Producing an L2 Campus Newspaper: Pedagogic Support for Authentic Writing, Active Learning and Task-Based Interaction

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Abstract

In this paper, the process of helping Japanese university students produce an English-language campus newspaper is reported. Student-writers, under the guidance of the lead student-editor and an editorial advisor teacher, decide on content and deal with all production matters. This student-led enterprise results in a newspaper which highlights student perspectives on campus issues, and profiles volunteer activities, exchange programs, and international students. The principal contribution of this paper is to elaborate the pedagogical rationale behind this exercise, which is three-fold: 1) situating student writing in an authentic context, 2) promoting active learning though a project-based approach and 3) offering opportunities for task-based language learning on an incidental basis. Some comparisons with previous approaches to promoting authentic writing are discussed, and closing comments are positioned around comparing the character and structure of student newspapers from university campuses in North America.

Introduction

Under the banner of "By the students, for the students," the *KU Campus News* is an initiative to produce an English-language campus newspaper at a Japanese university. Although the project is undertaken outside of the traditional EFL classroom, writing instruction and support are required to publish student work. As a long-term project undertaken by EFL students, the *KU Campus News* has been in publication since 2004. The publication reflects the interests and perspective of the student body, and the paper has continued to mature since its inception in 2004. In addition to final decision-making authority on editorial matters, all aspects of the design, layout, and production are led by students.

The entire endeavor represents considerably more than an attempt at information dissemination in English (though it is this too), and comports quite considerably, but not entirely, with the rationale for the publication of *Voices in Writing* (reported by Isemonger 2007). *Voices in Writing* started relatively contemporaneously with, but independently of, the *KU Campus News*. The pedagogical rationale underpinning the *KU Campus News* endeavor includes attention to 1) opportunities for authentic writing, 2) active learning through collaborative and project-based activities, and 3) creating a task-based environment for situated and naturalistic oral communication. Valuable skills and knowledge emerging from the process also include a deeper

understanding of the responsibilities involved in information integrity and the skills which facilitate this (very often overlapping with the interview skills required for qualitative research).

These three aspects of the pedagogical rationale for the project are elaborated below, before providing an extended description of the project in which they are realized.

Three Pedagogical Principles Underpinning the *KU Campus News*

The most important feature of producing the *KU Campus News* is that it proceeds under a pedagogical rationale and, as such, represents augmentation of the more formal language learning curriculum rather than mere information dissemination and publicity. This part of the paper will detail the three main aspects, mentioned above in the introduction, and do so in anticipation of the later elaboration of how these aspects are instantiated. It is worth noting that some of this rationale emerged organically as the newspaper developed.

Opportunities for Authentic Writing

The issue of authenticity in second language acquisition is an issue which has appeared with respect to the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to varying degrees. The issue presents as somewhat different when these fours skills are separated according to the receptive skills (reading and listening) and the productive skills (writing and speaking).

With respect to the receptive skills, the issue is typically one of materials authenticity, because this is usually the basis for what is received as language (L2) input. Thus with respect to listening, where attention to this issue has received coverage from quite some time ago, the issue centers around spoken input which is sampled from the real world (Morrison, 1989; Porter & Roberts, 1981; Vogely, 1995). With respect to reading, the issue is much the same in that reading materials which are authentic are deemed to offer better and more meaningful input for the learner (Berardo, 2006).

With regard to the productive skills (whether this be writing or speaking), however, the issue becomes somewhat inflected to the issue of context of production and audience, and the extent to which these are experienced as real or simulated. This shift makes the problem of providing authenticity more challenging. To some extent, and with respect to speaking, task-based language learning, while still succumbing to classroom simulation of real-life tasks, attempts to achieve authenticity to the extent that tasks replicate real-life situations convincingly, offering opportunities for negotiated L2 production according to concrete and authentic communicative goals. Thus, while the *situational* authenticity of a speaking task may be challenging, the idea is to achieve *interactional* authenticity through a naturally occurring negotiation of meaning (see Ellis, 2007). Going beyond the classroom, however, immersion programs, for example, deal directly with the issue of situational authenticity which task-based language teaching (TBLT) in the classroom is never really disposed to providing. The issue of authenticity with respect to L2 student writing, on the other hand, is somewhat, though not entirely, different from that of speaking, and tends to focus on the issue of audience. Typically the audience for student writing is the teacher, and though it would be wrong to characterize this audience as inauthentic, because education and evaluation are real-world activities, there is a more subtle sense in which writing a letter to an imaginary newspaper, and to be read by the teacher, never quite lives up to writing a real

letter to a real newspaper. Simulation, in this example, much like a task in the TBLT classroom, is again what detracts from the authenticity of the experience, and the sense of communicative motivation which we would presume to be associated with such authenticity.

The general motivational value associated with the real or authentic audience available through blogs and writing for websites, for example, has been highlighted in several practical teaching and CALL forums (see, for example, Campbell, 2003; Vurdien, 2012; & Zhang, 2009) all of which speak to the power of providing a real audience for student writing beyond the teacher and the physical classroom. The versatility of blogs and their reflective and collaborative value are fairly obvious. Of course, the viability of an authentic audience for any particular blog is the heart of the issue. While a blog may exist in public space, there is usually nothing inevitable about it being accessed and read. Leslie (2017) describes the strategies and classroom techniques used to produce a student-written website dedicated to featuring the cultural and economic life of a local prefecture in Japan. The publishing exercise reported in the study proceeds well beyond the typical blog production, and raises important questions regarding the tension of balancing both teacher and editor roles for instructors involved in publishing student work.

To date, however, very little has been written about a more formal approach to publishing student work in EFL contexts, which essentially represents a serious attempt at the construction of audience for student written production. Isemonger (2007), in his account of the *Voices in Writing* journal, addresses some of the demands involved in such a project. The project recounted was very much in the shape of academic publishing (with an emphasis on peer review and so forth) rather than the publishing associated with journalism. Isemonger framed the pedagogical role of the project within the writing curriculum of the institution where it was implemented, and within the context of authenticity and motivation theory.

The *KU Campus News,* to be described below, represents a project with similarities to the *Voices in Writing* project, but also with some significant departures. The similarities reside in the formal approach to the construction of audience and to a regime of quality control which proceeds beyond the teacher's red pen, and into the realm of editorial oversight and the judgment of the public gaze. Also, in both cases, there is an issue of the public record in the minds of students, because contributions do not vanish into the teacher's desk draw, but remain relatively permanently in public space. The departures reside in the journalistic, rather than academic, character and direction of the publication. In an academic context, quality control is secured through a well-established and accepted system of peer review (usually double blind), while in the context of journalism, quality control is usually ensured through an editorial hierarchy, not to mention a production sequence which seeks to iron out the small proofing-type mistakes in order to reach final-copy standard.

While student publications such as campus newspapers are commonplace in North American universities either as genuine publications, or publications associated with teaching journalism (see below), they are written by L1 writers for an L1 audience. Thus, the *KU Campus News* publication presents as a special case of sorts in Japan, and furthermore, as an L2 publication has some benefits for the curriculum which go beyond those typically reported for L1 publications. The most important of these, is the provision of an authentically situated writing context for students.

Active Learning through Collaborative and Project-Based Activities

Ito (2017), citing Mizokami (2014), explains that the term 'active learning' started to gain traction and attention in educational circles in Japan from around 2010. The attention is explained as being associated with reports by the Central Council for Education between 2012 and 2015, citing, for example, the report *Towards a Qualitative Transformation of University Education* (Central Council for Education, 2012). This 2012 document associates active learning with collaborative learning and project-based learning and disso-ciates it from the traditional lecture. Ito and Kawazoe (2015) had earlier linked this form of learning with employability which is an issue obviously foremost in the minds of agencies such as the Central Council for Higher Education. Ito's study is essentially a critique of the view that active learning amounts to collaborative learning and project-based learning, with of course both of these implying socially situated learning of some form. From our anecdotal perspective, we recognize the object of Ito's critique, because there certainly seems to be a tendency to conflate these categories in tertiary education in Japan. Nonetheless, it is also clear from Ito's critique that he is not at all abandoning the connection between collaborative and project-based learning and active learning. On the contrary, in attempting to elaborate a notion of what he terms deep-active learning, Ito cites Grauerholz's (2001) constructive-interactive stage, as opposed to the passive-active stage, as more strongly associated with this type of learning. However, and whatever the case, it does seem that when the term active learning is used as part of the parlance of current tertiary education in Japan, collaborative and project-based learning are implied.

From our perspective it is not surprising that active learning, construed as socially situated learning, or collaborative and project-based learning, has recently become fashionable in Japanese tertiary education. If anything, what is surprising is that this has happened only recently. The increasing attention to socially situated learning is bound up with the revolutionary impact that theorists such as Vygotsky (1978, 1986) have had on pedagogical theory over the last 30 years in the West, and we include Japan as part of the West for this. Vygotsky's work, primarily advanced in the area of developmental psychology in the early part of the 20th century, was isolated from the Western intellectual trajectory for decades owing to the Communist East-Capitalist West divide. Situated in part as a critique of the work of Piaget (2001a, 2001b), work which did indeed find significant recognition in the West during the 20th century, Vygotsky outlined a form of socio-cultural constructivism in theoretical contention with Piaget's version which could be considered as constructivist, but not socio-culturally so. It would be reasonable to argue that while Vygotsky was not, of course, completely unknown in the West, the delayed surge of interest in his ideas only really began as late as in the early 1980s. However, from this time the surge of interest with respect to the importance of his ideas has been profound, and it is increasingly difficult to mount ideas on learning while neglecting the social aspect of it.

What is also important to note is that while the term active learning may only recently have become fashionable in Japanese tertiary education circles, this does not mean that active learning, with its socially situated connotations of collaborative and project-based learning, was never actually occurring before this. We would argue that the project outlined here, the *KU Campus News*, exemplifies an institutionalized project, with pedagogical intention and student involvement, which promoted, and still promotes, socially-situated and active learning

A Task-Based Environment for Situated and Naturalistic Oral Communication

Task-based language teaching, associated strongly within the communicative language teaching method-ology, is also a term which has wide currency in the present tertiary education environment in Japan, but with specific respect to foreign language learning/teaching. Notionally, it is not very much different at all from the collaborative learning and project-based learning associated with active learning covered above. It is, however, discussed separately in this section, because it would be fair to say that the term, and the methodology represented by the term, has a much longer pedigree in tertiary education circles in Japan. It is a methodology which is not indigenous to Japan, but its significant adoption is strongly related to thinking and policy directives from MEXT connected to foreign language teaching (usually English) reform which go back quite some time. The goal of MEXT to, over time, balance the curriculum in pre-tertiary education towards a greater emphasis on communicative English is well documented, and this is associated with directives such as the well-known English-in-principle policy, whereby Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) are encouraged to expand the use of English as a medium of instruction, and not only as a target for instruction.

Essentially, TBLT involves the completion of tasks by students in class, where the objectives are two-fold. On the surface level, the student goal is to complete a task using English, and the student may be consciously involved in objectively completing the goal. On a deeper level, however, the purpose of the task is not so much its own completion for the sake of it, but rather the language output it generates from the student. This output has the qualities of being communicative rather than rote; a form of free oral production. This contrasts with pattern-practice exercises and skits, for example, where the output is essentially memorized and then repeated, rather than generated.

An essential quality of tasks conducted in the TBLT classroom is that, although they have this positive quality of generating free oral production under communicative-curriculum pedagogy, they remain, nonetheless, simulations. It is in this respect that the *KU Campus News* adds a vital component to the curriculum. The tasks being carried out by students, predominantly in English, represent far more than simulation, both in terms of writing (drafting and re-drafting) and the spoken communication and negotiating of meaning associated with this process, and are very close to the type of tasks they would have to carry out in an English-environment workplace after graduation.

Project Description and Definition of Roles

When the *KU Campus News* was first conceived by a well-meaning and active group of English seminar students in 2004, the concept was embryonic, and not fully elaborated. None of the seminal students had a background in journalism, and none had experience with layout and design, or managing a budget, or the many other production-related skills needed for publishing a campus newspaper. They also lacked a general editorial concept and interviewing skills, and their English speaking skills far outpaced their writing skills. But what they did have was a very strong desire to create something lasting, to improve their English, to make their voices heard, and to create an English-language campus resource celebrating the student perspective. This combination served them well as they pioneered the *KU Campus News*.

To establish the *KU Campus News*, students needed to formalize how the campus newspaper would be

managed. The project was divided into editorial and production processes. Editorial decisions were firmly placed under student control with advisory support from the teacher provided only upon request. Students organized to appoint a student-editor, discuss story selection, practice interview techniques, and to delegate production tasks such as layout and design, scheduling and deadlines, and communication with the publishing company. The advising teacher was asked to assist with writing support, administrative matters such as budget negotiations with the university, and final copyediting. This clear division of roles and formal request of editorial teacher support helped to establish the project in the first couple of years.

While roles have continued to evolve over the years, it is clear that the seminal students were involved in project work which was more demanding than students who inherited the project with the engine running, so to speak. These early students were involved in activities which were highly collaborative and very much project based. While at this early point of setting up the organizational aspects, the opportunities for authentic writing were yet to begin, it was already clear that opportunities for authentic and situated English-language communication were always present. It would be a fair to say that all communication in the presence of the supervisory teacher was in English; whether this communication was with the supervisor teacher or with other students. Of course, communications with the publishing company would occur in Japanese, but while doing so, none of the ancillary and none of the language-specific benefits of active and collaborative learning were lost.

One major aspect of collaborative learning, under the socio-cultural constructivist framework, is the issue of who is teaching who, and how. This relates fundamentally to the notion of "mediation" which is so prevalent in social constructivism; and with social constructivism being the most properly elaborated theoretical framework for understanding the pedagogical worth of collaborative learning. In this, we can roughly locate two forms of mediation, which generally appear on a continuum rather than as categorically different, and these are mediation by peers and mediation by a more knowledgeable other. When students are collaborating with each other to solve problems and complete tasks, we would think of peer mediation. Conversely, when students are collaborating with the supervisory teacher, we would think of mediation by the more knowledgeable other. With a capable and active student-editor, the advisor teacher can take a lesser role. In lean years with less confident students, the teacher must take on other roles such as coach, idea prompter, and even as fellow writer from time to time. Admittedly, students need more support in some years than in others, but the student-centered nature of the initiative is always preserved.

An important aspect of the program is the embedding of peer mediation into the cycle of cooperative work among students by involving students of different grades. Students work on the project for three years, meaning that senior students are always mediating the activities of the junior students; and when this occurs the mediation is in fact moving up the continuum from peer mediation to mediation as a more knowledgeable other. Again, the quality of peer mediation depends on the ability and confidence of students in a given cohort.

It was helpful for students to clearly set out their objectives for the *KU Campus News* project, which were jointly negotiated by students and teacher. These objectives need to be revisited annually with each incoming student cohort. The mission statement for the paper reads as follows:

> *The KU Campus News* aims to provide an English language forum for sharing university related
> news from a student perspective, profiling students and faculty members involved in unique

endeavors, promoting a sense of pride in our university, and highlighting the international aspects of Kochi University.

Within this broad mission statement, more specific educational objectives were specified which are numbered below:

1. Produce a campus newspaper representative of the whole university, with news from all faculties covered in some way.
2. Contribute stories, interviews, and features written from the perspective of the students and which focus on issues of interest to the KU student body.
3. Profile foreign exchange students to help integrate them into the KU community.
4. Provide students and university staff from all faculties with a local context English learning resource.
5. Profile students and teachers engaged in unique/alternative educational, personal, or community related projects.
6. Improve the English-language writing skills of university students.
7. Improve organizational, media, critical thinking, and communication skills among students involved in the campus newspaper project.
8. Complete all project phases (editorial, decision-making, reporting, writing, and lay-out, design, and production) in English, and led by students.
9. Promote the university to prospective students and the wider public.

While the above objectives more generally relate to the product itself, and the type of content to be represented and publicized in it, it is important that even at the conception, aspects of the three pedagogical rationales discussed above, are reflected, either directly or indirectly. The above objectives were of course also negotiated with students rather than imposed by the supervising teacher. For example, Point 4 identifies the newspaper as, post-production, offering a teaching resource (for English) with local content. This means that aside from the authenticity imbued to the writing process by the intention to print and distribute the paper, the writing contained in each issue will continue to be used as a teaching resource over following years. This enhances the sense of legacy and public record for the writing being undertaken by students, and therefore enhances the overall authenticity of the writing process. This point (Point 4) is perhaps more important than Point 6 where the English-language learning objectives are made explicit. Another example would be Point 8 where the project-based nature of the project is properly specified; and it is additionally stated that this is to be done in English and by students. The environment for on-going and relatively unstructured (in that students are not in a formal classroom doing a TBLT assignment) task-based language learning is essentially specified in Point 8. The unstructured nature of the TBLT environment it sets up is all for the good, because it comes with the additional benefit that the task is not simulated as in a formal classroom, but is actually as real as one can get.

Each issue of the newspaper includes an editorial, a statement about the mission, objectives, and origin of the project, and box information on the back page about contributors. It is an eight-page publication, and with varying lengths of stories its conception is one of accepting full-page, half-page, and quarter

page contributions. A typical issue will have anywhere from 12 to 15 separate articles each of which are supplemented with photographs, graphics, and/or images. Depending on the number of participating students enrolled in the seminar, each student is usually responsible for two or three articles per issue. By far, the two most frequent kinds of stories are student profiles (club/community involvement, working holiday experiences, job hunting, and overseas activities), and profiles of foreign exchange students. The project also puts out calls for participant-based experiential reports by students on official international university exchange programs. The next most common contribution is teacher profiles in which students interview teachers, usually about their overseas research and educational activities.

In addition to these typical article styles, brainstorming sessions on story selection are held to come up with thematic concept section ideas such as publication of roundtable discussions with foreign students, or "Where are they now?" profiles in which student-writers get in touch with former graduates to learn about their post-university experiences. Also, and periodically, there are stories reporting the results of student surveys about what they think the university needs to do in order to improve, or other topics of interest to students. These stories are not regular features but give each issue a unique feel. Student-writers who are involved with university festivals or club activities, for example, put forward ideas to cover such stories during these brainstorming sessions. It is often in these sessions that the front-page story is decided.

One of the more inspiring and valuable parts of the *KU Campus News* project is when students from time to time make their voices heard in the form of campus activism and human-interest stories that have deep meaning to them. This aspect resonates with the project reported by Isemonger (2007), where one notional aspect of the publication (even notable in the title of the publication which was 'Voices in Writing') is not so much the neutral idea of going public, but more the empowering notion of giving voice. This aspect enhances the authenticity of writing for students, because the act of writing itself becomes empowering. While stories about student political activism are not common among young Japanese students, past front-page stories have powerfully demonstrated student responses to, for example, a controversial KU presidential election and the recent criticisms that Humanities faculties are facing from the Japanese government. When political activism on campus is represented, the stories have a certain edge not seen in the more common reports that are published. The *KU Campus News* also aims to tackle topical issues whenever possible. The 2011 Fukushima earthquake and tsunami disaster led to stories about foreign students who had to transfer to our university as a result, and students who later visited the area to do volunteer work. With respect to human-interest stories, one of the most moving articles that has been published in the *KU Campus News* was about a first-year student who got pregnant and was advised by faculty to drop out of university. She persevered and completed her undergraduate studies as a mother. The story focused on how she overcame prejudice and balanced motherhood with her studies. It can be a transformative process for student-writers to interview and report on such real-life stories, and the process contributes considerably to engagement with the humane, and the development of an empathetic adult mind.

Before stories enter the drafting stage, there is much that happens in the way of planning and preparation. One common problem that student-writers face involves the interview process. For English interviews, students must develop skills in asking follow up questions when conducting interviews. They quickly learn that the best part of a story often comes from digging a little deeper by going beyond prepared interview questions and asking questions based on interview responses. IC recorders are usually used and then students

transcribe the important parts of the interview that they will use in their stories. There is significant overlap between the skills developed in these interviews, and the skill which may be required for interviews as part of qualitative research for the undergraduate thesis with which all students will also be engaged. Students, in doing these kinds of interviews for the newspaper, are essentially, and sometimes unwittingly, enhancing their skills as a future researcher.

Some interview subjects, however, ask not to be recorded, which means that note-taking skills are also required for conducting interviews. Interviewees who cannot speak English pose another issue for student-writers, because they then have the responsibility of translating the words of others leaving the potential for misrepresentation of content. A key feature of the process is that we ask interview subjects to approve the final draft of the article before publication. Other editorial issues we face include approval of the use of photographs, and our "Where are they now?" column has led to official requests in how brands like ANA and JICA are represented. Negotiating and learning about these aspects of the editorial process are extremely valuable to students involved in the project. In this context, dealing with problems and challenges is actually the fertile soil of project-based and collaborative (active) learning. These problems and challenges are actually pedagogical opportunities at a deeper level.

Situating Pedagogical Support for Student Writing: Drawing on Multiple Approaches

The above issues serve to illustrate how the project conceptualizes authentic writing, collaborative and project-based learning, and the creation of a situationally and interactionally authentic task-based language learning environment. However, none of this escapes the fact that, at the end of all this, students have to ultimately sit down and write in a foreign language; and this presents as the highest hurdle that students face. It also represents the real operating space of the teacher as mediator; oftentimes very far along the continuum towards the role of more knowledgeable other. Even advanced EFL students struggle to produce good writing, and language support is essential to publish a campus newspaper in English. While the focus is on working with students by taking a process approach to improving their writing, there are elements of genre with which students must also become familiar. The pedagogical approach used for supporting EFL student writers in this project draws significantly on Badger and White (2000) who put forward a more complementary and inclusive "process genre approach." And, given that the *KU Campus News* is a published work, a good old-fashioned 'product' approach is sometimes needed as well.

A genre approach to writing instruction implies that we write with a purpose in mind and that writing is a value-laden, social activity fueled by the writer-reader relationship (Hyland, 2003). When students publish their work for a specific purpose, as they do for the *KU Campus News*, they must develop an awareness of audience which serves to focus their writing to meet the needs of a target readership group. Such an approach to writing necessitates, at least in the beginning stages, some explicit teaching about text types, the common grammatical patterns used in these text types, and what it means to write for a purpose, and to preserve the "generic integrity" (Hyland, p. 22) of, for example, a campus newspaper. As mentioned, this kind of work is the preserve of the 'more-knowledgeable-other' form of mediation as explicit instruction is invoked. This might be something as simple as teaching techniques for integrating quoted interview text into a story, or

modeling previous articles or similar text types. Or it can be as complex as advising students about how to socially situate an article for a community of readers by making certain language choices. Students need to be conscious of their purpose in writing a certain kind of story, about who their audience is, and what message they hope to convey through their story. As an example, a standard student profile for the campus newspaper will be written in a different style than will a report about a controversial university presidential election which would require a carefully drafted summary of the situation, a semblance of balance, and the careful weaving in of interview data from faculty and students. Student-writers therefore need some explicit teaching of target text types; a focus on the rhetorical structures of campus newspaper stories which addresses micro and macro examples provided in model texts.

After students become more familiar with the genre-specific features of writing for the *KU Campus News*, and once story selection has been decided, support of student writing becomes very much an enabling process-oriented approach. With its focus on guidance, intervention, and collaborative interaction about writing, and with its emphasis on regular feedback cycles and its dual focus on content and language (Caudrey, 1997), the process approach has obvious value for students writing in their second language in a public forum, with the caveat that the final published product is much more than just a secondary concern as it is often portrayed in the process approach. The process approach that is used to support student writing for the *KU Campus News* features a six-stage draft and feedback process culminating in face-to-face (F2F) individual conferencing. The six-stage process begins with a face-to-face conference in which students present a detailed outline of their story and a discussion about what will be needed to complete the story. The second stage involves submission of a first draft. In this stage, handwritten comments are provided on the content to offer general advice about how the story could be improved. Editing suggestions about language issues are provided only for the first half of the story with students expected to independently apply these suggestions to the rest of their story as they re-draft their story in the fourth stage.

When students have completed their second draft, a more intensive conferencing session follows. Conferencing works especially well for writing instruction with small groups of students. It allows for much needed individual attention and builds the student-teacher relationship (Anderson, 2000; Bayraktar, 2012). Advice given via conferencing is more specific than in typical written feedback and allows for immediate real-time responses to questions and comments posed by the supervising teacher. In the conferencing session, the student-writer and teacher can easily discuss and negotiate meaning and writer intent, and this face-to-face time is an opportunity for the teacher-reader to tease out more from the story if necessary. It is important to explicate that at this point the process of F2F conferencing is centered on a task, and the process therefore has the tangential, but additional, benefit of offering a task-oriented basis for authentic communication along the lines of TBLT, but only more real and authentic. What is also notable about this is that the benefit is received somewhat unconsciously, precisely because it is real, rather than consciously as in a simulated task in the formal classroom. It is beneficial with respect to oral communication growth while being focused on a written task. A typical conferencing session takes about 60-90 minutes per story. This would not likely be possible in a larger classroom environment but works well in an extra-curricular context structured around collaborative and project-based learning (or active learning). After the intensive face-to-face conferencing session, the student is usually comfortable enough with the draft to submit it for publication. The final stage is for copyediting when the advisory teacher and the seminar group meet to focus several sets of eyes on the

laid out version of the *KU Campus News*.

Overall, this elaboration of the founding and development of the *KU Campus News*, illustrates the pedagogical rationale which underlies it. This rationale, as earlier discussed, is three-fold, namely, to provide an authentic writing context for students, to promote active learning in the form of collaboration and project-based learning, and to provide an incidental task-based context for situated and naturalistic English communication. The project is particularly suited to this end, and in a way which the formal classroom is not. In the formal classroom, the student is inevitably writing for the teacher. While the teacher may ask students, in the process of writing a newspaper report, for example, to imagine their audience as real, in the final analysis the student accepts this as essentially artificial knowing that the only real eyes which will fall on the work are those of the teacher. Similarly, tasks in the classroom, under the TBLT framework, are in the end simulations. An information gap exercise where, for example, students have to exchange information as doctor and patient in a consultation, is in the end a simulation of what the students and the materials imagine would happen. Tasks in a project like the *KU Campus Newspaper* are much closer to reality, and are fitting to collaborative and project-based learning as part of an active learning framework.

Drawing Comparisons with Campus Newspapers in L1 Contexts

To our knowledge there are no examples of student newspapers written in English in Japan or in other EFL contexts; certainly none which have been reported in the literature. It is therefore worth stepping out from the confines of the project, to briefly consider what some of the differences are with student newspapers from outside of Japan, and in L1 contexts, specifically North America. There is wide variation in the kinds of student newspapers that are published on North American campuses. Some are quite activist in their aims, some are primarily exercises in writing where composition students can practice their craft, and still others have their ranks filled by journalism students learning about reporting and writing to deadlines. In their standard incarnation, a campus newspaper publication typically represents the concerns and perspectives of students about university politics and current events, with strong input from student unions. To compare such publications, mature in their traditions and in their comfort level about provocative expression of opinions, with a second-language writing endeavor in a context underrepresented by similar forms of cultural expression, is in many ways unfair. For a start, there are few if any similar student newspapers at universities in Japan, even ones written in Japanese. A typical American or Canadian campus newspaper has a greater publication frequency and often a web presence, incorporates an advertising budget, and has the length and feel of a 'real' newspaper with its coverage of university politics, broader community issues, entertainment, and sports. In short, North American campus newspapers are a much closer representation of real journalism.

There is, however, much that we can learn from using these North American examples, linguistically as a text model and, culturally, to see what is important to overseas students. With respect to the latter, established campus newspapers like, for example, *The Brunswickan* from the University of New Brunswick and *The Dalhousie Gazette* from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia regularly publish a large number of student and political activism stories, offering commentary on faculty strikes, sexual health, sexual harassment cases, student union activity, academic freedom, and LGBTQ issues. In short, there is a depth and maturity of content, freely expressed, aimed primarily at scrutinizing university administrations, and

addressing social issues. EFL students are often fascinated by such stories and introducing them to such text types can be an impetus for transformative growth and social involvement. As noted earlier, such hard-hitting stories do not often appear in the *KU Campus News* but, when the need arises, North American campus newspapers can model what a story might include in its coverage. It is these qualities which put these publications into a posture of closer representation of real journalism, but this assessment should not be read as deficit with respect to projects such as the *KU Campus Newspaper*, where the level of authenticity far exceeds that of the classroom, yet does not quite achieve that of typical North American examples. The context, not least of which is the L2 context, and the objectives are different. From the pedagogical point of view, many bases are covered and the project is properly aligned with what educational authorities in Japan seek for its tertiary institutions.

A look at selected campus newspapers from abroad highlights some of the key challenges faced by the *KU Campus News* project. Most of note, campus newspapers generally operate with no involvement from faculty and are fiercely independent by their very remit. When we consider the *KU Campus News* project, any discussion about how the teacher role might be further de-emphasized in the writing and production process seems counterintuitive given that it is an L2 English-language student publication without a significant operating budget. Yet the very involvement of a teacher, no matter how limited, and irrespective of the restricted editorial advisory role, sacrifices true student independence and can potentially stunt real growth as a student initiative. Beyond an over-reliance on profile-style stories, some repetitiveness of themes, a limited readership, a general lack of critical writing/reporting, and difficulties in coming up with new stories; beyond questions about whether greater frequency of publication should be considered or whether the *KU Campus News* will continue on in digital or paper format, it is this constant need to preserve and nurture the authenticity of student voices within this unique publishing context that will determine whether this project can optimally develop, and whether students can achieve real independence.

Conclusion

For any teacher or student group interested in publishing an L2 English-language campus newspaper, it is essential that students be the driving force behind the project. Beyond providing much-needed support for the foreign language writing process, the primary task for advisor teachers who assist with such projects should be to facilitate and nurture students as they develop editorial skills, organizational structures, and a sense of purpose to produce written work for public space. It is tremendously rewarding for students to write to a real audience and have their voices heard in a meaningful forum. Student writers mature over the three-year period of involvement in this campus newspaper project both in terms of their writing skills and the message they want to convey through their published stories. A student-editor can especially experience transformative progress in strategy, communication, and leadership skills as they grow into the position over a period of time. And just as the writing and life skills of students are developed through projects like this, there is also potential for teachers to be profoundly rewarded by helping students effectively communicate what matters to them. Even when the teacher role is necessarily only advisory in nature, it can be inspirational for teachers involved in such socially-situated, active learning projects where both linguistic gains and personal growth are realized through publishing the work of language learners in English.

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