

## TASK-SUPPORTED EFL INSTRUCTION: INTEGRATING STUDENTS, TEACHER, AND TEXTBOOK ROLES IN A JAPANESE MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOL CLASS

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: January 2023 Revised: March 2023 Published: April 2023	<p>Many high school English teachers in Japan intend to include communicative activities in their lessons. However, how exactly it could be done remains a puzzle due to various concerns. To offer a solution, this article proposes a task-based teaching approach premised on the context of a mainstream Japanese EFL class. The approach is termed Task-supported language teaching (TSLT). It attempts to factor in variables unique to the Japanese education setting, namely: (1) limited classroom time to tackle the target language; (2) the pressure of standardized tests; and (3) the influence of Japanese cultural sensibilities. Two research questions are raised: (RQ1) What are the roles of students, the teacher, and the textbook in task-supported EFL instruction?; and (RQ2) How does Task-supported language teaching (TSLT) complement a Japanese mainstream high school EFL class? The study utilized mixed methods of Sociocultural Discourse Analysis and self-report questionnaire. Solving RQ1, students' answers to the questionnaire reveal that their roles include solving vocabulary problems, managing teacher-assigned tasks, and engaging in off-task talk. Analysis of classroom discourse highlights the teacher's role as classroom manager, content communicator, and assessor and provider of feedback. Also, the textbook was found to exhibit informative, instructional, and experiential roles in the EFL class. Solving RQ2, propositions on how the teaching approach proves to complement well a Japanese foreign language class are enumerated. Implications of the findings call for more deliberate use of pair talk time in class, recalibrated classroom language use among EFL instructors, and adaptive use of textbook tasks, among other key recommendations.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Classroom-based research; Mixed methods study; Sociocultural approach; High school EFL; Japan	
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### INTRODUCTION

Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (henceforth MEXT) has completely rolled out the revised Course of Study (national curriculum) for upper secondary schools in April of the school year 2022. A basic tenet underlying its foreign language curriculum is the implementation of task-based practical activities using the lesson's target language (henceforth TL) (MEXT, 2018). This toll order appears ideal on paper but the reality that Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) face inside the high school EFL classroom on a daily basis makes simply running the class around tasks problematic. Consequently, traditional classroom approaches heavily reliant on form-focus and teacher-fronted methodologies are still employed. Three major contributing factors are identified as (1) the pressure to master discrete points of the target language in preparation for tests (Carless, 2007); (2) grammar translation-based orientation of target language presentation in official textbooks (Kotaka, 2013); and (3) the time-consuming nature of tasks within a tight class schedule (Littlewood, 2007).

Facing these challenges, ascribing to a strong version of Task-based language teaching (henceforth TBLT) (Ellis, 2018) appears to be not the best option. Instead, a weak version termed by Ellis (2018) as Task-supported language teaching (henceforth TLST) offers opportunities for communicative activities involving tasks while allowing for focus on TL forms (to support students' exam preparation); TL development optimizing textbook content (to provide students TL practice), and structured instructional and interactional tasks (to fit a tight class schedule).

### **Task-supported EFL instruction: a complementary compromise**

A zero-grammar, fully meaning-oriented and strong version of TBLT may find it difficult, if not impossible, to find its way in a Japanese mainstream high school EFL subject despite MEXT's toll order of putting a premium on "student-centered activities mediated by supplemental grammar instruction and deemphasized grammar translation" (Ozeki 2010, 2011 on Kotaka 2013, p.48). This may be highly attributed to the fact that Japanese students encounter English as a foreign language (henceforth FL) rather than as a second language (henceforth SL). Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo (2017) contrasts the two; describing an FL setting as providing learners with low frequency of TL exposure whereas an SL setting as exposing students to considerably higher frequency of input. The status of English as an FL in Japan is explained by Kachru (1985), as cited in Aoyama and Denton (2020), stating that Japan is included within the Expanding Circle countries. In the Expanding Circle, English is studied as an FL, instead of it being practically and casually used in daily communication. This translates to paucity of functional competencies as pronunciation, turn-taking skills, and even awareness of basic conversation gambits among students; making it impossible for the teacher to facilitate a fully meaning-oriented classroom task. The disadvantage to Japanese students as FL learners is compounded by other realities such as limited drill time in their regular English classes, where lessons are mostly teacher-centric and the classes sizable (Li, 2014 as cited in Sato and Storch, 2020). As a result, students' motivation to learn English primarily lies on the necessity to pass examinations. Considering these realities, a sociocultural approach-oriented means of exploiting what limited TL exposure afforded by the classroom textbook, minimal minutes for practical language exercises, and fairly large class size—TSLT may open avenues for achieving simplified yet meaningful TL in-class practice.

### **Textbook, teacher, and students' roles in TSLT**

The dynamic interdependence of textbook use, teacher discourse, and student-peers' interaction viewed in a sociocultural lens is central to effective task-supported English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) teaching. For one, the prescribed textbook's dynamic roles as teaching material (Tomlinson, 2012, as cited in Mathieu et al, 2021) in everyday classroom settings established it as a constant tool subject to the teacher's adaptation (Bosompem, 2014; Sampson, 2009; & Shawer, 2010 as cited in Marcos Miguel, 2015) and students' consumption (Marcos Miguel, 2015). In particular, the informative, instructional, and experiential (Tomlinson, 2012, as cited in Mathieu et al, 2021) roles played by the textbook in the present study was explored. Glasgow and Paller (2014) recognize the potential of a textbook in exerting positive influence on EFL teaching and learning. However, they are also aware of the negative impacts of teachers' misuse of the textbook and its inability to drive student motivation towards TL use. In the current study, the prescribed textbook in the mainstream EFL class serves as the primary reference text for presenting the TL as well as sample sentences, model passages, listening practice, and sentential level writing/translation drills. Having a constant source of the target language through the textbook is believed to aid in input flooding in line with form-focused instruction (Spada, 1997 as cited in Spada, 2014).

Similarly, the teacher plays an active role in a task-supported language classroom. In the proposed pedagogic approach, teacher roles are anchored on the English-for-Teaching

constructs categorized by Freeman et al. (2015). English-for-Teaching is derived from ESP and is a teacher's competency in enacting the curriculum in English that is understandable to non-English speakers. In particular, three constructs were adapted in the current study in classifying the teacher discourse-cum-teacher roles played, which are: (1) "Organizing students to start an activity (under Managing the classroom); (2) Giving instructions and explanations (under Understanding and communicating lesson content); and (3) Responding to student oral output during a role play activity (under Assessing students and providing feedback)" (Freeman et al., 2015, p.8). Proposing a suitable approach to analyzing classroom discourse through a sociocultural lens, Mercer (2004, 2010) highlights the potential of sociocultural discourse analysis (henceforth SDA) in identifying teacher and student roles in dialogue. One study found teachers to utilize some techniques such as (1) "eliciting knowledge from learners; (2) responding to what learners say; and (3) describing significant aspects of shared experiences" (from Mercer, 1995, p. 34 as cited in Mercer, 2004, p. 145). In the current study's locale, the teacher performs roles on different junctures of the lesson. Explanations of classroom discourse revealing these construct-roles viewed through the lens of SDA (Mercer, 2004, 2010) are provided and appropriately placed in the paper.

A third contributing factor is students' roles. In a task-supported EFL lesson, student peer interaction and collaboration occur deliberately and in frequent intervals. Considering the current study's informants (Grade 11 Japanese students), students' first language (henceforth L1) is allowed during peer interaction although English is constantly encouraged. Hung (2012) cites the benefits that using L1 brings to a task-based lesson as it was found to: (1) help clarify FL terms when explanation in FL proves complex; (2) lower language learning anxiety as per Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, and (3) scaffold student's shared understanding of the assigned task. In studies conducted across different SL/FL school grade levels, various salient L1 functions emerged. Swain and Lapkin (2000) found particular L1 uses among Grade 8 French immersion students who underwent jigsaw and dictogloss tasks: (1) task management (under Moving the task along); (2) vocabulary search (under Focusing attention); and (3) off-task (under Interpersonal interaction).

In a two-year longitudinal picture placement task experiment among Spanish Grade 3 (who in the second year of the study turned Grade 4) pupils grouped into mainstream and CLIL classes, (1) deliberations over vocabulary words; (2) talking about the task itself; and (3) using discourse markers, were ranked as the main uses of L1 (Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo, 2007). In an advanced-level Japanese high school setting, the uses of L1 for (1) fillers; (2) backchanneling; (3) asking for help; (4) equivalents (to L1 of FL terms); and (5) metalanguage were discovered among Grade 12 students (Aoyama, 2020). However, sidetracking was also evident among the student-informants in Aoyama's 2020 study. Sidetracking is described as having discussions away from the main track (about the task at hand). The current study also attempts to gauge the occurrence of such sidetracking (termed Off-task interpersonal interaction by Swain and Lapkin, 2000) during pre-role play pair talk. Likewise, 24 university intermediate-level ESL students in Australia were paired into six same-L1 dyads and another six different-L1 dyads in a study by Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) where the 12 pairs engaged in a text reconstruction task and a short joint composition task. It appeared that the L1 was employed for (1) task management discussion; (2) task instructions clarification; (3) vocabulary and meaning discussion; and (4) grammar points deliberation. However, a long session of non-task related, personal chat was also noted in one of the same-L1 pairs in the study.

### **Time-bound and purposeful classroom talk**

In the context of the current study's informants, FL exposure is mostly provided by the textbook and the supplementary textbook audio CD. This limits opportunities for learners to be exposed to the TL exclusively within the scheduled class session. On the part of the teacher,

such a peculiar situation calls for on-point, carefully planned teacher talk—if resorting to translation to students' L1 is to be avoided in class. In particular, any explanation of highlighted grammar points within the lesson must be deliberately timed. Michaud and Ammar (2022) suggest embedding explicit grammar instruction while the speaking task is ongoing as an immediate opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge in a meaningful situation. Another equally important factor is the sequencing of lined-up tasks for the lesson. In support of input flooding (Spada, 1997 as cited in Spada, 2014), receptive skills (reading and listening) make up the initial tasks to expose students to the day's TL. This helps them with awareness raising (based on Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, Ellis, 2005) as they would need to eventually use the TL when conducting the tasks requiring productive skills (speaking and writing). In between the lineup of tasks in the lesson, terse but timely opportunities for peer dialogue is provided as supported by Long's (1996, as cited in Ellis, 2005) Interaction Hypothesis. This way, learners are scaffolded into seeking meaning in the text, context, and teacher-given prompts with a classmate (when in pairs) or classmates (when in a small group of three). Timed peer dialogue such as pre-task planning and rehearsing (Foster & Skehan, 1996, as cited in Kellem, 2009) aids boost oral fluency and reduces pauses length during the actual oral performance stage (Kellem, 2009).

In the class-cum-research locale, students were given at least a minute to talk in dyads or triads every after textbook-based task and before the role play performance. Johnson (1992, as cited in Tonkyn, 1996) argues that rehearsing and discussing language choices and forms before actually engaging in oral production prevents fossilization. The benefit of pre-oral performance preparation was affirmed by Skehan and Foster (Foster, 1996 in Tonkyn, 1996) as it was also found to elevate language complexity during the actual oral production of the TL. As for student roles during actual role play performance, the concept of Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis was taken into account as one of its claimed benefits include allowing students to hypothesize the use of the TL. Students' hypotheses were twice tested in class during the two-round role play performance, with teacher corrective feedback occurring in-between each round.

Considering the aforementioned, a gap exists in literature because as of date no known study investigates the interplay of the constructs discussed in the context of a real, live classroom environment. This is where the novelty of the current research lies. Heeding MEXT's toll order while weaving interrelated constructs to propose a responsive and adaptable pedagogical sequence, the teacher-researcher poses the following research questions: (RQ1) "What are the roles of students, the teacher, and the textbook in task-supported EFL instruction?"; and (RQ2) "How does Task-supported language teaching (TSLT) complement a Japanese mainstream high school EFL class?"

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The overall approach adapted in the study is the descriptive research. Descriptive research attempts to answer what and how questions about a phenomenon using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods to gather data. The what question in the study is research question 1, What are the roles of students, the teacher, and the textbook in task-supported EFL instruction? On the other hand, the how question is research question 2, How does Task-supported language teaching (TSLT) complement a Japanese mainstream high school EFL class?

To gather the data needed to answer the two research questions identified, a mixed methods approach was adapted. The first method was a qualitative method used to document teacher roles termed Sociocultural Discourse Analysis, abbreviated as SDA (Mercer, 2004, 2010). To document this interaction, permission was sought from the school to audio record the

classroom lessons during the running period of the research. The teacher roles were identified and labeled following English-for-Teaching constructs following Freeman et al.'s (2015) classification. The second method was a quantitative one which was used to determine students' roles in a task-based EFL class—self-reporting. This was selected by the teacher-researcher because the number of pairs simultaneously interacting during pair talk time proves it impossible to capture all of their individual exchanges. Gathering data on how they made use of the pair talk time during the lesson, as well as the amount of it, is the main purpose of floating the self-report questionnaire. The student-informants were well-informed of the questionnaire's purpose in keeping with research ethics principles. Their responses did not have any effect on their class standing on Writing 2 subject. Right before dismissal from the 45-minute class, the student-informants answered the questionnaire for the week while their short-term memory of their in-class L1 use was recent.

Coincidentally, the present study also takes the form of an action research, a type of practitioner research. Revesz (2021) defines action research as one employed by teachers who conduct studies on task-based pedagogy in their local settings.

### **Population and Sample**

The local setting of the teacher-researcher is an EFL English Expression class which is a required subject as part of MEXT's foreign language curriculum for high school. It is offered to the research locale's (the school) Grade 11 students (n=117) and is a once-a-week, 45-minute long, all-English taught subject. The school is a private co-educational junior and senior high school located in Tokyo. The 15- to 16-year-old students' English proficiency ranges from CEFR A1 to A2 as determined by results of their EIKEN tests (Test of Practical English in Japan). The research ran for five consecutive weeks in the second semester of school year 2022-2023, between September to October. The researcher is the sole teacher of the English Expression course, which is called Writing 2 in the school's foreign language curriculum.

The course English Expression has been implemented in Japan since the school year 2013, with the goal of "evaluating facts, opinions, and others from multiple perspectives and communicating through reasoning and a range of expression." (MEXT, 2011a, p.3 as cited in Glasgow & Paller, 2014). The school's prescribed textbook used for the course is *New One World Expressions II: Revised Edition* (Ito et al, 2019), published by Kyoiku Shuppan. The worktext-style coursebook features TL as how it is used in daily situational contexts. Each lesson aims to develop among learners the skills of reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translating.

### **Instruments**

The first of two main instruments used in the present study was an audio recorder. The teacher-researcher strategically placed the recorder inside the classroom for optimum sensitivity to audio data from both the teacher and the students. This high-sensitivity digital voice recorder captured the classroom discourse throughout the five-week consecutive 45-minute lessons. Transcription of recorded audio data and analysis followed while ascribing to the tenets of SDA. Such recordings have been thoroughly deleted from the teacher-researcher's work PC after the transcription work.

The second instrument was the weekly self-reporting survey forms conducted via Google Forms. The in-app data analytics function of Google Forms enabled easy and ready access to student responses in summarized and graphic form. The questions in the survey included translations in Japanese to account for possible misinterpretations as may be caused by varying language proficiency among students. For each question, a sample response which may closely resemble the students' own responses was provided as well to gather precise responses. Each week, the survey questionnaire was posted before class dismissal by the teacher-researcher on each class's Google Classroom learning management system (LMS),

which provided a convenient tool as all students had their own Chromebook devices from which they could access such.

### Data Analysis

Using the summarized data generated by the in-app data analytics function of Google Forms, the teacher-researcher tabulated the weekly results by class. Tabular representation of data was followed by rationalization and analysis to provide complete explanation. Summarized findings were then compared to related studies for synthesis with existing literature in the field. As for the transcribed audio recordings, salient points were identified vis-a-vis the alternative constructs evident in cited literature. Similarly, rationalization and analysis followed such discourse analyses in order to produce holistic interpretation of findings. In the process, care was taken to not alter in any way the actual captured classroom discourse to maintain fidelity aiding accurate interpretation of results.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

#### From self-report questionnaires

##### *Roles of Students*

Table 1  
L1 use during pair talk for Understanding vocabulary

	H2A	H2B	H2C	H2D	H2E	Total
	n=21	n=25	n=19	n=22	n=30	n=117
Week 1	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=60.8%)	(n%=74%)	(n%=63.1%)	(n%=62.5%)	(n%=64.5%)	n=81(84%)
Week 2	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=68.2%)	(n%=67.8%)	(n%=65%)	(n%=59.1%)	(n%=71.9%)	n=82(85%)
Week 3	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=58.4%)	(n%=75%)	(n%=76.2%)	(n%=63.7%)	(n%=60.7%)	n=78(80%)
Week 4	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=57.9%)	(n%=85.7%)	(n%=68.8%)	(n%=63.6%)	(n%=62%)	n=72(74%)
Week 5	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=50%)	(n%=73.9%)	(n%=71.5%)	(n%=68.4%)	(n%=64.3%)	n=73(75%)

*Note.* Ti stands for percentage of pair talk time used; n% stands for percentage of respondents by class.

Table 1 arranges the weekly percentages of pair talk use for Understanding vocabulary. Week 2 shows the highest percentage of L1 use to talk about word meanings with 85% of students doing so. Week 4, on the other hand, registered the lowest percentage of L1 for the same purpose with 74% of the total number of informants.

Table 2  
L1 Use during Pair Talk for Task Management

	H2A	H2B	H2C	H2D	H2E	Total
	n=21	n=25	n=19	n=22	n=30	n=117
Week 1	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=65.2%)	(n%=85.1%)	(n%=73.7%)	(n%=66.7%)	(n%=58.1%)	n=86(74%)
Week 2	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=63.6%)	(n%=75%)	(n%=80%)	(n%=72.7%)	(n%=62.6%)	n=89(76%)
Week 3	Ti=25-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=25-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=79.2%)	(n%=70.9%)	(n%=66.6%)	(n%=59.1%)	(n%=78.6%)	n=85(73%)
Week 4	Ti=50-100%	Ti=75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=25-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=84.3%)	(n%=61.9%)	(n%=75.1%)	(n%=59.1%)	(n%=75.8%)	n=76(65%)
Week 5	Ti=50-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=83.4%)	(n%=82.6%)	(n%=71.4%)	(n%=63.2%)	(n%=67.8%)	n=80(68%)

Note. Ti stands for percentage of pair talk time used; n% stands for percentage of respondents by class.

Table 2 reflects the weekly percentages among student-informants' use of L1 to move the task along (Task management). As much as 76% of the respondents used L1 to achieve this aim in week 2, the week with the highest percentage. The week with the lowest percentage is week 4, with 65%.

Table 3  
L1 Use during Pair Talk for Off-Task

	H2A	H2B	H2C	H2D	H2E	Total
	n=21	n=25	n=19	n=22	n=30	n=117
Week 1	Ti=75-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=25-100%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=0-50%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=56.5%)	(n%=59.2%)	(n%=68.5%)	(n%=58.3%)	(n%=80.7%)	n=81(69%)
Week 2	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=0-50%	Mode= Ti=50-75%
	(n%=59.1%)	(n%=67.9%)	(n%=65%)	(n%=68.2%)	(n%=72%)	n=83(71%)
Week 3	Ti=0% (n=20.8%) Ti=100% (n%=29.2%)	Ti=25-75%  (n%=83.3%)	Ti=50-75%  (n%=71.4%)	Ti=50-75%  (n%=68.2%)	Ti=0% (n=28.6%) Ti=75% (n%=32.1%)	Mode= Ti=0%-75%
						n=79(68%)
Week 4	Ti=0%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-75%	Ti=50-100%	Ti=0-50%	Mode=

	H2A n=21	H2B n=25	H2C n=19	H2D n=22	H2E n=30	Total n=117
	(n%=31.6%) Ti=75%					Ti=50-75%
	(n%=42.1%)	(n%=71.5%)	(n%=68.8%)	(n%=86.4%)	(n%=65.5%)	n=78(67%)
Week 5	Ti=0% (n%=27.8%) Ti=50% (n%=22.2%) Ti=100% (n%=22.2%)	Ti=50-75% (n%=60.9%)	Ti=50-75% (n%=66.7%)	Ti=50-100% (n%=79%)	Ti=0% (n%=32.1%) Ti=75% (n=32.1%)	Mode= Ti=50-75% n=74(63%)

Note. Ti stands for percentage of pair talk time used; n% stands for percentage of respondents by class.

Week 2 saw the use of L1 pair talk for Off-task, as shown in Table 3. The figure stands at 71%. As for the week with the lowest percentage for L1 use to sidetrack, it was week 5 with 63%.

### From Sociocultural Discourse Analysis

#### *Roles of the Teacher*

The first role of the teacher is Starting and dismissing the class, under Classroom Management. Commencing and dismissing the class in a Japanese mainstream classroom usually involves *aisatsu* (ceremonial Japanese bowing in unison). The set phrase and word order of *aisatsu* is exemplified in Excerpt 1, sequence 3, as follows:

(School chime sounds.)		
Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
Teacher (T)	Please stand up for the greetings.	1
Students (SS)	[Students stand up.]	2
S1	<i>Kyotsuke!</i> (Attention!) <i>Rei!</i> (Bow!) <i>Onegaishimasu.</i> (Please teach us.)	3
T	Good afternoon, everybody.	4
SS	Good afternoon, <i>sensei.</i> (teacher)	5
T	How are you today?	6
SS	[no response]	7
T	Are you feeling cold?	8
S2	Yes, yes. Cool, cool.	9
T	Oh, you feel cool? Me, too. It's cool today, isn't it?	10

Excerpt 1. Classroom Management: Starting/dismissing the class

Another teacher role under Classroom Management is Checking the class roll. The teacher may confirm with other students the whereabouts of their classmates not in their seat. Since Japanese students are taught at an early age to look after each other, it is customary to confirm with their seatmates the whereabouts of their classmates, as evident in sequences 13-15 of Excerpt 2. Interestingly, sequence 15 offers an early glimpse of the feedback provider role of the teacher, where a recast was given.

Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
T	Before we start today's lesson, let's find out who's absent today.	11
	[draws attendance record book and pulls out class seating chart]	12
	Is [Sakura] absent?	13
S1	She went to toilet.	14
T	Oh, she went to the toilet? I see. Thank you, [Taro].	15

Excerpt 2. Classroom Management: Checking the class roll

In line with monologic English-for-Teaching classroom discourse constructs, Understanding and Communicating Content is identified in Excerpt 3. In particular, Facilitating tasks is reflected.

Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
T	Now, let's listen to the model dialogue between Sarah and Taiki.	29
	They are talking about Sakura's plan for the coming spring vacation.	30
	What do Sarah and Taiki know about Sarah's plan?	31
	Let's listen and find out.	32
	[plays relevant accompanying audio CD track]	33

Excerpt 3. Understanding and Communicating Content: Facilitating tasks

Explaining nuances in expressions, classified under Understanding and Communicating Content, is performed by the teacher with options of using classroom affordances such as writing tools to highlight expressions and point students to specific grammar or vocabulary items, as Excerpt 4 reveals:

Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
T	In the first model sentence for today,	47
	"I would love to take you to tonight's dance,"	48
	the expression "would love to"	49
	[highlights with an e-pen the expression flashed on the screen]	50
	is a formal alternative to "want to" or to the more casual "wanna."	51

Excerpt 4. Understanding and Communicating Content: Explaining nuances in expressions

In between the first and second rounds of role play performance, the teacher may present to the entire class one or two salient points gathered while going around the classroom as the first round was ongoing. Classroom writing tools, digital or traditional, may be used to focus students to the error and avoid its occurrence moving to the next round of meaningful practice. Excerpt 5 contains discourse sequences to show such instance:

Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
T	Nice effort in the first round, everyone.	68
	Before we go to round two, let's talk about how to use the expression,	69
	"Thank you for (verb+favor done)."	70
	[writes on the board the model sentence and highlights target form]	71
	We usually use the "~ing" form of the verb with it,	72
	as in, "Thank you for coming to my party last weekend."	73
	[highlights "coming to my party" with a color chalk on the board]	74

Excerpt 5. Assessing and Providing Feedback: During oral task feedback

Individualized teacher feedback on learners' written responses may likewise be given as evident in Excerpt 6, where a student confirms with the teacher the use of an alternative vocabulary word to answer a question in a fill-in-the-blank translation task:

Interlocutor	Discourse	Sequence
S1	Excuse me, <i>sensei</i> (teacher). I have a question.	94
T	Yes, [Momo]. What do you want to ask me?	95
S1	Number 2 question...hmm...answer is "intends,"	96
	but my answer is "wants." Is it okay?	97
T	Let me see. [looks at the fill-in-the-blank question item]	98
	Well, using "wants" instead of "intends" in this sentence	99
	creates the same meaning. So, yes, it's correct. Good job!	100
S1	Ah [sighs]. Thank you, <i>sensei</i> (teacher).	101

Excerpt 6. Assessing and Providing Feedback: Feedback on written responses

### *Roles of the Textbook*

In one portion of the textbook's lesson presentation, students are informed about the TL through sample sentences with highlighted phrases that contain the TL, which highlights its informative role. Another role, an instructional one, is reflected in the textbook as it presents sentence-level writing and translation tasks with instructions in L1 on how to accomplish the tasks. A third textbook role featured is experiential, where a Model Dialogue or a Model Passage featuring the TL is provided. The written text includes a translation in the students' L1 and has a corresponding audio recording in the accompanying CD. Aside from these provisions of experiencing the TL through a reading and listening text, understanding is checked through a short listening comprehension exercise with discrete question items.

### *Complementary roles of task-supported approach in a Japanese mainstream EFL class*

The TLST-informed pedagogical sequence featured in the present paper proposes three roles that complement a mainstream EFL class in Japan. First, the pedagogic sequence allows for a holistic, five-skill lesson providing TL exposure and practice in manageable increments within a limited 45-minute timeframe. Second, it supports Japanese students' need for form-focused TL practice as influenced by their regular *asa tesuto* (morning tests), GTEC (4-skill English preparatory test for university entrance exam), EIKEN (a test of practical English proficiency), TEAP (Test of English for Academic Purposes), and other standardized and institutional testing requirements. Third, the featured task-supported approach in the present study conforms with Japanese cultural sensibilities in a number of ways, as pointed out by Greer (2000). For one, giving non-confrontational corrective feedback by addressing it to the class as a whole appeals to the Japanese preference of involving the group instead of singling out individuals. Another is allowing students time to prepare before the actual role play performance through the pre-task pair talk. Finally, maintaining a similar lesson flow which creates a familiar rhythm to decrease student anxiety and increase motivation is accomplished.

## **Discussion**

### *Roles of Students*

In the self-report questionnaire, the first question inquired about the students' use of the L1 to understand FL vocabulary. In summary, 74-85% of the students used 50-75% of the pair talk time allowed in class to discuss FL word meanings. Previous studies support this finding. In a two-year picture placement task experiment among Spanish Grade 3 (who in the second year of the study were promoted to Grade 4) pupils grouped into mainstream and CLIL classes, deliberations over vocabulary was the top-ranked use of L1 (Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo, 2007). However, their respondents used a higher percentage of L1 use to talk about word meanings with 81.3%. Another previous study was that of Swain and Lapkin (2000), who found particular L1 uses among Grade 8 French immersion students doing jigsaw and dictogloss tasks, where vocabulary search was one function L1 served. Their respondents used less L1 with 41%.

The second question in the self-report questionnaire inquires on the students' use of L1 to help make sense of the task and how to proceed with it. Figures reflect that 65-76% of students consumed 50-75% of the allotted talk time for task management. Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo's (2007) experiment suggests that their informants (in primary Grade 3, then Grade 4) spent a lower L1 use percentage of 12.1% for task management, compared to a higher percentage of L1 use for vocabulary deliberation, at 81.3%. Contrastingly, Swain and Lapkin's (2000) investigation reflects opposite results. A remarkably higher percentage of L1 turns (78%) was noted for task management as opposed to a lower percentage of L1 turns (41%) for understanding vocabulary.

In the self-report questionnaire's third question, Off-task talk or sidetracking has been enquired. Responses of 63-71% of the students show 50-75% L1 use for discussing non-task-

related matters. In Swain and Lapkin's (2000) study, 23% of L1 turns have been used by the informants for interpersonal interaction. It registered the lowest in rank among the three constructs measured in their study (task management registering the highest, followed by vocabulary search). Off-task talk construct was not measured in Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo's (2007) study. In Aoyama's (2020) discovery of sidetracking, however, the L1 had been used as scaffold towards a better understanding of the task prompt, comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary, and maintenance of a comfortable group work atmosphere. Ostensibly, the sidetracking that Aoyama's student-informants involved themselves in was not totally off-task; whereas in the present study the nature of students' off-task discourse is that of topics irrelevant to the task at hand. However, this "off-topic" dialogue may hint on the interpersonal interaction role of L1 rather than a complete misuse of classroom pair talk time, as Swain and Lapkin (2000) suggest. Table 4 tabulates the findings in the current study and two previous ones.

Table 4  
L1 Functions in Three Studies

	Understanding vocabulary*	Task management**	Off-task talk
Current study (2022) (n=117 grade 11 Japanese students learning EFL in a mainstream setting)	50-75% (mode of L1 use in weekly pair talk time)	50-75% (mode of L1 use in weekly pair talk time)	50-75% (mode of L1 use in weekly pair talk time)
Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo (2007) (n=32 grade 3-4 Spanish students learning French in mainstream and CLIL settings)	81.3% (percentage of L1 occurrences in 2-timed jigsaw task in 2 years)	12.1% (percentage of L1 occurrences in 2-timed jigsaw task in 2 years)	(not measured)
Swain and Lapkin (2000) (n=22 pairs of grade 8 Canadian students learning French in an immersion setting)	41% (percentage of L1 turns in a dictogloss task and a jigsaw task)	78% (percentage of L1 turns in a dictogloss task and a jigsaw task)	23% (percentage of L1 turns in a dictogloss task and a jigsaw task)

Notes. \*Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo used the term Vocabulary while Swain and Lapkin termed it Vocabulary search. \*\*Garcia Mayo and Hidalgo termed it Metacognitive talk whereas Swain and Lapkin used the term Task management.

The findings expose the shortcomings in the task-based approach used in the study. Arguably, using the L1 for pair talk is indispensable in a mainstream Japanese class. However, it may appear to violate a principle of instructed language learning, as Ellis (2005) points out the importance of exposing FL learners to extensive L2 input with remarks as, "Maximise use of the L2 inside the classroom. Ideally, this means that the L2 needs to become the medium as well as the object of instruction" (Ellis, 2005, p.217). In addition, Krashen (2009) consistently viewed comprehensible input as a driver for successful language acquisition. He asserts that input both listened to and read in a pleasant, low-anxiety environment best allows for such success. Considering these positions, ideally the pair talk time in the task-supported classroom must strictly be in the TL. However, citing the present realities surrounding Japanese mainstream education (as discussed in the literature review), such would be challenging. It is important to point out that the results of the current study regarding L1 use among students do not agree with all previous studies in the field. To further validate or debunk the findings here, L1 use may be studied in future research endeavors in order to determine its actual classroom benefits.

### Roles of the Teacher

Teacher roles as seen through the lens of English-for-Teaching constructs appear in Table 5 (Freeman, et al, 2015).

Table 5  
Teacher Roles in a Task-Supported EFL Class in a Japanese Mainstream High School

Functional area	Teacher roles*	Nature of language	Language skill
Classroom management	Starting/dismissing the class	Greetings ( <i>aisatsu</i> )	Speaking and listening
	Checking the class attendance	General inquiry	Speaking, listening, writing (in roll book)
Understanding and communicating lesson content	Facilitating tasks	Activity instructions and explanations	Reading (aloud textbook instructions), speaking, writing (on the board)
	Explaining nuances in expressions	Definitions, explanations, examples	Speaking, writing (on the board)
Assessing students and providing feedback	During-oral task corrective feedback	Form-focused feedback addressed to class in general	Listening, speaking, writing (on the board)
	Corrective feedback on written responses	Individualized feedback on writing conventions	Reading, speaking, writing (for showing spelling, etc)

(adapted from Freeman et al, 2015)

Note. \*Freeman et al (2015) termed this Classroom routine/Teacher task.

The adapted matrix of English-for-Teaching constructs features added teacher roles as (1) facilitating *aisatsu* (Japanese ceremonial greeting) to start and end the class and (2) checking the class attendance against a class roll book. These two are daily essentials for teachers of any subject area in Japanese mainstream education. In the current paper, an omission has been made from the original matrix of Freeman et al (2015), which is Organizing students to start an activity under Classroom management. In the adapted matrix, it has been included in Activity instructions and explanations under Understanding and communicating lesson content. Another addition made evident in the adapted matrix is the explicit inclusion of “writing on the board” as a teacher language skill for when giving task prompts as well as highlighting language forms during corrective feedback. This is especially helpful for Japanese mainstream settings where student English proficiency may widely vary. Writing on the board may further aid students who may have difficulties catching even simple and TESLish oral delivery of task instructions by providing them with visual support.

### Roles of the Textbook

Completing the answers to RQ1, “What are the roles of students, the teacher, and the textbook in task-supported EFL instruction?,” textbook roles are explored by analyzing the prescribed English Expression textbook used vis-a-vis Tomlinson’s (2012) classification of teaching materials as informative, instructional, and experiential. The informative role of the textbook is evident in the Expressions portion of each lesson. Usually, five or six model sentences with the lesson’s TL highlighted in a bright color font are presented. The textbook’s use of Enriched input, or typographically enhancing the TL, hints on Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis (1990, 1994, as cited in Reinders and Ellis, 2009). The hypothesis asserts that attention to the TL is a prerequisite for learners’ subsequent acquisition of it. Another role that

the prescribed textbook performs is that of an instructional one. In particular, the Listen and Repeat oral drill provides learners a guide on pronouncing statements featuring the TL. Another instance where students are guided on practicing the TL is in the Practice writing exercises, where translation and reordering of shuffled sentence chunks is done. Finally, the experiential role that the textbook plays is reflected in the Model Dialogue/Model Passage. Through this, students receive TL exposure in written and spoken form as they listen to the recorded version of the reading text on the accompanying CD. The multimodal exposure to the TL is a manifestation of input flooding, or increasing the frequency of the TL (Reinders and Ellis, 2009).

However, the prescribed textbook used in the present study lacks in performing two other roles as described by Tomlinson (2012). These two are (1) eliciting and (2) exploratory. Eliciting is encouraging students to make use of the TL whereas exploratory aids them discover for themselves about the language. Filling this gap, the teacher-researcher has supplemented the lessons with a role-playing task to both address the eliciting and exploratory roles that the textbook does not exhibit. For each role-playing task, the teacher-researcher allows students pragmatic use of the TL as they explore its use to communicate their intended meaning. It is in this instance in the lesson that a task-supported approach is best deemed fit as it scaffolds them to focus their attention on meaning-making; instead of straining their mental resources by requiring them to fully construct the surrounding context-forming but non-TL related word chunks and phrases.

Building on this pragmatic meaning-making is crucial to language learning (Ellis, 2005). However, providing the pre-and post-TL scaffold, such as a role play dialogue guide, may not provide the desirable difficulty that is claimed to be a requisite for an ideally-situated practice in a limited-exposure EFL curriculum. As Marsden and Hawkes (2023) quip, “During paired oral production activities, access to written resources that can provide the precise language necessary to complete the task is not encouraged, so that learners must actively retrieve the language needed” (Marsden & Hawkes, 2023, p.20). Such may hint on the debilitating, instead of facilitating, effect of providing the surrounding phrases pre-and post-TL in view of the desirable difficulty principle. A counterargument for this is that for most of the student-informants in the current study, who already find it difficult to utter the few words to fill in the blank in the dialogue guide, the desirable difficulty level may be lowered. Thus, such may warrant maintaining the rich scaffolding present in the dialogue guide. In fact, Sato (2010) recognizes that using form-focused practice, as in the use of dialogue guide during the role plays in the current study, may still be effective as a form of oral production task. The provision of a written dialogue guide may be appropriate as reading, writing, and listening activities are still vital at the oral production stage for Japanese mainstream education learners (Sato, 2010).

#### *Ways how task-based EFL pedagogy complements a mainstream Japanese class*

RQ2 enquires the question, “How does TSLT complement a mainstream Japanese high school EFL class?” The task-based pedagogical sequence featured in the present study complements a mainstream Japanese EFL class in three ways. First, manageable TL chunks given in the FL are given to students in regular intervals despite minimal class hours. The TL which is mostly encountered by students in class is tackled while developing the five skills of reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translation. Second, it helps prepare Japanese students for their frequent discrete point item tests by exposing them to form-focused TL practice. Third, it conforms to the Japanese cultural values of addressing the group instead of the individual; allowing for preparation time instead of immersing immediately in a non-familiar performance task, text, and context; and setting a more relaxed, familiar classroom atmosphere by keeping to the established class progression (Greer, 2000). Figure 1 illustrates how TLST complements a Japanese mainstream class.

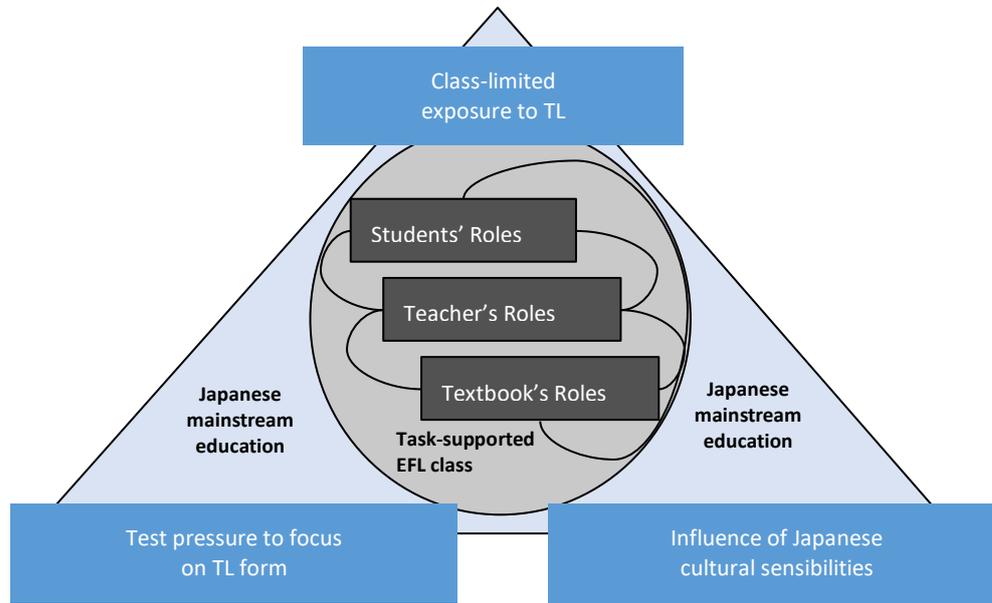


Figure 1. Integrated roles of students, teacher, and textbook in a task-supported EFL class situated within a Japanese mainstream education setting.

## CONCLUSION

### *Research Implications*

The present study has created repercussions in the conduct of research in the language classroom. Although the findings derived from the conduct of the present study are numerous and varied, the contextual limitation it offers cautions against making generalizations. However, the rich ecological validity of it may be acknowledged as it was conducted within an existing EFL program without alterations to its prescribed syllabus, textbook, and topics (lessons) sequence. Another limitation is that the researcher is also the teacher where the action research was conducted. Literature in the field cautions against this for potential researcher bias. To counter such, the practicing teacher-researcher observed utmost adherence to research ethical practices to derive impartial, holistic results from research literature-grounded practices. In terms of methodological flaws, qualitative approaches of the discourse analysis types may result in researchers' selective attention to favorable discourse excerpts advancing their research agenda. In the current study, SDA was conducted while referring to highly relevant constructs with discourse exemplars as a countermeasure for such. In addition, as it is claimed that informants themselves may not be the best source of data on their performance, the self-report questionnaires were answered within the same class period to account for factors as actual performance-reporting time proximity in consideration of short-term memory constraints. The shortcomings enumerated imply that meticulous and deliberate preparation prior conducting action researches as this one must be observed at all times.

### *Teaching Implications*

The current study also produced ramifications in terms of language teaching. As evident in the results on L1 use among students in this study and in previous researches, the actual purpose of learners in using their mother tongue may widely vary. As no generalization may be derived as to its actual benefit or drawback, teachers must be aware of its use in their own class. High school students' use of their L1 is especially interesting to explore as they use it functionally every day for learning at school and for socialization with peers. It is the responsibility of the language teacher to determine whether to allow the students to use their L1 and to what extent its use will be allowed during class. Fully restricting it may be

deliberating. On the other hand, giving students absolute freedom of its use may just be as detrimental. Another implication that this study generates is on teacher talk. The classification of teacher roles enumerated in this study are descriptions in a contextualized class. Many other potential classification of teacher roles may exist, as many as the widely varied teaching environments language teachers the world over are situated in. Teacher talk is another aspect to be deliberate about. Teachers must make informed decisions on the level, amount, and pacing of English to use for each specific group of EFL learners. Simplistic language use may discourage intermediate to advance learners while high-level words may overwhelm beginners. Textbook-based activities require equally considerable consideration. Full or partial adaptation of tasks found in the textbook may impact learning positively or negatively. Even extension activities such as teacher-made role plays must be planned out carefully in terms of timing and complexity.

### *Recommendations*

Lastly, the teacher-researcher hopes that such a practitioner research project may spur fellow teacher-researchers to conduct an experiment of their own on the viability of a task-supported approach; whether in a mainstream, CLIL, test-preparation, or ESP setting, to further validate its benefits and shortcomings in real classroom settings such as that of the current study. More importantly, finding out how local, institutional, and national cultural sensibilities shape their own practice of a task-supported approach would be a welcome development to the dynamic and evolving literature in the field of TSLT.

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