunately, the relationship between the time spent learning an FL and developments in interest for culturally specific teaching materials is unknown. To address this gap in the literature, this paper examines the attitudinal profiles of a group of Japanese EFL learners (n=156) over the course of more than five years of learning.