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A Study on Creative Educational Methods Utilizing Active Listening

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A Study on Creative Educational Methods Utilizing Active Listening

アクティブリスニングを活用した創造的教育方法に関する研究

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Introduction

In Japanese school education, the "ability to live" was redefined in the 2008 revision of the Courses of Study (学習指導要領) issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MEXT, 2008). At the core of the revision was a special emphasis on "language," as the core of it, inviting for “enrichment of language activities” in not only Japanese but all other subjects. In 2017 revision of Courses of Study, Chapter 4, "Foreign Language Activities," states the objective as "to deepen understanding of language and culture through experience and to develop an attitude of active communication (MEXT, 2017). One reason for the necessity of this change lies in the fact that children do not have enough contexts to practice human building relationships skills due to decreased chances of communication with the birthrate declining and the number of single children families increasing (Tanaka, 2017). Tanaka states that because of low levels of self-affirmation and self-confidence, children do not have the ability to engage in dialogue, and that it is mandatory to develop education that evokes mutual acceptance. However, a 2013 survey of Japanese elementary school teachers on "communication using a foreign language" found that 51.4% of students were hesitant to actively communicate due to "lack of opportunities to speak a foreign language," "lack of confidence," and other reasons (Fujita, 2014).

It is important to acknowledge that the difficulty in communicational skills have reasons in educational ways of thinking that are focused on collective and civic needs. Wieczorek argues that critical thinking is not a skill that is in high regard in Japan as the students are taught to focus on perseverance and self-discipline in “one-for-all” settings. Students are mostly required to memorize text, which is then tested and as a result, there are high test scores that do not test the usage of data (Wieczorek, 2008). Review research by Hagerman argues that foreign language education policies in Japan have been created to position foreign language as a tool to knowledge, trade and internationalization. There have been many bilingualism proposals, yet those also have been predicated on state rather than the needs of the students (Hagerman, 2010). MEXT in its’ instructions for foreign language teaching of 2023 states the following: “In activities in which, for example, students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other, they should be able to perform language activities in which they have to think about how to express

themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition." (MEXT, 2023). The idea of putting a student in a situation where they must think of a communicative answer seems productive yet defining the response with "appropriate" gives an idea that there is already a limited preconception of what is expected from the student – this is an idea that keeps repeating without considerable results in the increase of student fluency.

The levels of English fluency remain very low with Japan having the second lowest TOEFL mode grade in Asia in 2022 (TOEFL iBT website, 2022) and students have been greatly reduced in opportunities for group learning about communication prior and during COVID-19. Research by Murayama and colleagues state that before the pandemic the social isolation prevalence had been 21.2%, but in 2020 it had reached 27.9% (Murayama et al., 2020).

In addition, one of the problems hindering the development of communication skills in Japanese educational settings is the spread of COVID-19, that began in early 2020. A report of OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) of early 2021 titled "The state of school education - one year into the COVID-19 epidemic," states that 1.5 billion students in 188 countries experienced the closure of their school in 2020 (Mori, 2021). Japan made the decision to reopen schools in June of 2020, which lead the country to successfully continuing schooling practically uninterrupted. This fact, however, reflects the situation only on the surface as the learning and socializing environment within the schools was altered with safety measures such as wearing masks, practical social distancing and ventilation in classrooms. This brought additional stress on academic and mental health of the students (Isha, Wibawarta, 2023). Unfortunately, the safety measure caused stress was present for almost three years until the measures were finally lifted in 2023 – during this time the adapted safety measures deprived students of opportunities for creative pair and group work.

Unfortunately, the statistics are possibly even worse for people with disability - as the social isolation during the pandemic in combination with a disability generates the same levels of loneliness as having 2 or more disabilities (Heinze et al., 2021). When the issue of changes in learning and socializing environments during COVID-19 pandemic is scrutinized in detail, it is also revealed that there is an increase in student suicides due unstable school schedules, occasional school closures and the sudden changes in learning environments (Koda et. Al 2022). Removing safety measures has not been enough to substantially contribute to decrease in student stress, as

the suicide statistics have had little to no improvement in 2023 (National Police Agency, 2024). [1] Radical methods are necessary in both schooling and extracurricular activities to minimize these statistics. The notion that social factors affect suicidal behavior has been long established (Amitai, Apter 2012).

The purpose of this thesis is to seek creative educational methods for diversity of Japanese people to alleviate the inability to communicate in verbal and non-verbal peer communication with the active listening in school education and extracurricular settings. Ultimately, it is necessary to reduce the stress in the educational environment by facilitating engaging and social ways of learning foreign languages together with other subjects to make the study process considerably easier for students.

The following two research questions were developed based on the purpose:

1) (validity of active listening) Do active listening based creative educational methods foster the development of listening skills and develop a positive attitude toward communication in foreign language lessons?

2) (applications of active listening) If so, what kind of active listening based creative educational methods are effective, for whom, and in what situations?

Tanaka argues that education for mutual recognition through communication might begin with “listening” to each other (Tanaka, 2017). A survey on communication conducted by the Kanagawa Prefectural Center for General Education on 5,391 students in Kanagawa Prefecture in 2014 indicated that "students are conscious of “communicating”, but they are not as conscious of “whether or not they got the message” as they are of “communicating”. In other words, students tended to be less conscious of "listening" and "communicating with others" than of "communicating" (Ichikawa, 2014). Listening is an educational method that promotes understanding of the other’s true intentions and fosters an attitude of respect. This method would be more effective if it was not imposed unilaterally by the teacher on the students, but rather generated creatively from the students’ own spontaneity. It is important to consider developing creative educational methods that encourage students to "listen" for development of

[1] In 2023 the number of suicides dropped by merely 7 people, with 507 student deaths. (Health Ministry data based on National Police Agency, 2024).

communication skills. That is because the lack of confidence in communication is a big issue in Japan, as seen in the previous studies.

The guidelines of 2023 for foreign language education by MEXT are designed for the students to have an immersive experience, indicating, that Japanese are trying to recover from past unsuccess in foreign language education organizing. The guidelines still contemplate situations such as shopping, greetings, self-introductions, talking on the phone, shopping, travelling etc. (MEXT, 2023). This knowledge is necessary, yet it is difficult to generate spontaneous interest among students unless it is accompanied by more creative tasks. MEXT listed situations imply that they are designed for civic goals rather than personal creatively communicative empowerment of a student. It is necessary to guide students to actively construct situations of interest to them in the target language they themselves wish to use in order to ensure that the student willingness to use this language in real life. There is potential in creating such spontaneity by constructing creative methods utilizing theater and sound design to draw out the students' active nature. Previous research shows efficacy of drama-based language learning as it is a process-oriented language learning with fluency being prioritized over accuracy (Giebert, 2014), yet it is found to be difficult to manage due to accompanying creativity caused over-excitement (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020).

Sound or music is another tool known to control stress and raise communicative abilities. A study analyzing the relationship between students' stress and music education and changes in steroid hormones and cortisol in saliva revealed that music education in schools tends to reduce stress and increase empathy in students (Hattori, Anri, Toyoshima, Fukui, 2015). This study suggests that the main reason for music classes to exist in schools should be defined as the acquisition of ability to empathize. The idea of using music education to "supplement" communicational skills which then would be utilized in foreign language education may contribute to reducing students' stress and improving their abilities and willingness to communicate, but it has not been established as a concrete lesson plan. Such lessons could be used to enhance the ability to actively listen and to not only self-express, but also be brave in the process by communicating initiative spontaneously.

Furthermore, research on mindfulness has shown to improve student psychological well-being, as well as improve the ability to memorize new information (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006; Quach et. al., 2015). Japanese utilize a type of mindfulness called *mokuso* in

schools during classes. Japanese *mokuso* (silent contemplation) is a technique with potential to reduce students' stress and encourage them to listen. The Japanese kanji character for *mokuso* (黙想) indicates the meaning "to be silent (黙)" and "think (想)". This method is widely used in martial arts and schools to prepare one's mind and body through regulation of posture, breath, and heartbeat (Araki, 1995) for a physical or mental learning experience. It is a form of mindfulness in which the mind and body are regulated by closing eyes, being silent, and adjusting posture, breathing, and heart rate. This method is promising for improving foreign language learning process, however, official information on how this method is conducted, when it is used and what are the effects of is lacking and requires documentation. *Mokuso* may hold a potential of non-verbal communication as it is frequently used without verbal instructions and that is why it is necessary to observe and interview students for such findings.

All the proposed methods contain qualities of a technique called "active listening". "Active listening" is a term that was created by clinical psychologist Carl Rogers in 1957 stating that "active listening requires that we get inside the speaker, that we grasp, from his point of view, just what it is he is communicating to us" (Rogers, Farson, 1987). It is a type of listening skill which when practiced unfolds an intuitive connection within an interaction. It has several names such as empathetic listening, speaker-listener technique, reflected listening and dialogic listening. Active listening can take several forms, such as paraphrasing a version of the speaker's message, asking at an appropriate moment a question, and inputting a moderate to high nonverbal conversational involvement (Weger et. al., 2014).

This ability is the highest level of listening and an extraordinary communication skill – it occurs in situations when one pays complete attention to what a person is saying and shows interest without interruption. Active listening mostly will not occur in hurried communication between two people (Gonzalez, 2009). This further implies that the students will be able to truly connect with each other only in an environment that attracts spontaneous communicative situations and perhaps a teacher can contribute to the indirect facilitation of such situations. Fostering such environments is highly important to ignite meaningful communicative contexts, which are described in each chapter of the thesis.

Based on the above, creative educational methods will be developed to encourage students to "actively listen" with the goal of fostering communication skills in school education

and extracurricular settings. To achieve this, first a literature review will be conducted on the fields of foreign language education, music education, sound related human psychology and mindfulness techniques. Based on the findings and problems the previous studies, educational methods utilizing active listening methods such as theater, sound design and *mokuso* will be developed.

The target educational settings for these methods are school education and adult aimed learning. The methods are the following:

1) An extracurricular class of English containing self-chosen target language-based "Role Play", after which the rate of memorized language is calculated for self-generated language and partner generated language. The preparation process to train the students and prepare the teachers before the experiment are documented and compiled in a comprehensive set of instruction;
2) A workshop of group sound design for adults which is followed by the presentations of created work, listening to it and delivering commentaries to one another. Before and after the workshop the participants are interviewed about confidence, self-perception, peer perception and willingness to repeat the process in the future. Both numerical and qualitative data are analyzed from these surveys;
3) A workshop of sound design for junior high school students with visual impairments. The process is documented by audio recording and, in which the methods of facilitation and the reactions of students are analyzed. This data is then transposed into a comprehensive situational method map describing facilitation steps and encounter behavioral reactions of communicative ability within the specific workshop;
4) An Elementary Grade 2 school English class grammar task, during which a classic *mokuso,* a guide sound utilizing *mokuso* and non-intervention are used to observe the effects on the ability to concentrate and listen to peers during the task. Amounts of grammar mistakes and movements after the interventions are measured by measuring the class video recording with the movement tracking software;
5) An Elementary school English class, during which a classic *mokuso,* a sound and guidance based *mokuso* and no *mokuso* are employed to observe the effects of the methods on the ability to memorize speech. Grammar mistakes are counted and after the process the

children are interviewed on their thoughts regarding their *mokuso* experiences, analysis is conducted on the observations of communicative nature. Additionally, homeroom teachers involved of first grade were interviewed about their utilized methods of *mokuso,* the purposes, timing and the way of training received and given. Their answers are analyzed to find commonalities and differences used and to identify the types of *mokuso* that exist in Japanese schools.

These methods are utilized and verified through the assessment of participant levels of memory, concentration, and self-esteem by both numerical and qualitative data. The described context of previous research, the problems within them and propositions that were put forward lead to hypotheses: active listening in education not only fosters the development of listening skills, but it also develops a positive attitude toward communication. Additionally proactive creation enhances student's ability to concentrate, learn and express oneself.

This dissertation starts off with a chapter for Previous Studies and discusses different issues in chapters two to five: the second chapter "The Role of Student's Imagination in Amplifying the Ability to Memorize Foreign Language" describes and analyses implementation and testing of a student imagination centered pedagogy to alleviate the inability to identify, memorize and communicate via a foreign language through utilization of the active listening skill.

The third chapter "Use of Group Sound Design to Strengthen Self-Expression of Adults" describes and analyses implementation of a workshop of group sound design for grownups that teaches sound design in groups, presentation of it and listening to each other's work to generate bravery in self-expression through the combination of challenge and empathy inducing experience.

The fourth chapter "Use of Group Sound Design as a Tool of for Visually Impaired Junior Highschool students for Communicational Empowerment Post-COVID-19 Japan" describes and analyses implementation of a workshop of group sound design for Junior Highschool students with visual impairment during which a method of comparison and feedback through listening was taught through facilitation to become a tool of socialization.

The fifth chapter "Tuning into Silence: An Examination of *Mokuso* Techniques in Japanese Elementary Education" describes and analyses the effects of group connectivity and

academic performance through the implementation of sound based and *mokuso*-based mindfulness techniques in elementary school.

I. Previous Studies

In this chapter, the efficacy of active listening for the enhancement of listening skills and cultivation of a positive communicative attitude within foreign language classes will be discussed. The term “active listening” will be defined, the origins of it will be explained, and the key aspects of it such as empathetic understanding will be described in detail. The ways of applying active listening to Japanese education will be discussed, along with the roots of active listening in counseling and then a potential in foreign language education.

The review of studies will then shift to the drama-based “Role Play” method and how it contains the elements of active listening, while a focus will be kept on the “Model, Action, Talk” (MAT) method and possibilities to enhance it. This part will also discuss the impact of technology on children’s attention span and learning. The effectiveness and challenges of drama use within foreign language education will be reviewed, emphasizing a process-focused style of teaching that puts priority on fluency over accuracy. The benefits of drama education in language education, especially the preparatory details, such as rhythm, miming, greetings will then be analyzed, reflecting the success in student engagement and learning outcomes.

The discussion will then continue to the COVID-19 problem of physical proximity alterations, having a necessity for the use of listening and sound creation as means of communicational skill improvement – the idea will move towards a possibility for universality in discussing positive effects bridging not only to school-aged education but also towards adults experiencing new ways to connect in work and outside. Specifically, in regulation of stress, group learning process leveling, and the increase in empathic ability. The problem of increased loneliness, especially for people with special needs, will then be discussed. The advantageous aspect of auditory skills, present in people with visual impairments, will be analyzed to then contemplate therapeutic and educational applications for a possible positive attitude towards communication together with self-confidence. This idea will root in previous research suggesting a positive social effect on elementary school students with no impairments.

The impact technology growth altering the length of tasks will be acknowledged with a contemplation about the uncertainty of how it affects the ability to concentrate in the long run.

The addressal of this issue preemptively will then be put forward. The reflection of mindfulness practice on language learning, with an emphasis on memory retention, will then be discussed. Specifically, a case will be raised on how effective it has been for the activation of working memory ability for junior high-school-aged students. The method efficacy will then be questioned with a proposal for timing to be shortened and potentially fit for elementary-aged students.

The discussion will then shift to *mokuso*, a specific type of mindfulness practiced by the Japanese to prepare for learning processes. The widespread use of the practice together with the absence of details in methodology and explanation will contemplate the existence of different types of it, effects of it on memorization, concentration, and non-verbal communication.

Finally, the discussion in this chapter and the tasks put forward will be summarized as a means of preparation for practical application and validation of them in the next chapters.

Active Listening

Active listening, a concept introduced by Carl Rogers in 1957, is a sophisticated communication skill that involves deeply understanding a speaker's message from their perspective (Yamada, 2016). The three elements of listening are "empathic understanding," "unconditional positive regard," and "self-identification". The listener's attitude equipped with these features allows the speaker to talk with ease. Active listening in the Japanese educational context has been used mainly in the context of psychological attitudes in counseling situations (Ishikura, 2016). On the other hand, in the context of English education, it is often addressed in "listening to words and phrases" to improve English listening skills, rather than a means of psychological communication skills development (Nishihara, 2009). As such, the conventional concept of listening tends to fix the roles of listener and speaker. In order to foster communication, it is necessary to design classes in which opportunities for listening are spontaneously alternated.

The communicational methods put forward in this thesis and explored by other researchers can be consolidated in a novel pedagogical and facilitation method based on group creativity, reflecting and, finally, active listening. It has several names such as empathetic listening, speaker-listener technique, reflected listening and dialogic listening. Active listening

can take several forms, such as paraphrasing a version of the speaker's message, asking at an appropriate moment a question, and inputting a moderate to high nonverbal conversational involvement (Weger et. al., 2014). This skill is highly important during initial interactions and keeping this idea in mind can help the educators, the students and other readers to obtain the throughline for success in different communicational methods.

One way to design a class in which opportunities for speaking and listening alternate spontaneously is assuming a role within "Role Play" and there are several different methods exploring this. "Role Play" is a technique used in education with the goal to expose learners to experience of genuine situation to strengthen the abilities of the learners to communicate naturally and meaningfully with their peers through topics related to their daily routines and future professional environments (Yen, Huei, & Kuo, 2013). Ritsuko Nakata, founder of IIEEC English Teacher Training Center, is also the author of "Let's Go," a best-selling ESL book for children in Japan. This method is called the MAT method, an acronym for the "Model, Action, Talk" method. This method leads to independent competence in the target language, gestures, practice of new vocabulary through pair work, and ultimately students' ability to use the target language along with question formats (Nakata, 2013). The efficacy of this method is in how students place their bodies, think, and act in theatrical situations. "Role play" focused on the "Model, Action, Talk" situation makes spontaneous the language and attitudes necessary for communication available.

There have been many factors which change how humans learn and perform during their years of childhood. One factor is the great increase of technology use with the beginning of the 21st century - the attention span has become very short due to the intensity the new portable devices like tablets, phones, games, computers, and most importantly social media offer us. It is said that children who are exposed to so called excessive screen time have their attention span, language and cognitive development impaired (Carson & Janssen, 2012). Other studies shows that children aged 4-6 who are exposed to screen time more often have lower emotional understanding ability (Skalická et al., 2019), expressive speech delay due to face-to-face interaction absence (Livingstone & Franklin, 2018).

Considering the pandemic and the collapse of a routine study style and the periodic halt of real-life education there has been a significant damage to the level of attention and motivation

that children accumulate in their everyday education path. In Japanese classrooms, especially the ones specializing in English education, the lessons are being concentrated on entertainment elements like games and songs, which often are very appealing to children. Unfortunately, they are not enough when it comes to development of practical English use, listening and comprehension. Somewhere between 2 and 8 percent of Japanese population consider themself a fluent English speaker (Oricon, 2014).

The language learning process is especially difficult due to natural lack of interest in the language in a country with comparatively little ethnic diversity. The expertise in English classroom shows that the problem arises in the way how the rhythm of the lesson is not consciously perceived, taught and learned by both the teacher and the students. Research shows that understanding rhythm of taught class is what enables a teacher to insert a particular cultural or personal mark on the teaching process (Clandini, 1989). Absence of teacher understanding the rhythm in class leads to moments where the attention span is spent due to inefficient sequence of actions and no more new information can be productively absorbed and used by the students. It is important to state the fact that not only the teacher to student command rhythm is to be considered, but also the use of ques manifested in the voice and movement of the participants within a lesson may bring benefits to the process. The use of cueing suggests that it leads the attention of the learner to the relevant piece of information or content, leading to a better learning process (Gog, 2014). Rhythm and use of body, however, are just the preparatory factors for the taught material to be fully absorbed - the component that holds the two of these is the application of the used language to real life situations. Unfortunately, schools tend to focus only on textbooks and tests, and that does not allow the child to imagine the target language as his or her reality.

Therefore, this paper applies the combination of the elements as preparatory measures for the students to become more focused, willing to participate in given activities and gain confidence. The main part of the study focuses on situations in which children learn to express themselves through self-generated dramatic situations through the method of “Role Play” and improvisation techniques and are performed in pairs using the basic layout of previously learned English conversation and grammar. The self-generated expressions and vocabulary will be examined in conjunction with the active listening mindset in English established through the drama class to see if they affect the ability to remember what they have learned.

Drama

The use of drama in language teaching has been shown to be effective not only for children but also for university students. A study has created a great insight of various methods summarizing the merits of using drama for teaching a foreign language to university students (Giebert, 2014). The author cites previous studies indicating the idea that process-oriented teaching style is arguably more liberating for the students as fluency is prioritized over accuracy - this approach is especially effective for students of lower level (Culham, 2002) via a setting where there is less pressure to perform flawlessly (Giebert, 2014). This is especially relevant to children who have a smaller intuitive understanding of the specific foreign language due to their native language having little similarity to the language being taught - for example, English language in Japan.

Giebert, however, accurately mentions the potential problem in the fact that the merits of the method are clear, yet not all the teachers would be ready using drama as their main teaching tool for their class due to lack of training and therefore a potential inability to perform examples situations in front of the students. The article contemplates a possibility of a specific training for teachers on how to get adapted to the method (Giebert, 2014). What these studies show is that accuracy is not what is important in communication. What is also important is to create situations where it is safe to make mistakes and to reduce the psychological burden on students.

Studies have shown that when the pressure on students to perform perfectly is reduced in language instruction that incorporates drama, paradoxically, students' percentage of correct answers improves. In research by Nasser Alasmari and Amal Alshae'el published in the International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies of January 2020, two groups of 20 sixth grade female students participated. The control group was studying English in a conventional teacher centered way using a textbook and the experimental group was practicing English using conventional methods of drama. The methods to assess the results achieved specifically was a test taken before and after the processes of learning English in an 8-week span. The research monitored the experimental group which learned English by using 3 sketches designed by the researchers from the textbooks of the students (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020). The results give

clear evidence that the students who were in the experimental group had considerably high results in their tests after the 8-week span than the control group (M= 10.1 and 18.4 with the latter score favoring the experimental group p=0.002) (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020). The research paper did a great job describing and citing researchers on the techniques of drama and their relations to merits and as importantly to demerits within them. The merits lie in specific techniques in the multi-dimensional base that drama-based tools such as "Role Play" and simulation provide to strengthen the development and stimulation of language learning (Koyluoglu, N., 2010).

In the context of a teacher who is an ESL (English as Second Language) teacher in Japan, most will have encountered the "Let's Go", which is also derived from the "MAT" method. Even though the book is a source of well-constructed lessons with grammar, vocabulary and written and recorded dialogues, it is somewhat insufficient to let the children fantasize real life contexts. The method of "Model, Action, Talk", are connected to the drama techniques that this paper focuses on. Additionally, the idea of interacting pantomime and gesture with the target language is valuable for "Role Play" (Capper, 2000). Despite being the source of the lesson, however, the situations presented by the book and school lessons are not grounded in the children's own reality and seem ineffective due to a lack of the ability to relate to the content. There is basis to believe that a theatrical situation that assumes the students' own real-life situation will induce spontaneous speech.

It has already been mentioned that the pleasure of creating and acting out drama enhances language learning (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), but there are problems with this approach as well. For one thing, it was that while the children were presenting the drama scenes they had created, their peers seemed noisy and difficult to control due to the excitement and creative atmosphere. The following is a direct quote from this issue:

".. issue noted by the observer was disengagement and non-involvement in the learning process on the part of some learners."

"This again may be due primarily to the teacher's lack of classroom control and also to learners' perceptions of this kind of activity, especially in cases where it did not appeal to their

own preferences and needs. It may also be attributable to some students taking a dominant role over most of the responsibilities, leaving no room for less dominant peers to get involved." ***(***Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020)[2]

A study in 2007 by R Allan Allday and Kerri Pakurar published in the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis states that greetings performed by the students raise the mean baseline on-task productivity from 45% to 72% during the intervention phase. Another research conducted by (Shields-Lysiak et. al., 2020) states that greetings which are performed not on a single occasion, but a lengthier period is a part of the so-called Dialogic pedagogy - a reciprocal, collective and supportive set of practices that bring about their purpose and accumulation after a considerable amount of time. It is stated that individualized greetings lead to the benefits of having sense of community, socio-emotional development, and a sense that one is always being heard. The involvement of a greeting is therefore essential in any lesson and especially in drama-based learning one as it would not only fortify the benefits of the method but could also potentially help teachers bridge a conventional English lesson with a more creative one, letting the benefits of both fuse into results. Based on the above survey of previous studies, this study aims to first construct an English based "Role Play" method that incorporates greetings to cultivate communication skills.

Sound Design

Next, against the backdrop of social unrest triggered by the COVID-19 an investigation will be conducted about the previous research on the use of "sound" to foster communication skills. The spread of COVID-19 began in early 2020, and 1.5 billion students in 188 countries experienced school closures in 2020. After this period humanity has done a lot of work in terms of organizing remote work and education. These alterations continue to be useful in an

[2] Alasmari and Alshae'el (2020 January), The Effect of Using Drama in English Language Learning among Young Learners: A Case Study of 6th Grade Female Pupils in Sakaka City, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies,* Australian International Academic Centre PTY.LTD p.65-67

increasingly uncertain world. Students and workers can conduct their studies and work from anywhere in the world and maintain the regular influx of new information. Methods of safeguarding the population, however, have come at a high price which is risk of social isolation caused premature death hazards rivaled only by smoking, obesity and physical inactivity and also a 50% higher dementia risk (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). The pandemic has introduced the world to the necessity to “find new ways to connect creativity, innovation, ethics and sustainability” for the objective of not only surviving this crisis, but also becoming stronger and more resilient (Hölzle et al., 2020, p. 195). Under the circumstances of the COVID-19, close proximity conversations and physical proximity were controlled to prevent the spread of infection, making it difficult to conduct classes centered on dialogue such as drama-based learning (Isha, Wibawarta, 2023). Therefore, focus was put on combining foreign language education with "sound design" to cultivate communication skills utilizing "listening.

The use of music has the potential to lead to a reinvention of the concept of work and school social bonding post-COVID-19 as it contains many well-known merits proven before the pandemic. As (Ryan and Deci, 2000) state - creative engagement in any form is usually self-driven and motivated by oneself and that leads to inner flourishing. Yet, musical creativity would need to be applied in unseen problematic contexts, such as the Japanese unwillingness to express oneself publicly and the lack of confidence.

Music is a well-tested solution to many health and educational issues. It is becoming evident that there are benefits that musical activity in groups can bring to counter social anxiety caused trouble. An example is Group singing in different settings can increase and decrease stress-based cortisol (Beck et al., 2000; Schladt et al., 2017). Music can possibly become a tool to empower presentation skills.

Research suggests that Japanese people's lack of confidence in self-expression is a psychological trait that negatively affects their interpersonal relationships if they believe that their expression will negatively affect them (Ogiwara, 2017).

Against the backdrop of the social anxiety of the COVID-19 and the psychological characteristics of the Japanese people, this paper will construct a lesson design utilizing group sound design. It will explore methods such as reflection on perceived work to help students find value in their own work and ultimately present it with confidence. For the purposes of this paper, sound design in the classroom will be defined as “sound design workshop”. Specifically, a piece

of music will be co-created by recording “looping” sounds of instruments and environment without the need for full-fledged music technology. The aim of this research is to investigate whether the widespread assumption that a person without a musical gift is not capable of creating any music, can not only be debunked but also to explore if and what could be the potential educational gains transposable to different contexts of learning. The analysis of the experiment also focuses on the applied facilitation techniques.

Listening to Music

Sound design is an unorthodox form of musicianship for both experienced and in-experienced to potentially access music without considerable difficulty and resources of time, however it is not the only aspect that gives leverage do so in the described manner. The group aspect in this type of musicianship has been proven to bring benefit to social skills and health, which brings benefit to society at a larger scale (Hallam, 2010). This form is also promising, as cross-level creation process can channel experience to inexperienced easier than autonomous learning. The exact aspect that allows this to happen is the mimicking of the process and to do so, one must employ listening skills.

Listening to music has also been shown to decrease the activity in the amygdala, which in turn leads to a decreased sense of stress related emotions and arousal (Moore, 2013). This then leads to feelings of happiness and pleasure (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Koelsch et al., 2016; Koelsch, Offermanns, & Franzke, 2010; Limb & Braun, 2008). This phenomenon explains how a challenge can be accompanied with positive emotions as group musicianship, especially, when the process involves listening to music of one another in turns within the same group process - perhaps there is a potential in difficulty being accompanied by stress relief.

A study by Schellenberg et al. in 2015 has examined whether group music training for children improves prosocial skills. The study focused on third- and fourth-grade students and was conducted over a 10-month period with a control group. The results of the study revealed significant gains in prosocial skills, but only for children who were lacking in prosocial skills before the study began. The gains were manifested through increased levels of prosocial behavior and empathy and were comparable in mandatory classroom situations to those of their own choosing (Schellenberg et al., 2015). This study focuses on the deeper level of the nature of

the activity: the pair-teaching component and learning music from each other. The study presented ways to enhance prosocial skills by focusing on children teaching each other and tuning into each other's playing of instruments. Two details are most specific and important here: children with social skills problems clearly improved, and entrainment released endorphins and encouraged group bonding elements, thus promoting group prosocial behavior. What this study shows is that the experience of learning music together through pair-teaching is more effective in improving prosocial skills than the question of whether it is forced or voluntary.

Performing or Creating Music

Performance of music in different settings can raise and lower stress levels. The perception of how a musician is being received by other people is also a powerful tool to control these levels of stress. The research discussing these elements is the following. A study analyzed 44 studies within which studies showed changes in biomarkers related to stress (cortisol, blood glucose and immune system measures) when listening to music, which shows the presence of stress reduction (Finn and Fancourt, 2018). These findings prove that not only performance of music is beneficial, but that also the seemingly more passive action of listening has a direct positive physical impact on us. An interesting thought to assess is the combination of creating through performance and listening. There is evidence that group singing in low stress conditions is associated with decreased levels of cortisol, whereas doing so in high stress conditions like concerts have shown increased levels of cortisol (Beck et al., 2000; Schladt et al., 2017). These functions of stress manipulation can possibly be combined to disassociate the stressful moments an replace them with a sense of a stress relief by performing listening in the right context.

The same research paper also talks about a phenomenon called cognitive reappraisal, which means to monitor negative thoughts and replace them with more positive ones (McRae et al., 2012). The reassessment of adverse moments and events associated with trauma with the goal of finding positive aspect within them, leads to resilience (Gross, 2002). This technique could be potentially valuable to control the perceived negativity of feeling ashamed or lacking confidence within group artistic creation activity involving display of created material, where

participants have no long-term experience. It could be generating stress from self-exposure in front of others and be reappraised by receiving meaningful comments by others. These ideas have the powerful potential of controlling social anxiety born during the years of pandemic (Farchi and Gidron, 2010). The method of monitoring negative thoughts and replacing them with more positive ones could also be considered as part of the active coping method, which is involving behavioral and/or psychological strategies to change the qualities of the stressor or how the stressor is perceived (Chesney et al., 2006). The topic of resilience within this compilation is extremely valuable because resilience is a quality that is under-explored, yet it brings a lot of value in an uncertain world. Contrary to an intuitive belief that resilience can be only trained via vigorous situations like exercise or working in a hospital or military, the discussed research complimented by the valuable data from the past aims to suggest that there are possible situations and activities in which resilience can be accessed through a psychologically and physically safe environment.

When researching the topic of music creation merits for groups, an interesting idea arises: music creation and performance contains an interpretation of individual and collective dynamics which come in a form of novel and truly creative cognitive relations. The authors have put forward the idea that these dynamics put parallels with self-regulatory homeostatic and allostatic processes of living systems which ensure survival, intelligent action, and structure in groups, putting the word *creative* in a different light (Maturana, Varela, 1980). The surprising moment of these findings is how counter-intuitively a media mostly associated with entertainment, culture and medicinal values is suggested to also induce processes associated with survival and evolutionary character. Sound in the form of music according to these ideas can and possibly should be acquired by the general society to evolve further as a species - the path to be paved for these ideas to be explored in action is to formulate and practically present them to a non-musical audience.

Musicianship in groups manifests evolution and self-regulation aspects in the reciprocal exchange baring stabilizing and destabilizing characters by musicians de-centering their agency in the process (Ryan and Schiavio, 2019). After summarizing the ideas these processes resemble negotiation in the form of action with the goal to achieve group merits by everyone exercising their arranged responsibility within a musical process. It seems that an element of selflessness is

present in a musical process which has a potential to resonate with the targeted Japanese society. However, for this idea to become practical a clever way on how to introduce it in Japan needs to be designed.

Music for People with Special Needs

Music is a well-tested solution to many health and educational issues. The American Music Therapy Association lists such merits as promoting wellness, managing stress, alleviating pain, expressing feelings, enhancing memory, improving communication and promoting physical rehabilitation (American Music Therapy Association, 2005). This is true for people with and without both physical and mental predispositions. When discussing music therapy, it is usually divided into two categories - the “receptive”, which focuses on listening and “active”, which involves the patient using musical instruments (Guetin, Portet, Picot, Pommè, Messaoudi & Djabelkir, et al., 2009). This definition of music therapy covers positive aspects that have been proven in science time and time again. It is also important to pay attention to the components of music therapy techniques listing such elements as writing song lyrics, writing the music for new songs and creating art by music which arguably could be listed as the third major category of music therapy, the *creation* of music. It seems to be a very different process to solely playing an instrument and/or listening to music as it involves the process of collective creativity and the management of it, which in turn leads to group bonding.

This is especially important for people with special needs in Japan due to the tendency of the Japanese society becoming increasingly lonely (Murayama et al., 2020) and the same or arguably even stronger effect present for disabled people (Heinze et al., 2021). This issue further highlights schooling life change caused related stress, that was identified in the beginning of this thesis (Koda et. Al 2022) and calls for action towards school aged audience with visual impairments. This research paper is an attempt to aid all parties involved, as both the cultural background and the COVID-19 restrictions have made the social separation between people with special needs and those without alarmingly present. Music is still a very unknown and under-researched field in science. It is essential to keep an open and a critical mindset in terms of the merits that music creation can bring. It is necessary to narrow down to only the most convincing

and useful tools as they can be carefully tailored for specific sub-groups of the society to acquire specific merit for their individual needs.

Research shows, however, that people with vision impairments have an array of advantages in terms of audial skills such as being better at sound localization, process audio stimuli faster, using echolocation to understand their surroundings, processing words and sentences faster and remembering auditory stimuli (Bragg, Bennett, Reinecke, Ladner, 2018). This puts forward the following problem - there is a necessity and potential for measures of social skill development utilizing sound design and employing comparison through listening to communicate in schools for visually impaired.

The amount of social exposure for people with visual impairment is naturally lower, as there most of the society do not have the same condition as they do. Ways in positive communication could be fostered naturally could be through employing group creativity on mixed special needs and non-special need audiences. There is a necessity to look for ways in how the audial advantage of people with visual impairment can be used as an advantage for generating a sense of connection to alleviate loneliness and stress. It is important to take in consideration the implementation of previous prosocial behavior and empathy enhancing context (Schellenberg et al., 2015) for an upcoming work for students with visual impairments to see if any previous merits can be adapted to see if this creative method can bring any effect on positive attitude towards communication and self-expression.

Mokuso

So far, analysis has been done on classroom methods made to cultivate the ability to "active listening " through drama-based learning and group sound design, and to develop a positive attitude toward communication. Finally, focus is placed on the Japanese custom of " *Mokuso* (silent contemplation)" as a method of introducing a class that encourages listening and awareness of one's surroundings. *Mokuso* is a form of mindfulness in which the mind and body are regulated by closing eyes, being silent, and adjusting posture, breathing, and heart rate. In Japan, it is often used in martial arts and school education to enhance concentration on what to do next. With the rise of speed in technology tempos of work and study habits are also affected. According to the research done in February 2022 by the Centre for Attention Studies at King’s

College London, technology has generated more distractions and reduced the need to work long tasks to achieve set goals. It is unproved if this truly impacts the ability to concentrate. (Duffy, Thain, 2022) Before this hypothesis is proven, educators must teach the children how to adapt to both - shorter and longer tasks. Mindfulness practice possibly has the potential to retain focus for both, but there is necessity for further investigation on the potency of it relating to the problem and whether it can serve any unnoticed educational purpose.

When discussing the types of mindfulness practice, the research about the effects of different media use for achieving the state of mindfulness is scarce, especially for the age of elementary school, yet potentially fruitful for usage is schools. Distraction and wandering in one's thoughts have a higher probability of occurring when one does not have prior experience in mindfulness (Thera, 2009), therefore, guidance from an instructor and/or ambient sound can perhaps be aiding in keeping attention focused on the present moment (Philips et. al., 2019). The media of sound has a property to change brainwaves and prepare the body for specific processes - a research from 2016 reports findings that mindfulness practice focused on singing bowl sounds can reduce feelings of tension, anxiety, and depression, especially the parameter of tension seemed to lower in participants in their 20s and 30s, when in comparison to older participants (Goldsby et. al., 2016).

Release of tension may be pivotal in process of learning, yet according to Spielmann and Radnofsky in 2001, presence of tension is important for language acquisition as it has different qualities to it and is not a linear parameter - the students being able to develop a "self" in a foreign language is what matters more over grades and scores (Spielmann, Radnofsky, 2001). Presence of the "self", however, can be exercised via mindfulness practice.

A research paper published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* presented statistically convincing findings within experiments which suggest that mindfulness practice increases working memory capacity in adolescents. The notion of mindfulness practice requiring constant attention and simultaneously redirecting the attention to oneself being related to the function of working memory is relevant. This experiment was conducted with students being taught mindfulness practice for 8 times 45 minutes a time and then having them perform the 15-minute mindfulness practice daily at home. The overall intervention time was 4 weeks (Quach et. al.,

2015). These findings are very convincing and makes one wonder whether the merits exist also for younger elementary school children - 15-minute home meditation is not an appropriate method for young children due to the length and requirement of self-discipline and regularity for the task, therefore, the question is whether the method could possibly work for very short amounts of time, such as 2 minutes and a half and in class. There is not much data to compare to in terms of length, however, one of the interviewee teachers said that they would let the children practice till unnecessary body movement visibly disappears.[3]

The Japanese *mokuso* educational tool does not exist anywhere else in the world. This tool stems from Japanese martial arts and the continuous practice of martial arts is what allows this method to remain in use today. The word 先生 or *sensei*, contains several meanings, of which 3 are "instructor", "master" and "teacher". When observing typical lessons in elementary (junior high and high) schools in Japan, often any lesson will start with the command which is as follows: "立腰して黙想しましょう。" 立腰 or *ritsuyo* translates as *the standing back*, an expression which is often at schools for children to assume a healthy posture when sitting and 黙想 or *mokusō* which consists of two symbols meaning *silent* and *thought*/*concept*. This is can then be translated in English to the double meaning of *meditation* and *mokuso*.

Mindfulness from the point of view of academia has been famously precisely described by the prominent researcher of meditation Kabat-Zinn: "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). *Mokuso*, however, widely used in martial arts and schools, is used as a method to specifically *prepare* one's mind and body for a physical or mental learning experience. In Kendo, the process of *mokuso*, which is performed before and after practice or matches, aims for the harmonization of mind and body and concentration through regulation of posture, breath, and heartbeat (Araki, 1995). There is a distinct difference in the processes of mindfulness and *mokuso*, as *mokuso* has a designated context for utilization. As the method focuses on body and mind preparation, value may be found

[3] Interview with an anonymous elementary school homeroom teacher in Fukuoka, August 27th, 2023

in exploring the effects on language memorization, the use of it and collective communicational tendencies. The Japanese schools seem to focus on the meaning of "silent contemplation" when *mokuso* is used, as the students are free to ponder in their minds as they like - this statement, however, is not yet proven and in this research paper an additional goal has been set to find out more about this process by interviews not only for the teachers, but also the students.

In martial arts the *zen*-principle manifests as awareness of oneself, of one's consciousness and everything therein - the practical implication of the use in martial arts is to bring the practitioner into the focused mindset of combat and then to exit it with feeling of appreciation (Wolf, 2020). With similar analogy of entry in process with engagement and departure from it with gratitude, the habit of *mokuso* can be used to affect student's mood, focus and eventual academic success advantage. However, if the practice is brought upon students without a lucid idea of purpose and timing, it has a potential to elicit confusion. Japanese communicative culture values the prevalence of silence in information exchange, which comes from consideration towards the head space of one another. *Mokuso* practice without any assisting media or guidance may seem as less effective than sound-based *mokuso*, but it would be valuable to explore both knowing the value of silence in Japan. As the great composer John Cage has said "Not one sound fears the silence that extinguishes it. And no silence exists that is not pregnant with sound." (Cage, 1961)

The general question to be answered is this: is guided *mokuso* technique based on the perception of sounds is more effective than a regular non-guided *mokuso* practice and what are the effects of it on communication, focus and the ability to memorize foreign language in elementary school students.

Japanese schools widely practice *mokuso*, yet the instruction is entrusted to the teachers individually. Since there is an ingrained culture of silence in the society, it is important to find out what are some of the specific teaching instructions and goals and usage context *mokuso* in schools, to further uncover which styles of teaching *mokuso* have potentially the most impact in retaining new information in, for example, language learning and whether there are other notable, so far unknown benefits that the teachers and students detect by using this method.

The absence of details regarding the use of *mokuso* in Japanese school classroom context can be speculated to be caused by how religion is being viewed in Japan. Historically, religions

were viewed as a deviant threat to public order by political ideologists and the media during the Meiji Period, the image had further become more negative by the pre-WW2 State Shinto nationalistic radicalization (Bafelli & Reader, 2012). Due to the historical course which religion has taken in modern Japan, there is a present cautiousness within the society towards any practices of religions, especially if they are new. The same perception works on activities that have an even remotely associative relation to religion such as meditation when they approach the structures of state such as education and politics. The Japanese constitution states that there is prohibition for the state and its organs from engaging in any religious education or other religious activities (White, 2004). Such legislature possibly affects the lack of mindfulness practice guidelines in the official MEXT guidelines.

In 1998 there was a study conducted by Robert Kisala and other scholars, who involved interviewing the public on their views regarding religion. The results showed that religion scored 18 percent of approval rate on religion in Japan in comparison to 48 percent in Europe (Kisala 1999, 60-65). The absence of guidelines for the use of *mokuso* within schooling processes, and yet at the same time meditation being mentioned as a tool for stress relief for children who study abroad is a situation of paradox. It describes the belief in the tool of meditation and the effects of it in the context of stress reduction in problematic situations during overseas studies, but there is no discussion about it within the national education system. As much as situations of this sort seem to become a loss of educational value, it is important to keep in mind the culture of *communicative ecology* in combination with the cautiousness towards religious activities, as mindfulness stems from meditation, which originates in Buddhism. Yet, as discussed before - the frequency of the habit in schools and the specificity of silence being a communicative value, there is an opportunity to explore how *mokuso* affects the process of language acquisition at schools.

Clarified values and improved behavior based self-regulation are potential aspects through which mindfulness practice identifies anxiety or fear but are instead able to use them as information as well as aid on to act in ways that are more congruent with their actual values and interests (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006). The described effect is very relevant, when discussing the organization of a lesson of foreign language education in Japan, as children have potential to organize themselves in groups for movement-based “Role Play", but often

become disengaged due to tendency to start using excess movement and playfulness due to inability to focus and “drill” new language material.

Being present with objective, non-judgmental and open thoughts and emotions may be able to generate clarity towards one’s values and behaviors, has shown extra engagement regarding one’s interests and behaviors one values (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Through the above investigation of "silent contemplation" (*mokuso)* and "mindfulness," it was found that "setting aside time for silence" may help students become aware of their surroundings and inner world and clarify their values and actions.

Summary and Tasks

In this chapter, research on active listening, drama for language learning, music creation and perception, mindfulness and *mokuso* were reviewed. They revealed points of past success and problems. It was then discussed how the previous research could be implemented in further tasks to utilize previous knowledge to construct and assess new creative methods for specific contexts and audiences and with specific methods of verification when possible. Firstly, the discussion started with counseling originated increase of interaction depth via active listening having the potential of being applied in foreign language learning as a means for communication skill development. This idea originates in previous research supplied proof of its’ efficacy in achieving a moderate to high nonverbal conversational involvement. The idea of activating new communicational dimensions in listening can cause the enhancement of language learning through focusing on the speaker, rather than just their used language (Weger et. al, 2014). To prove this the task of practically involving these ideas in a foreign language lesson process and documenting it to serve as creative methodology and then verifying the effect is put forward.

Then the review moved on to the “Model, Action, Talk” and the merits of physical engagement evoking more natural and use of foreign language (Nakata, 2013), but a necessity for student decided target language-based “Role Play” situation addition to evoke spontaneous language to strengthen its’ effect was identified. The reason for this is that “Model, Action, Talk” alone seems to be insufficient to generate are real life context. English education, it is often addressed in "listening to words and phrases" to improve English listening skills, rather than a means of psychological communication skills development (Nishihara, 2009), which indicates of

a socio-cultural detachment from this language. As a response to this student body, thinking and theatricality involvement was deemed to be necessary, because that would put focus on process-based fluency of instead of accuracy-oriented results that cause pressure to perform (Giebert, 2014) in lower-level students (Culham 2002). Even though this "Role Play" is found to be more effective for the memorization of text book based information with creative measures, the method of "Role Play" is accompanied by overexcitement of students (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), As means to alleviate this problem, while sustaining memorization results, the involvement of miming for para-lingual communication induction (Capper, 2000), greetings for productivity and feeling of inclusion (Allday, Palkurar, 2007), rhythmicality for the personal and cultural input of the teacher (Clandini, 1989) and audial cues for increase in focus on relevant pieces of information (Gog, 2014) were proposed. The task of an experiment containing students memorizing their decided language is then to be conducted and measured to verify the effect of the compounded methods as a comparative alternative for the (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) experiment of a drama class focused on textbook expressions, accompanied with problems of student behavior control. This experiment will be done to verify if the method combination fosters the development of listening skills and develops a positive attitude toward communication in foreign language lessons.

The narrative then shifted to the topic of the need to utilize of a music as means to cultivate communication skills in physical proximity limitations during COVID-19 (Isha, Wibawarta, 2023). The previous research findings discussed increase of social skills, decrease of stress and skill growth by group self-regulation through practicing and listening to music (Beck et al., 2000; Schladt et al., 2017; Hallam, 2010). The conversation then discussed the lack of confidence to self-express in Japan (Ogiwara, 2017) needing to be addressed by finding value in one's creative expression (Gross, 2002) through the stress of presenting one's sound (Beck et al., 2000; Schladt et al., 2017) and then lowered by listening to that of others (Moore, 2013). Because these ideas, have not been connected in a single method so far, the task of merging these ideas in a "sound design workshop" method is put forward. The method's effects on willingness to express oneself is to be measured with pre and post process surveys together with qualitative analysis of the workshop to understand to what extent this effect is possible.

The discussion then shifted to the problem of increased loneliness in the main population (Murayama et al., 2020) and especially in the population with special needs (Heinze et al., 2021).

This further emphasized the issue of school aged experienced heightened stress and disruption of ability to connect (Koda et al., 2022), calling for action with an audience of school age students with visual impairments. Music was then discussed as a cognitively advantageous aspect of people with visual impairments (Bragg, Bennett, Reinecke, Ladner, 2018). Because arguably the higher-than-average stress levels for school aged students with special needs together with a cognitive advantage of sound perception were identified, a need for social inclusion through investigation of how and in what ways this problem and feature of advantage could be aligned was put forward. The task of exploring whether and how sound design can foster a positive attitude towards communication for students with visual impairments is now put forward. It will be done by qualitative data collection via process documentation to see if there are empathy and communication enhancing effects through sound design.

Finally, the discussion moved on to acknowledging that potential distraction-based inability to concentrate has unknown consequences (Centre for Attention Studies at King's College London, 2022; Duffy, Thain, 2022). This put forward a need to adapt students to both long and short tasks with a proposal in to use mindfulness-based methods. Afterwards, research highlighting working memory boost in adolescent was discussed (Quach et. al., 2015). This method was proposed to be adapted in elementary class with shorter time usage, in the form of *mokuso,* a Japanese form of mindfulness for learning preparation (Araki, 1995). Because there is proof of memory enhancement in older children and this method is practically employed in elementary school of Japan, the task of exploring the efficacy of an adapted method for younger students measuring memorization rates in a shorter time span needs to be put forward.

The discussion shifted the to the problem of excess movement causing disengagement of students in class. Previous research highlighted mindfulness-based action to cause students to self-control in favor of their study interest (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006). Additionally, the incorporation of guidance and ambient sound usage to recalibrate focus was found to be effective retaining attention in previous research (Philips et. al., 2019). As previous research suggests an effect of self-control and yet the effect seems to be vague in how it has been measured the task of testing whether it manifests specifically in movement must be put forward – it will be investigated with the usage of a movement tracking device. Lastly, the lack of official guidelines for *mokuso* usage together with previous research highlighting the high regard for non-verbal informational culture (Kimura, 2010). This led to the question of whether the students

freely ponder in their minds and what are the effects if any on group communication of the different approaches in *mokuso*. To answer this question the task of gathering responses to these questions and then gaining an understanding of any group-based tendencies through interviews is put forward.

II. The Role of Student's Imagination in Amplifying the Ability to Memorize Foreign Language

The language learning issues in Japan are reflected a questionnaire conducted in a Japanese Elementary school, which reveals that close to 50 percent of Japanese students do not have the confidence to utilize the language which they are taught at schools (Fujita, 2014). Previous experiments with "Role Play" show, that textbook expression memorization rates become higher, but at a cost of loss in behavioral control within the lesson (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020). This chapter describes an experiment that takes an existing English class "Role Play" framework (Nakata, 2013; Yen, Huei, & Kuo, 2013) and builds a method that induces willingness of the students to utilize spontaneous creativity. The experiment will contain students memorizing their decided language with preparatory measures of greetings, rhythmicality, audial cues and miming and then the memorization rate will be measured to verify the effect of the compounded methods. This creative method will be explored as an alternative for the (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) method of a drama class focused on textbook supplied expressions, accompanied with problems of student behavior control. This experiment is done to verify if the method combination fosters the development of listening skills and develops a positive attitude toward communication in foreign language lessons. The idea of activation of new communicational dimensions in listening can cause the enhancement of language learning through focusing on the speaker, rather than just their used language (Weger et. al, 2014). This chapter will explore a method compound based on aspects of active listening, through which students can arguably identify with, learn foreign language and create a learning environment that accurately recreates real life experience in spontaneity to ultimately encourage the confidence to use the learnt language.

Methodology of the Experiment

While there has been an invaluable history of extensive research and convincing results related to drama in language learning, there seems to exist a wide gap of differences between drama and conventional foreign language teaching that hinder the opportunity to incorporate one style of teaching into the other. In the very different world of professional acting a certain level of discipline is required to achieve results in the creative sphere. Foreign language education filed can benefit greatly from this work ethic philosophy. With this idea in mind, the research starts out as a preparatory description for groups to be trained with a specific agenda of greetings, rhythm, and cues to make them organized enough to avoid chaotic situations amid the creative tasks.

With preparation keeping its' emphasis, this research focuses on exploring the potency of the setting when students can memorize expressions in English more easily when they have chosen the expressions they want to learn independently and spontaneously. They do so by having been told the theme of the "Role Play" and by being asked to brainstorm an expression in their native language, memorize the translation of it done by the teacher and then perform it using "Role Play" and pantomime techniques in front of their peers.

The hypothesis is that in proper discipline and level of engagement, the ownership of study material creation gives pupils a higher ability to memorize more complicated language than on a normal drill-translate-answer language agenda.

The purpose of the experiment to verify, whether the method, employing specific steps of preparation and focus on student decided expressions can have both control of class, success in expression memory retention and signs of active listening while making a relative comparison to (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) method's success rate in memory retention for the learnt expressions. Differences in experiment design and participant features will be taken in consideration to understand what the potential practical implementations in future experiments and class settings are if the method(s) are decided to be used.

Specific method steps:

1) Teaching Preparatory Elements:
   - lesson rules (1. Hands down, 2. Speak clearly, 3. Listen carefully);
   - audial cues (after an activity is finished “make a circle”, before an activity starts “ready, set, go” and clap hands),
   - raising hands to avoid interruptions.
2) Practicing “Role Play” dialogue consisting of greetings and simple questions and answers ending with the student expression exchange;

   The “Role Play” framework is taught in two versions – the basic version with the use teacher taught verbs, that students choose to use and the altered version that is taught 2 weeks later, where students substitute that verb-based phrases with their own self-selected expressions, which are initial unknown to them in the taught foreign language, therefore translated by the teacher.

   Basic “Role Play” framework:

A: “Hello!”
B: “Hello!”
A: “How are you today?”
B: “I’m fine thank you! How are you?”
A: “I’m fine too thanks! Let’s [verb chosen by student A]
B: “Yes, let’s [verb chosen by student B]!”

   Student Expression Altered “Role Play” framework:

A: “Hello!”
B: “Hello!”
A: “How are you today?”
B: “I’m fine thank you! How are you?”
A: “I’m fine too thanks! [Expression chosen by student A]

B: “[Expression chosen by student B]!”

- Student self-generated curriculum is decided with the help of a teacher given theme presented to the students (“Challenge”; “I’m busy”; “It’s scary”; “I’m tired”; “It’s hard”. The themes should have a problem element for a suggestive and creative process)

3) Drama based instruction for acting and perception of partner during the “Role Play” training:
   - Emphasis of clear speech;
   - Use of theatrical hurdles in the dialogue;
   - Teaching the presenters and listeners the empowering property of a fully listening audience;
   - using miming.
4) Active listening instruction during the “Role Play” training:
   - training students to listen and understand non-verbal language (body movement, voice tone, subtext);
   - training students to correct and accept corrections when a mistake is made (paying attention and accepting partner input).
5) Teacher and student relation building:
   - students selecting optional activities,
   - discussing discipline together to avoid scolding,
   - praising specific student actions (verbs), when difficulty is overcome.
6) Class Control mainting:
   - Pace control – lesson sped up or slowed down by the teacher when necessary.
   - Controlling the energy of class by use or lack of reward activities, such as games.
7) Presentation of 1. dialogue, 2. learnt expressions (everyone drills the expressions) and 3. meanings to listeners.
8) Verbal testing and feedback session of what is learned and what could be improved both on the side of students and the teacher.

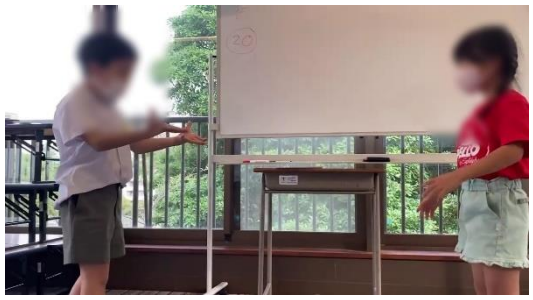
Specific Details Concerning The 8 Steps of the Method (Teaching Tools)

It is important to acknowledge that the methodology of the experiment is holistically supplemented by rigid preparation and a set of principles employed by the educator (points1, 3, 4, 5, 6). These steps should be introduced gradually, and the educator must prepare oneself with patience as these steps reflect a lot of trial-and-error situations. The main principle that the students should have developed at latter part of the experiment (week 6-8) is the sense of active listening: enabling themselves to understand ideas in body language and tone; making the speaker more confident (when they are listened to) and allowing the listener to assist others when understanding an error in the listening process. The teacher must mirror these principles and demonstrate them in his own actions when leading the educational process so that the students can mimic these positive effects. Most importantly for both the students and the teacher is to maintain the Growth Mindset, that enables a positive outlook on mistakes and focuses on praise with a verb like nature to highlight the positive moments of overcoming difficulty. Research has shown that intelligence praise lowers the motivation of students (Mueller et. al, 1998).

No.	Steps	Strategy	Practical Implementation
1	Teaching Preparatory Elements #1: Adapting and Tailoring Rules	**Make rules for engagement and avoidance of distraction**. (e.g., From "Hands Down", "Listen Carefully", "Speak Clearly")	At the beginning of each class, it is encouraged that students remember and recite the class rules both in the learnt foreign language and their native tongue.
1	Teaching Preparatory Elements #2: Audial Cues	**Teach students audial cues:** "Make a Circle" at the end of an activity as transition for the next activity, "Ready, Set, Go" and clap as a beginning of an activity and a signal to put in complete focus in observation	It is encouraged that students form a circle after a verbal cue preceding and following each activity. Engagement is promoted through movement. This serves as a good transition between activities, helping to maintain student interest in the lesson while keeping their unnecessary movements in check.
1	Teaching Preparatory Elements #3: Hand Raising	**Responsible hand raising:** Teach when and how to raise hands appropriately.	A clear idea of how hand raising should be done is established and its use is emphasized for important questions or issues, rather than minor interruptions. Students are presented with situations illustrating both appropriate and inappropriate use of hand raising. These situations are then discussed

			by the students to reinforce understanding.
2	"Role Play" Method	**Student-centered learning: encourage self-generated material** in dialogue and improvisation.	The students are allowed to create their own dialogue endings and character motivations. The teacher steps in with constructive advice when necessary, ensuring that the guidance is non-intrusive. This delicate balance can be honed through active listening and a trial-and-error approach. Students are given the freedom to accept the teacher's advice or discuss an alternative to it. Emphasizing the importance of being ready to acknowledge a mistake and retry at the appropriate time is a key part of the teaching process, as it reinforces that there are no other ways to learn this skill effectively.
3	Drama Based Instruction for Acting and Perception of Partner #1: Clear Speech to Find Strength	**Emphasize speaking clearly:** explain the dual aspect of making others understand you and building your own confidence	Students are encouraged to strengthen their voices by using their stomach muscles and to articulate every word clearly through proper mouth movement. It is reminded that speaking in a loud voice during role-playing boosts their own confidence.
3	Drama Based Instruction for Acting and Perception of Partner #2: Theatrical Elements	**Role-Play**: **use theatrical elements to induce a sense of a communicational reality** via creativity.	Experimental moments are demonstrated with "Role Play" exercises where students imagine their dialogues in specific circumstances, venues, situations, etc. Students are talked to about the occurrence of natural reactions

	(Hurdles in Conversation) 		during a dialogue, which may prompt them to change their text, and they are encouraged to do so if they feel inclined. It is explained to them that this approach closely resembles the use of language in real-life contexts.
3	Drama Based Instruction for Acting and Perception of Partner #3: Audience Engagement Empowering Others	**Teach the empowering property of a fully listening audience** being connected to the presenter or the speaker	Exercises are conducted where students experience the difference between performing for attentive and inattentive audiences, which proves to be very rewarding. Students are exposed to both a highly concentrated audience, experiencing the motivation that comes as speakers when others are truly listening, and to the contrasting feeling of lacking the strength to perform as well when the audience is preoccupied with something else. At the end of these exercises, the value of active listening is highlighted, and students are reminded to practice this in real-life settings as well, to create a rewarding experience in communication with others.
3	Drama Based Instruction for Acting and Perception of Partner #4: Miming	**Teach the students the necessity to follow own and partner set details in miming**	The students are shown examples of how miming and the scene, in which miming is involved “falls through”, if the miming is done in a manner that is not fully concentrated. The opposite examples are demonstrated to show the potency miming altering

			communication, when one is considerate towards own and partner set details.
4	Active Listening Instruction #1: Understanding Non-verbal Communication 	**Teach listening beyond words**: train students to listen and understand more than verbal language.	Conversations are regularly conducted with students about the importance of truly listening and paying attention to tone, emotion, and nonverbal signals. These include "Role Play" scenarios where body language is used to effectively convey emotions or messages, aiding students in becoming more aware of their own body language. Emphasized during these activities is the acceptability of the teacher making mistakes, underscoring the importance of transparency and honesty with the students. If necessary, the teacher's repetition of demonstrations, acknowledging and learning from these mistakes, serves to enhance student attentiveness and respect.
4	Active Listening Instruction #2: Induced Partner Support	**Teach the students to be present and act in any conversation by listening**,	Students are encouraged to actively listen to their peers and identify moments when mistakes are made or text is forgotten, in order to assist their partner with the correct answer. In such situations, praise is given to both parties involved: the student receiving assistance is commended for not flinching, bravely accepting the mistake, and adapting their response, while the student who is actively listening,

			understanding, and reacting to the context is also acknowledged for their attentiveness and helpfulness. This approach fosters a supportive and collaborative learning environment.
5	Teacher and Student Relation #1: Allowing Students to Select Activities	**Coming up with a plan and involving students** in decision making	It is effective to allow students to choose the next activity from a set of activities with which they are already familiar. This approach makes them feel that their opinion is valued. Additionally, students often respond positively when asked for advice about a teaching decision, showing willingness to help.
5	Teacher and Student Relation #2: Positive Discipline	**Discussing misbehavior with questions and answers**: discussing invented scenarios or sometimes specific cases	Open discussions on the importance of rules are conducted, utilizing group discussions on important matters to build a sense of community and mutual respect. Occasionally, after a misbehavior, a discussion is initiated about the specific misbehavior or rule. Examples are provided without addressing or hinting at the individuals who breached the rules, followed by questions about these examples. This approach is an attempt to allow students to understand by themselves the drawbacks of disrupting the lesson and to encourage them to suggest

			alternatives. This method is also effective when discussing issues like undone homework.
5	Teacher and Student Relation #3: Praising Specific Verbs of Students Who Overcome Hardship 	**Praise students who go through difficulty** when practicing or presenting and following rules	Students are constantly reminded that moments of difficulty and mistakes are crucial for growth. It is emphasized to the students that mistakes should be perceived positively, as they represent the only path towards progress. This perspective on errors as opportunities for learning and improvement is a key component of the educational approach. Verbal praise is used for students who, for example, are able to "make a circle" without getting distracted. This approach is intended to encourage the student to repeat this behavior and to motivate other students to become more inclined to follow the rules.
6	Class Control #1: Pace Dynamics 	**Interchange of activities**: intellectual and movement-based activities to maintain high energy.	Tasks requiring engagement and physical activities are switched between on a regular basis. It is a good strategy to allow students to occasionally choose games or activities, particularly when they are feeling tired, to help keep them engaged.
6	Class Control #2: Timing and Focus Depending on Age/	**Variation of timing and activity** dynamics for different ages to sustain attention-span	When working with very young students, it is considered important to lead the lesson in waves. Allowing them to engage in both

			intellectually challenging tasks and, subsequently, more playful or movement-based tasks, helps younger students conserve energy to sustain throughout the more challenging parts of the class. In contrast, older students are capable of handling longer and more focus-demanding tasks. A less rapid change in activities allows them to work and think in depth. Attention is paid to the body language of the students to see if they display signs of boredom or anxiety due to insufficient explanation. It is important to be flexible to slow down for explanations or speed up to keep the students interested in the class. A rewarding activity at the end is used to prevent burnout. For older students, an intermittent rewarding activity can be useful to motivate them, especially on more challenging days.
7	Final Presentations	**Organize regular examination presentations (open lesson):** plan presentations for students to	Periodic presentations are organized where students perform in front of an audience. This practice is aimed at building public speaking skills and boosting the

		demonstrate their learning and to motivate them.	confidence of the students. It is used as the final step in learning the natural communicative aspect of self-generated language.
8	Feedback after Final Presentations	**Discussing the Learning, Presentation and Syllabus Integration Processes**	Presentations are used as milestones for students to aim for, ensuring that each class accomplishes small learning objectives in preparation for the end-of-term presentation. each presentation, a feedback session is conducted with the student, discussing what worked well, what could be improved, and offering praise for moments of challenge using specific verbs. For example, feedback such as “Good job on not giving up when you forgot your text and thinking of a new line!” is provided to encourage and acknowledge their efforts.

Figure 1: Comprehensive Strategy and Details on the Holistic Approach Prior and During the Experiment. Photographs by the author.

Educational Context that the Students Have Acquired prior to the Experiment

The students of 1st grade, 13 girls and 7 boys, of an upper middle class background attend an English class in their elementary school, which is their first year of English study, where they learn English grammar and the “Role Play” method. Both grade study processes are organized with an open presentation of “Role Play” class each semester - with students performing their obtained language orientation skills for both parents and teachers. Each week two classes are

conducted. One of the classes is conducted in two separate classrooms in groups of 15 people, teaching the students target language (numbers, colors, verbs, fruits, vegetables, food, school items, creatures, family members), alphabet, questions/answers and dialogues designed and chosen for the usage of "Role Play" purposes. The grammatical structures taught in class are reinforced via a listening based homework, checked once a week in class via a verbal assessment in class.

The other class within the week is based on the practice and rehearsal of a "Role Play" dialogue. The class is based on 4 general preparatory tasks for the teacher to conduct - creating teams, drilling vocabulary, teaching expressions together with simple questions and answers and teaching the "Role Play" dialogue. The "Role Play" concept leads to the adaption of situational language, that assist the students in understanding, using the taught language and becoming more confident and fluent in it.

The "Role Play" class consists of 30 people (both groups together) and first comprised of practicing the concept of functioning as a team - dividing the class in 6 teams with names of colors assigned to them "Team Yellow, Team Pink, Team Orange, Team Green, Team Blue and Team Purple", containing 5-6 members in each. While in these teams the students learn to align at a designated place for their team, to organize themselves, discussing and prepare group answers. They then are trained to conduct the presentation of team answers for team activities involving target language and finally switching functions within the team to practice conversations or dialogues by themselves to later present the result to the rest of the class.

The students of these classes attend the after school where they learn a more creative "Role Play" program, during which they utilized that learned knowledge for the elementary school yet participate in much more challenging tasks.

This ensures that the students practice conversation and presentation skills with the focus on listening to the people within the given activity, which in turn makes the conversation more realistic and engaging as it leads to actual communication containing specific purposes.

The goal of "Role Play" is to give the students an opportunity to use the language they have acquired in context. It helps the students retain what they have learned if they can link the language to an experience (e.g. going to the restaurant).

Greeting and Cue System as Means Preparation

- As soon as the students are inside the classroom the teacher gives a friendly command a slow, but cheerful count down: “Make a circle please. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1”.
- When the circle is round, the teacher proceeds with greetings. If not yet, the students are told to try their best again with the task, therefore encouraging certain accuracy in all their coming activities: “This is not a circle yet, here are 5 more seconds for you try again. Do your best!”

These 2 commands and actions should be trained as a cue for smaller children to a point where eventually the corresponding actions from children are performed in a reflex like manner (up until grade 5), because it will greatly reduce the potential of children emerging into chaos and too much playfulness between activities. This system has been thought up and implemented by the researcher at private school in Western Japan, Kyushu. These commands, however, perhaps slightly counter-intuitively, yet very importantly should be vocalized with a certain tone of challenge and playfulness so that the children maintain a sense of joy and do not feel oppressed. The lesson in this research is organized as one in movement, without desks and chairs, however this method can also be adapted for situations to tidy desks, lesson materials on top of them and chairs. An example would be the following: “Get ready. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1”

- In the greetings section, the teacher does the following actions:

1) Enters the circle (or in case of a conventional desk-chair classroom setting stands in front of the class)

2) Greets the children with a: “Good morning/afternoon/evening, everyone” in a bright and energetic voice tone, while using a greeting hand gesture.

3) Waits for the students to reply. In case this is one of the first 3 lessons, the teacher teaches the children how to greet the teacher by “Good morning/afternoon/evening, Mr./Mrs. …” combined with a specific gesture (usually a hand gesture). Afterwards the teacher lets the children repeat after him or her as many times as necessary for the children to be able to say this greeting with confidence in unison.

4) After the beginning part of the greeting the teacher proceeds with the same previous 2 steps of teaching a command and response with a gesture and to teach the children a further conversation.

An example greeting sequence:

T: "Good morning, everyone!"
S: "Good morning, Mr. Zarins!"
T: "How are you today?"
S: "I'm fine, thank you! How are you?"
T: "I'm fine too, thanks! Let's study English!"
S: "Yes, let's study English!"

- To make the classroom more organized in terms of behavior and yet to give the sense of being able to be heard at any time is allowing to speak at any time of the lesson under the condition that a hand is being raised before doing so as seen in [Figure 1];
- Before every activity physical start signal (cue) must be performed by the class so that they can become aware with their bodies that the activity has started. This can be achieved by a particular clap combination performed before every activity - this raises the awareness of children that it is time to focus and that something important is going to happen. This technique is adapted from professional theatre schooling in Latvia at the Latvian Academy of Culture derived from the Russian theatre doctrine. The clap in [Figure 2] is used to simulate a curtain on stage, when actors are practicing a scene or an element of performance off stage.

Figure 2: Raising a hand, a simple and effective way to avoid lesson disruption. Photo by the author.

Figure 3: Students are more attentive towards others if they do a special clap before an activity. Photo by the author.

Timeline of the Experiment

- **Week 1-3**: The preparation of the class (point # - rules, cues, hand raising) are taught.

- **Week 4:** The roleplay dialogue framework that is trained with basic theatrical elements such as miming and creating hurdles, when participants are divided into pairs of this experiment is the following.

A: “Hello!”
B: “Hello!”
A: “How are you today?”
B: “I’m fine thank you! How are you?”
A: “I’m fine too thanks! Let’s [verb chosen by student A]
B: “Yes, let’s [verb chosen by student B]!”

- **Week 5**: dialogues from the framework are reviewed and drama-based instruction together with active listening elements are taught to accompany the dialogues.

- **Week 6**: the last two lines after the phrase “I’m fine too thanks!” contain student generated expressions, that students need to come up with in accordance with a theme that a teacher selects.

A: “Hello!”

B: “Hello!”

A: “How are you today?”

B: “I’m fine thank you! How are you?”

A: “I’m fine too thanks! [Expression chosen by student A]

B: “[Expression chosen by student B]!”

The themes given by the teacher should have a problem element within them to make thinking original expression ideas a more suggestive and creative process and these situations are important for the children to learn how to think in a foreign language, which is one of the main essences in: “Challenge”; “I’m busy”; “It’s scary”; “I’m tired”; “It’s hard”. The themes have a problem element within them to make thinking original expression ideas a more suggestive and creative process and these situations are important for the children to learn how to think in a foreign language, which is one of the main essences in.

- **Week 7**: the students perform an open “Role Play” rehearsal, in which they utilize their expressions and practice presenting the expressions together with the meaning, after which all the students drill the expressions.

- **Week 8**: students present their “Role Play” scenes and present expressions students perform in front of an audience.

- **Week after Implementation Phase**: the students are verbally tested for to check how well they have memorize the expression of their own and of their partner.

Target and Evaluation:

The target of the set before the experiment was having participants remembering one's own decided expressions as well as additionally the remembering the expression generated by the partner. When the students were asking for their original idea to be translated and taught to them and their friend, their pair was always reminded that they need to do their best to memorize both - the expressions of their own and their friends. There were no baseline tests designed for the experiments in this thesis, as the prerequisite of the task was that all the students select an expression that they had no knowledge of in English, therefore their baseline knowledge of the curriculum was 0%. Therefore, the memorized expressions rate will be compared to a rate of 0% prior to the experiment. To acquire additional moment of verification the memorization rate after the experiment will be compared to one by (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), which was 50,65% after the experiment (and 36,55% before the 8 weeks of experiment, difference of memorization rate being 14.1%) for the control group and 92.35% after the experiment (and 31.4% before the 8 weeks of experiment, difference of memorization rate being 61%) for the experimental group[4]. The design of the experiment of this thesis and the experiment referenced are different, but it allows a relative assessment of the memorization success rates of both methods and assess whether the memorization of pair expression is of a similar rate of when a textbook expression is memorized without role play (control group of the experiment done by Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020). Both experiment participant profiles are very diverse in comparison to each other – their experiment group consisted of 20 6th grade girls of Saudi Arabian nationality, while the group of the experiment of this thesis consists of 13 girls and 7 boys of grade 1 of Japanese nationality). The different profiles, yet similarities in timelines, employed methods and measuring framework

[4] The results of the experiment are described in pages 65-66, Alasmari and Alshae'el (2020 January), The Effect of Using Drama in English Language Learning among Young Learners: A Case Study of 6th Grade Female Pupils in Sakaka City, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies,* Australian International Academic Centre PTY.LTD pp.65-67, The study is available here, accessed on February 23, 2024:https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1246184.pdf

of behavior could reveal some knowledge about the efficacy and behavior characteristics that after the experiment could be deemed more likely to occur for these specific profile groups.

Just like in the experiment of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), a table of evaluation for behavior and motivation of students [Table 1] designed by (Deci & Ryan, 1985) was used to document the use of the method in steps in this thesis to see if there would be any disruptions or lack of behavioral control, when employing the method. It contained four categories: the first two, motivational and communicative dimensions, which were marked as rich or poor, while the other two categories were filled in after listening to the audio recordings of the class.

In the experiment that was chosen for comparison student dominance from week 3 through week 6, continuing with non-involvement of a few members in weeks 7 and 8 were documented. Constant noise was observed from week 1 through week 8, with it transforming to small amounts of noise from week 3, but still – unchangingly present. If the experiment results of this thesis show that self-generated expression memorization rates are higher than the memorization rates of the peer generated expression together with minimal class disruption, then the memorization improvement boost of self-selected expressions can be approved. It must be accompanied with a decrease in behavioral issues such as lack of participation after weeks 1-3 (when preparatory measures are taught), no noisiness before the end intervention period and no domination of class by stronger students, the method should be deemed as a working one.

Results

The red color indicates the expressions made by other participants and the blue color indicates self-generated expressions. The symbol "+" stands for success in remembering (slight grammar mistakes were acceptable), whereas "-" stands for failure to remember. 15/20 people remember their expressions, while 8/20 people remember the expressions thought by their pair. The expressions are the following. The results are divided in the same way the students were paired during "Role Play" (for example, A and B; C and D; and so on)

A - Let's dig potatoes; + Here they are -
B - Let's dig potatoes; - Here they are –

C - Let's build a house; + Finished +
D - Let's build a house; - Finished +

E - Haunted house is scary;+ Let's open the door; +
F - Haunted house is scary;- Let's open the door+

G - Let's skateboard in the park;+ It's here +
H - Let's skateboard in the park; - It's here;+

I - Scary things;+ In the tent+
J - Scary things;- In the tent+

K - A scary book;+ Let's borrow+
L - A scary book;- Let's borrow;-

M - Let's do monkey bars;+ It's hard -
N - Let's do monkey bars-; It's hard+

O - Sakura is pretty;+ That's great -
P - Sakura is pretty;+ That's great -

Q - Work is busy-; Hospital is busy -

R- Work is busy-; Hospital is busy+

S - Let's study+, Let's cook+;

T - Let's study+, Let's cook-;

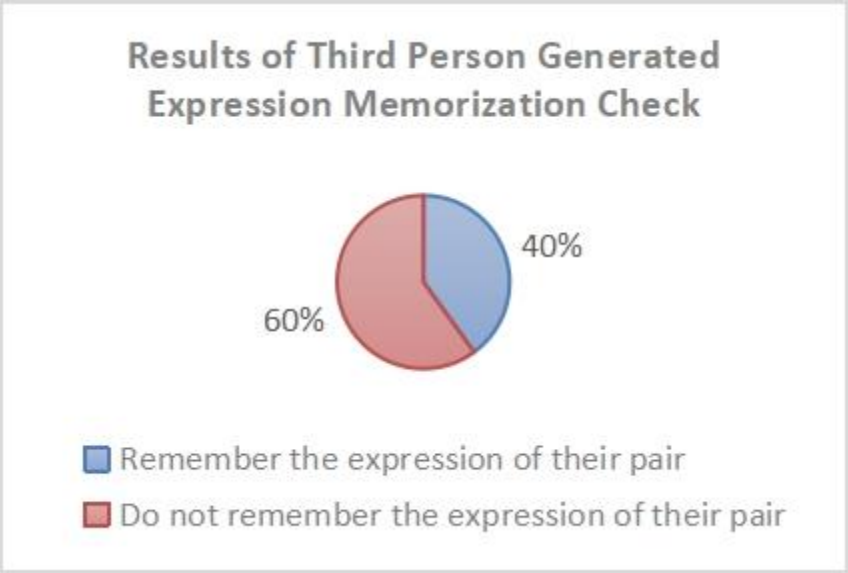


Figure 4: Results of the experiment conducted in October-November of 2021 in an anonymous school in Fukuoka. n=20; M=0.4; SD=0.599; t=3.933; p=0.0002.

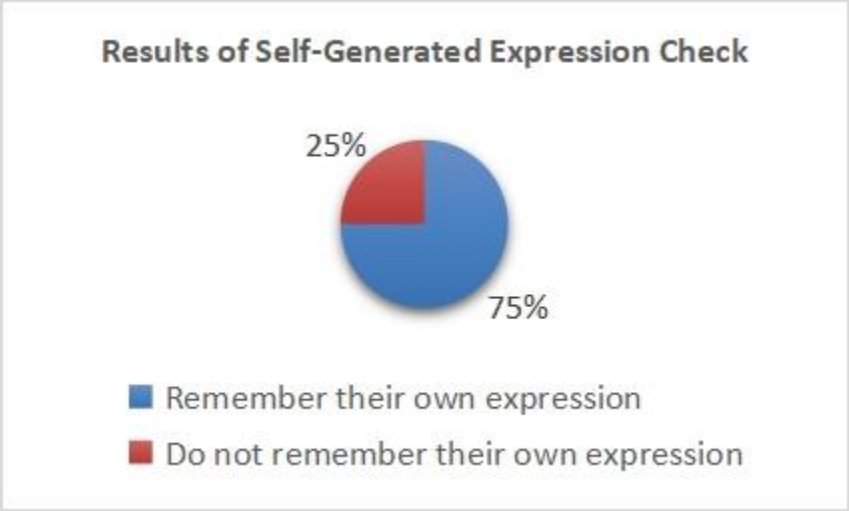


Figure 5: Results of the experiment in October-November of 2021 in an anonymous school in Fukuoka. n=20; M=0.75; SD=0.44; t=3.933; p=0.0002.

The results are convincingly suggesting that the learning process has been productive for the students as only 2 students out of 20 could not remember any expressions by the time their knowledge was assessed [Figure 5]. Even though both expressions within a pair were taught to both participants equally, it is evident that an expression that was self-generated had a much larger positive impact on memorization process. The students were given the freedom to decide what and if they used a gesture with the expression that they thought of, and as a result most of their role-playing was miming based, yet the expression itself did not have a direct gesture connected to it, which indicated of process-based focus rather than the target language focus. With 75% [Figure 5] remembering their expression and only 40%[Figure 4] (standard deviation=0.599 *p=0.0002)* remembering the expression of thought up by their pair, these indicators can be compared with the data of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), with difference in memorization rate being was 14,1% after the experiment for the control group (and 36,55% before the 8 weeks of experiment and 50,65% after)and 61% after the experiment for the experiment group (and 31.4% before the 8 weeks of experiment and 92.35% after). The growth from 0% to 75% indicates that the method implemented in this thesis is highly effective for Grade 1 students to memorize self-decided expressions through a process focused method. Also, the growth of students remembering their partner language from 0% to 40% seems to be a higher growth in memorization rate than the growth in the control group of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), which indicates, that this is still a more effective method of learning language than the conventional method of teaching employed by (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) for the control group.

Behavioral Observations

Table 1: Behavioral observations of the participants in the experiment in October-November of 2021 collected from lesson voice recordings in an anonymous school in Fukuoka.

Week	**Average**	**Motivational dimension (involvement/ interest/ enthusiasm)**	**Communicative dimensions (speaking initiatives/turn taking/social interaction)**	**Drama techniques used in classroom**	**Challenges**
1	Rich Poor	 √	 √	Teaching rules, cues, raising hands/playing rhythm and vocabulary-based games	Noise, No classroom management, Lack of commitment, Use of first language, Small voice
2	Rich Poor	√ 	 √	Teaching rules, cues, raising hands/playing rhythm and vocabulary-based games	Little noise, No classroom management, Use of first language, Small voice
3	Rich Poor	√ 	 √	Teaching rules, cues, raising hands/playing rhythm and vocabulary-based games	Partial classroom management, Use of first language, Little Noise, Small voice

4	Rich Poor	√	√	Teaching "Role Play" base, clear speech, theatrical hurdles, miming	Little noise, small voice, Use of first language
5	Rich Poor	√	√	Reviewing "Role Play" base, reviewing clear speech, theatrical hurdles, teaching effects of an actively listening audience, miming	Little noise, Small voice, Use of first language
6	Rich Poor	√	√	Introducing topic and self-selected expressions for "Role Play", rehearsal with expressions drilled in pairs	Small voice, Use of first language
7	Rich Poor	√	√	Open "Role Play" rehearsal with self-selected expressions/playing rhythm and vocabulary-based games	Small voice, Use of first language
8	Rich Poor	√	√	Presentation of "Role Play" scenes/vocabulary check/ playing rhythm and vocabulary-based games	Use of first language

Communicational and Noise Problem Gradual Alleviation

From the collected behavioral observation in [Table 1], it is evident that the students in the first three weeks of the experiments had difficulties with communicational elements such as taking initiative in speaking, taking turns and social interaction – the observed reason for this was the time and effort that it took for all the students uniformly to be able to respond to the vocal cues. The cues together with the clap and seemed to help students who were displaying excess movement together to regroup for the circle formation before the next activity. The challenges in the teaching process were slight noisiness, which disappeared after week 5 as the classroom was given the chance to individually experience how different a scene becomes when the observers are fully focused and when not. As noise had disappeared completely, it indicates of achieved high concentrated process of listening. The students reducing interruptive speech as they were noticing the differences in scene confidence and engagement seems to go hand in hand with the theory that speakers detect listening that is not genuine and do not respond well enough in such situations (Tyler, 2011). The continuousness of this observation indicates of benevolent intention of the scene observers, as it this property has been proven to be a key aspect of high-quality listening. It includes constant behavior that expresses positive intention toward the speaker, which in turn that affirms their intrinsic worth (Rogers, 1959). This empathetic experience seemed to be important for the students to happen during their own scenes. When compared to the presence of the "little noise" indicator being present from weeks 1 to 8 in the observation table of (Deci & Ryan, 1985) of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) research, it can be assumed that the goal of noise elimination has been achieved, as the indicator "little noise" disappeared after week 5. However, there are significant limitations to be considered – the observed group in this thesis is of Japanese nationality as well as the group consisted of grade 1 students with a 13 girl to 7 boy ratio, whereas (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) research was observing participants in a school of Saudi Arabia (native language Arabic) with a group made of grade 6 students consisting of 20 girls. Further experimentation with students of different nationalities, age and gender is necessary to calibrate the extent of how much listening skill increases the alleviation of noise to replicate this effect.

Classroom Management Through Planning Involvement and Positive Discipline

Classroom management difficulty, which gradually was resolved completely from week 4 indicates that it is a challenge that takes time for learners to adapt rules and habits of using cues, but they seemed to be completely adaptable possibly due to the taught preparatory activities of week 1-3 being openly discussed with the students. Research with well-supported empirical evidence shows that planning raises the possibility that behavior is performed (Sniehotta, Schwarzer, Scholz, & Schu¨z, 2005). It can be assumed that before practical learning process, discussing the use of rules, cues and raising hands concepts with students and confirming their understanding and agreement that these actions are necessary do a fun lesson, can be considered as involving the students in planning. Research shows that action plans tend to be executed in the 'real-life' settings, which helps the successful translation of intentions into behavior (Sniehotta, 2009; Sniehotta et al., 2005). Another important aspect to consider is that the 3 lessons (weeks), which were allocated for learning the preparatory actions, were accompanied by rhythmical vocabulary games as a reward for the students, even with misbehavior problems present in the room, considering their young age. When comparing this classroom management situation with (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020), it seems that student dominance from week 3 to 6 together with non-involvement of a few members in last 2 weeks could potentially be addressed with cues and discussions. Listening ability training could also possibly enable the dominating students experience the engaging situation of how much more interesting a scene becomes when full attention is paid to the scene, reminding a classroom that the underperformance of peers indicates of a poor ability to listen (Tyler, 2011). From the experiment in this thesis preemptive problem addressal through listening skill training seems to work with balance and no class disruption from week 4 and onwards, at least for grade 1.

Persisting Small Voice

The main issue encountered, which (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) did not seem to have any problems with, is the small voice of performance in the participants – it is also stated that the participants had been learning English for 3 years. In the experiment of this thesis the issues with this may be explained with the students having learned English for less than a year in school,

therefore, they still might had been in a position and age where confidence and speech apparatus needed to be trained. This problem persisted, even though the exercises for clear speech were carried out from week 4. The only time this problem was not present was week 8, when the students had a final presentation of their work – this indicates of two possible reasons. One, is the sense of motivation and willingness to perform well in front of a public. Two, is the length that it took for a class to generate clear speech abilities as the implementing speech training was only started from week 4 – possibly moving this type of training from week 1 could speed up the results of large, clear voice from week 5. A mid presentation in week 5 could also be utilized to raise the motivation to "speak up". This, however, may come at a risk of increasing the stress put on the very young participants, therefore an optimal compromise would possibly be starting this activity in week 4 and starting the addition of theatrical hurdles a week later perhaps. Further testing is necessary to examine the effects that these changes in experiment timeline would bring.

Hypothesis After the Experiment

The experimental class results in this thesis show that self-generated expression memorization rates are higher than the memorization rates of the peer generated expressions (75% and 40% growth from baseline 0% respectively, standard deviation=0.44 *p=0.0002).* The memorization rates of peer generated expressions (0% to 40%) still seemed relatively higher than the conventional methods employed in teaching expressions to the control group of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) in 8 weeks (14,1% after the experiment for the control group (36,55% before the 8 weeks of experiment and 50,65% after). The comparison is truly relative as the thresholds of difficulty are very different to Grade 1 and 6 students. The class disruption was alleviated after the 3 weeks of preparatory measure teaching, together with noisiness disappearing completely after week 5 as a result of practically teaching active listening during peer presentations. In the following weeks of the study students displayed a continued interest in the meanings of their peer expressions. With this it can be concluded that the hypothesis stating that in proper discipline and level of engagement, the ownership of study material creation gives pupils a higher ability to memorize more complicated language than on a normal drill-translate-answer language agenda is relatively true, when comparing to the control group results that the study of (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) showed. To further test this method a comparison to

"Role Play" framework employing textbook expressions for Grade 1 is necessary to fully in understand the efficacy of the memory retention part of the method. Observational results indicate that process seemed to be highly engaging, with students possibly alleviating the problem of small voice with the use of inner motivation to try hard in the final presentation, showing positive attitude towards foreign language learning.

Discussion

In foreign language education grammar and creativity is very necessary for the current Japanese second language education system. The translation of expressions for each student individually is a great way to adapt an individual approach to each student and it could be amplified with assistance of another teacher within a lesson. It is important to highlight that the children were constantly reminded about the necessity to listen to each other and pay attention to the speaker to help them gain confidence, to the meaning of the dialogues and non-verbal cues. Employing these ideas has ensured that the threshold of the student capability has been potentially heightened due to constant support from each other. One must understand that the process of the students working in pairs to create their own narrative would be impossible without truly constantly listening, understanding, and reacting to each other's verbal and non-verbal cues – listening is the aspect, without which the core of creativity in pair work cannot exist.

There are considerable limitations to this experiment, however, as there were only 20 participants in total. There was no way to conduct a large-scale experiment with separate non-intervention groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic rules, yet a high inclusive impact to do this experiment with the given settings. It was, however, also identified how much the levels of memorization of the students of the language that was invented by their friends, as they were instructed to memorize and *drill* it as well. It was then found out that when comparing to (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) experiment result the setting of memorizing peer-made expressions it does not serve as a potential control group effect. That is because the students of this experiment were able to memorize the expressions of their peers better than the rate that was achieved when control group memorized textbook expressions. This calls for further

experimentation with a control group of Grade 1 employing conventional teaching methods learning textbook expressions.

Another important factor was that the children were occasionally making grammar mistakes (word order, plurals, assisting verbs), yet they were able to memorize the core element of the expression and were trying their best to be as fluent as possible indicating that just like as one of the authors had stated - it is more of a process-oriented method (Culham, C. 2002). The translation of expressions was also quite a difficult task to manage, as keeping the same difficulty level was of great importance, yet it is still to be determined subjectively by the teacher. This can be effectively managed with another teacher in the process to keep efficiency and objectivity at high level, however it is somewhat of a disadvantage when it comes to measuring research data precisely.

Another important factor for the change in performance was the time at which the lesson was started - on one specific occasion the class started at 5:30 PM and at that time the ability to memorize and to remember expressions dropped drastically- first graders are simply too tired to be able to function properly at this time. Majority of the lessons were done at 3:00 PM and that prove to be an optimal time in terms of the ability to concentrate. The experiment has brought several points of advantage which can be explored more deeply in further research and and practically adjusted with another teacher to amplify the level of efficacy.

A students' decision on the choice of expression or vocabulary he or she will learn is of high importance to strengthen the ability to memorize the learned foreign language material. The effects of students learning self-suggested foreign language expressions by using theatrical situations in the techniques of role-play and improvisation are evident as the memorized expressions had a certain sophistication within them.

It is important to remember that in the study process describe a basic layout of previously learned English conversation with grammar and a reviewed combination of preparatory measures were used for the students to become more focused and willing to participate in the given activities. More research, hopefully derived from this one, is necessary in order to understand the exact role of these preparation measures and to test the method on larger test group together with a separate control group. Still, it seems that revised teaching methods

consisting of both teacher and student-centered methods are of great importance since the level of fluency in English in Japan is extremely low and the ability to learn by once well-established methods is questioned by ever-evolving technology.

The potential challenges for teachers related to language teaching through drama are shyness and the inability to communicate ideas clearly to students. Even though it is puzzling and off-putting to deal with problems that are not directly related to a typical teaching agenda they can be avoided by using such teaching guidebooks that teach how to keep the creative tasks as simple and as manageable as possible.

The other crucial factor for better results in future creative language learning process is not only teaching the classroom how to organize itself by greetings, cues, regular discussions about problems, behavior, value of listening and agency to select activities but also interviewing the students about their feelings regarding what is going on in class afterwards. The research has offered an insight to the potential of combining a teacher centered English class with a creative participant centered process to allow the children to envision a real-life situation of the learned target language. It has the significant limitation that could be further centered on the students by acquiring direct data from them via an interview – that would also arguably make the student feel more respected and valued in the process.

The future of effective language education potentially lies in the combination of proper discipline, level of engagement and ownership in co-creating the target language while listening to the partner. This combination of qualities enables the active use of imagination and understanding which effectively combats the lack of attention and the aging “one-size fits all” approach that is hindering the lingual progress of the future generations.

III. Use of Group Sound Design to Strengthen Self-Expression of Adults

In Chapter II collected data suggested that self-selected study material promises a higher ability in language, effectively letting the student experience a sense of identity within the study process. Self-selected memorization, however, in this research context has been explored under the circumstances of a partner actively listening, understanding and acting accordingly (Weger et. al., 2014), which in turn allows for a meaningful dialogue to happen. This brings forward a presumption that listening to another reveals and empowers one's own self, which should be explored in depth. This idea has potency in both curricular and extra-curricular settings, but could music education accompanied listening also be of use as a psychological tool of self-expression? It is worth exploring whether creativity and listening can be tools not only to create a sense of identity in language, but also raise the willingness to self-express by empathizing with another person going through an identical musical performance to one's own (Hattori, Toyoshima and Fukui, 2015).

In this chapter, titled "Use of Group Sound Design to Strengthen Self-Expression of Adults", an experimental audience of grownups was chosen during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic in July of 2021 – it was a time when voluntary participation of school students within an experiment of a psychological nature was difficult for epidemiological reasons. This experiment addressed the issue of Japanese people feeling increasingly lonely (Murayama et al., 2020) due to a combination of social isolation, and increasing individualism together with the constant presence of collectivism culture (Ogihara, 2017). The conflicting nature can cause anxiety yet has potential when used together as two tools. The purpose of this experiment is to explore an educational method attempting to expose contemporary Japanese temperament to sound design in order to gain confidence to self-express in an extracurricular context. Instructions will be created in order to follow up this class prototype concept into curricular context.

Methods

An experiment in form of a class of sound design was conducted at university aimed at adults (this experiment used purposive sampling in order to test the interaction between musicians and non-musicians. The invited people consisted of non-musicians, people who had some experience in music making and a professional musician (8 people, 4 people and 1 person accordingly). The participant gender ratio was 9 males and 4 females. The participant pool was also a mix of students and working individuals (in Japanese: 社会人 or *shakaijin*) - 6 of them were students, whereas 7 of them were working individuals. The number of participants was not planned, apart from the invited professional musician due to the inability to do so in the circumstances of the pandemic. The method employed consisted of the following steps:

1) **A presentation of sociocultural history of a traditional instrument (in case of this specific workshop - Okinawan traditional instrument *sanshin*) and short performance with it; (20 minutes)**; Points of focus are the concept of absence of mistakes in music creation and sketching a context through historical record of how people have used the traditional musical instrument in the past to cope with hardships (like war in the Okinawan case), have socialized and celebrated/supported each other. This kind of facilitation should be done in a manner that gives the participants some context that in turn would make them feel more confident during the practical part.

2) **A practical training session** related to rhythm, use of the traditional instrument, group musicality, synthesizers and recording devices as shown in [Figure 6]; (25 minutes)

Figure 6: Rhythmical warm up and sound design technique training. Photo by author.

The utilized equipment should contain the target **traditional instrument** accompanied with instruments that need no prior experience such as kalimbas, knob synthesizers and percussions, portable amplifiers (such as **Yamaha THR5), sound recorders (such as Zoom H4N) for environment sound, Boss RC-30 loop effect pedals** (to which the environment recording microphones are connected in order to layer the played instrument sounds together with the environment ambience **as shown in [Figure 7]**. The highlighted instruments are the ones that every group participating within this workshop must be supplied with – participants are allowed to choose other instruments by themselves.

Figure 7: Music and recording equipment used for the experiment. Photo by author.

Figure 8: Participant creating sound texture with an instrument, while the other participant is assisting in recording. Photo by author.

3) Dividing in **groups (of 3+ people), making and recording music** as shown in [Figure 8] - each group must contain at least 1 person with prior musical experience, while other participants can have none (30 minutes). The combination of different levels of musical proficiency is created in order to bring balance and flexibility within the creative process. It is preferable to have facilitators that are equipped with musical skills to simulate this effect.

4) **Guidance in how to present** created music and then commenting on the music made by others. **Presentation of music and reception of feedback** (15 minutes) This part should be expected to be the most challenging and potentially stressful for the participants. It has been designed this way in order to balance out the pleasant creative process with a presentation to induce a sense of vulnerability. These presentations are then listened to by the other participants, which

in turn should potentially reduce their stress due to the deactivation of the amygdala and sense of empathy (Moore, 2013).

The experiment is accompanied by a questionnaire filled in before and after the process to inspect the assessment of prior experience of musicianship and self-evaluation of musicianship skill of the participants. After the class participants are to be given tasks of repeated self-evaluation of musicianship skill, evaluation of ease of music creation and description of feelings in free form about feelings evoked by listening and displaying newly created music to each other.

Step by Step Description of the Method

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
1	Pre-Workshop Assessment	**Survey on Skills and Anxiety**: The survey is directed towards inducing thoughts.	The workshop begins by asking the audience to fill in a survey focused on their skills relevant to the workshop. It includes questions regarding their self-evaluation of the taught skill and their anxiety levels. This preemptive step generates preconceptions about the workshop's content and

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
			maintains participant focus.
2	Building Context and Connectivity	**Lecture on Traditional Instrument's (Sanshin) History:** Connecting past and present contexts.	The audience is given a lecture about the history of the chosen traditional instrument (Sanshin), discussing its history, role in empowering people during times of war, its effects, and the practical nature of it.
3	Educator's Background and Approach to Music Creation	**Sharing Personal Music Creation Journey:** Discussing practical tools in music without formal theory with familiar language.	The lecturer shares their background in music creation, focusing on practical tools, their application, and the path of learning to play music without the knowledge of music theory. This approach humanizes the educator and makes the learning process more relatable.

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
4	Demonstrating the Traditional Instrument (Sanshin) in an Unexpected Context	**Improvised Traditional Instrument Performance:** Showing versatility of the instrument that does not follow stereotypical sound.	The lecturer gives a performance with the traditional instrument employing experimental elements. This is done to let the audience experience how universal traditional instruments can be.
5	Practical Training Beginning with a Simple Activity	**Simple Rhythmic Activities:** Starting with activities that everyone can do.	The participants are then invited to join a practical training session of the traditional, which starts with an easy activity, such as clapping rhythms and copying them by listening. This activity is important in a larger group because there will always be participants feeling

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
			anxious before a class.
6	Introduction to the Traditional Instrument (Sanshin) and Its' Exploration	**Hands-on Traditional Interaction**: Encouraging exploration of the traditional instrument in one's own way.	For the next step of the workshop, participants are seated in a circle, and 3 people are given the traditional instruments (Sanshins). The participants are asked to pass the instrument around so that everyone can have an opportunity to interact with it.
7	Introducing Recording Equipment and Encouraging Experimentation	**Introduction of Sound Technology**: Teaching the use of the recording equipment and displaying common situations.	Participants are then introduced to the electronic equipment and acoustic instruments set up for sound recording and layering. The facilitator demonstrates simple examples and the acceptance of mistakes in sound

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
			recording using sequencing devices.
8	Group Dynamics and Facilitator's Role in Sound Composition	**Sound Composition in Teams:** Facilitation through listening and assistance.	Participants are divided into groups, each with a facilitator, and given 30 minutes to find an environment and record sound compositions. Facilitators suggest instruments, patterns to emulate, or perform the first step for them.
9	Finalizing Compositions and Encouraging Balancing Member Participation	**Finalizing Sound Projects**: Facilitating completion and participation.	Next, to finalize the compositions, facilitators assist participants in identifying the fitting "ending" for their compositions if necessary. Facilitators also ensure that every participant is equally involved and feels

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
			challenged to a certain extent.
10	Presentation and Reflection on Compositions 	**Review and Discussion of Compositions**: Leading a constructive feedback session.	When the 30-minute time runs out, the participants come back to the initial venue to present and discuss their work. The facilitator initiates the discussion with comments containing familiar language and comparisons to set an example.
11	Post-Workshop Assessment and Finishing 	**Feedback Collection and Expressing Gratitude**: Gathering reflection-based data and showing appreciation.	At the end of the workshop, a post-event survey is asked to be filled in by the participants to collect data on their reflections about their emotional experiences. This also serves as a

No.	Image/Steps	Key Practical Elements	Details
			facilitation tool to let the participant identify changes they experienced in the learning process. Expressing gratitude to the participants allows them to leave with a positive feeling.

Figure 9: Comprehensive Steps on Workshop Facilitation and Engagement Methods. Photographs by the author

Results #1: Facilitation of This Experiment

Initial Engagement and Pre-Workshop Assessment

The workshop was started by asking the audience to fill in a survey focused on their skills relevant to the workshop - it included questions regarding their self-evaluation of the taught skill and their anxiety levels. The questionnaire was designed not only as a tool to collect data but also as a facilitation instrument that made participants aware of their emotional state and attitude towards the subject in discussion. This is a preemptive step that generated preconceptions about

the workshop's content and maintained participant focus, as the survey made the participants think about a direct interaction with the skill in discussion.

Building Context and Connectivity

The audience was then given a lecture about the history of the Sanshin and this presentation talked about its history, role in empowering people during times of war, its effects, and the practical nature of the instruments. The concept of 'moai'[5] was introduced to let the participants think about the sense of connectivity, which was an important topic during the COVID-19 pandemic's social distance. The topics chosen aimed to build an atmosphere of learning a new skill by drawing parallels between historical and current problematic situations where music has been and could be a practical tool to facilitate self-expression and connectivity between people.

Educator's Background and Approach to Music Creation

The lecturer shared their background in music creation, focusing on practical tools, their application of the, and what was the path of learning to play music, without the knowledge of music theory. This was presented in an easy-to-understand way, using familiar language and comparisons, allowing the audience to empathize with the story and be able to imagine the process of learning the instrument by themselves. This is a theatre directing tool – telling a story in a way that is relatable (through use of language or cultural references) to the audience will evoke empathy, helping the audience relate to or find their own version of the feelings the storyteller expresses about the topic.

[5] "The Okinawa tradition of forming a *moai* provides secure social networks. These safety nets lend financial and emotional support in times of need and give their members the stress-shedding security of knowing there is always someone there for them. In Okinawa, at age 5, children are put into these committed social networks." Buettner D, Skemp S. Blue Zones: Lessons From the World's Longest Lived. Am J Lifestyle Med. 2016 Jul 7;10(5):319. doi: 10.1177/1559827616637066. PMID: 30202288; PMCID: PMC6125071.

Demonstrating Sanshin in an Improvised Context

The lecturer then gave a Sanshin performance to demonstrate how this instrument does not have to be necessarily played in a traditional or a difficult way – it was a performance employing jazz and funk music elements. This was done to let the audience experience how universal traditional instruments can be and that there is wide amplitude of how technically simple and difficult a performance could get.

Practical Training Beginning with a Simple Activity

The participants were then invited to join a practical training session of the Sanshin and which was started with an easy activity, that everyone could do - clapping rhythms and copying them by listening. This activity originates from Drama Education and is often used as a warm-up or an "icebreaker", which results in participants getting familiar with each other and the environment. Such an activity is important in a larger group, because there will always be participants feeling anxious before a class and alleviating it will smoothly transition to a more difficult activity.

Introduction to Sanshin and Its' Exploration

For the next step of the workshop participants were seated in a circle and 3 people were given Sanshins. The participants were asked to hold, observe, touch, and strum the instruments with a *bachi* (plectrum) in any way they felt like doing. This step was important because it allowed participants to get used to a previously unpracticed instrument without the pressure of any criteria. The participants were asked to pass the instrument around so that everyone could have an opportunity to interact with it in their own length of choice. Meanwhile the facilitator was showing easy ways of strumming and playing notes on the instrument - this approach let the

participants proceed to the next step of the workshop without any set criteria by observing and replicating the facilitators actions as though as if it was a private guitar lesson. It was also emphasized that the Sanshin does not need be played in a traditional way and that it could be used for rhythmic textures (as its' body contains a drum) or for the sounds produced by touching it. This was explained to the participants to alleviate anxiety about inexperience and have interest in finding sounds that they were interested in.

Introducing Sound Design and Encouraging Experimentation

Participants were then introduced to the electronic equipment and acoustic instruments that were set up for sound recording and layering. The facilitator demonstrated simple examples of sound recording by using a kalimba and sequencing devices. He explained how each button worked on the equipment and what was the correct sequence to record or take a step back when necessary to undo a step. The participants were then asked to try out the equipment and ask questions about any of the steps to make sure they understood the process and were comfortable with the technology. The facilitator made sure to show a situation in which he recorded a sequence with mistakes and how well it fit the non-linear nature of sound design, as it was not really meant to be music composition in its' traditional sense. This was an important step as it set to tone that musical proficiency was not the focus of the workshop, it was rather the motivation to try and let different situations unfold.

Group Dynamics and Facilitator's Role in Sound Composition

Participants were divided into groups, each with a facilitator, and given 30 minutes time to find an environment and record their own sound composition. The facilitator's role was to assist a group in moving the process forward, especially if participants felt awkward or unsure about their tasks. If participants hesitated to record the first layer of sound, facilitators suggested instruments and rhythmic or melodic patterns to emulate or did the first step for them. This guidance was delivered in a non-intrusive manner, with facilitators also using personal anecdotes to build rapport and comfortable atmosphere. This approach was highly important in creating a supportive environment where participants felt safe to experiment and make mistakes.

Finalizing Compositions and Encouraging Group Participation

Next, to finalize the compositions, facilitators assisted participants in identifying the fitting "ending" for their compositions. This was done in a manner avoided interfering with participant choices, only intervening when necessary to rid of confusion or lack of movement forward. Facilitators also ensured that every participant was equally involved and felt challenged to a certain extent, but not overwhelmed by the activity. The main idea used in facilitation was to truly be present in the situation and to listen to the environment to identify both verbal and non-verbal cues of insecurity. Most importantly the facilitator must be truthful about their interventions and try to relax as much as possible – if that is not possible, a facilitator can communicate their own anxiety and proceed with an addressing action so that the participants can identify with this and do the same.

Presentation and Reflection on Compositions

When the 30-minute time ran out, the participants came back to the initial venue to present and discuss their work. The groups were then asked to volunteer, playback and talk about the sounds that they had made. As members of the workshop felt nervous, the facilitator who had performed the sanshin improvisation asked his group mates, whether they would mind if their group went first with the facilitator giving his initial commentary. The first group presenting was naturally the most stressed, so the facilitator initiated the discussion with comments containing familiar language to set a comforting tone, for example "This track sound like a horror movie soundtrack, it is a bit eerie!" or "This track contains so many layers, it could be an impressionist painting!". Facilitators taking the initiative to encourage group presentations quickly led to positive atmosphere of wonder, humor, and surprise. When commenting on compositions facilitators focused on complementing associative and technical values, bringing encouragement of self-value and expression when needed. Addressing a member of a group, who had worked on a specific part of a sound composition, to express their opinion on a piece or the process that they had worked on was empowering for the authors. These questions were action and experience oriented to let the participants replace the feeling of stress with ownership and positivity.

Post-Workshop Assessment and Expression of Gratitude

At the end of the workshop a post-event survey was asked to be filled in by the participants to collect data on the participant reflections about their emotional experiences, both positive and negative. Again, this step was also meant as means of facilitation to let the participants reflect on the changes regarding their described skills at the beginning of the workshop. This served as evidence to the participants that in matter of around 2 hours they could learn to operate in the media of sound, present themselves through work and be able to express opinions on one another's work. Expressing gratitude to the participants for their bravery in creating art was essential to ensure they left the event with a positive feeling. This was done to acknowledge their effort in self-expression and to encourage them to do express themselves in creativity and presentation in the future.

Results #1: Attendance of Creative Events during the Pandemic; Music Skill Growth During the Workshop

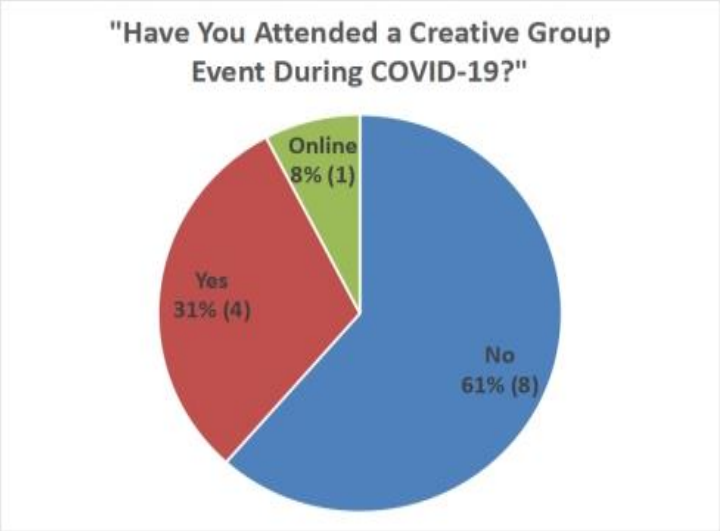


Figure 10: Attendance of creative group events during COVID-19 (conducted in Kyushu University, July 2021)

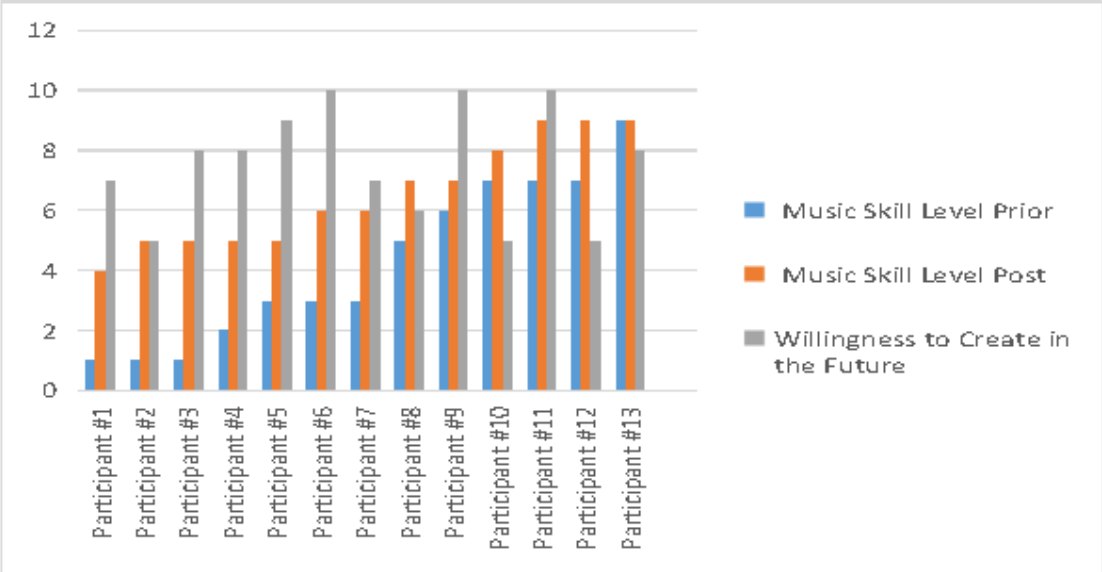


Figure 11: Mode levels of music skills: 4.23 prior and 6.54 post experiment (conducted in Kyushu University, July 2021)

Participants of the experiment changed their opinions about their musical skill levels after the class. Data calculated from the parameters described in *Figure 11* before the experiment the mode grade (blue columns) was 4.23 out 10, afterwards (orange columns) it had become 6.54. Interestingly a participant with musical skills of 7 raised their grade to 9. The 3 people who had rated their skill as 1 in the beginning all raised their levels to 4, 5 and 5 accordingly.

Wilcoxon signed rank test with continuity correction was used to determine whether it can be statistically assumed that musicianship levels would grow after a combined group musicianship session with mixed levels of skill.

data: before and after
V = 0, p-value = 0.002319
alternative hypothesis: true location shift is not equal to 0

Since p-value is not greater than 0.05, that means that the hypothesis can be considered true. A larger scale replication is required to repeatedly test this hypothesis.

In *Figure 10* when asked whether the participants had attended a creative group event ever since the pandemic had started, 8 out of 13 participants had not and 1 of the four who had participated, did so via an online event as shown in [Figure 10]. This reflects the uncommonness and the potential for the organized workshop to be perceived as uncommon, engaging and anxiety inducing for the participants in the light of the pandemic.

Discussion #1:

Musical proficiency level changes post-experiment

The fact that people with no musical experienced people had their musical proficiency levels grow the sharpest could potentially indicate that musically inexperienced people with the right equipment and short training can progress from incapable to moderately capable. The growth of self-assessed proficiency within beginners is what indicates that there may be a stereotype among non-musicians that music creation is unattainable and difficult, but the results prove that it can be successfully alleviated by the use of the right tools and guidance. The presence of experienced musicians in each group has proved to be crucial in exchange of skill by balancing the musical process (Ryan and Schiavio, 2019). This is important as this finding proves that the music can be created by anyone even on a short basis with the assistance of the experienced. The possible limitations however are the questions whether the effect can last after longer periods of time and whether it can be sustained when the participant is not within a group. The tendencies that were found are exploration worthy within further in-depth research.

Results #2: Participant Feedback on Music Design Experiment

Music presentations

This section contains data that is unexplored in previous research and the participants were also uninformed about it prior to the practical part of the class. The concept is presentation of own freshly crafted music to others and the perception of such presentation by others. As described invited people consisted of non-musicians, people who had some experience in music making and a professional musician (8 people, 4 people and 1 person accordingly). The participant

gender ratio was 9 males and 4 females. The participant pool was also a mix of students and working individuals- 6 of them were students, whereas 7 of them were working individuals. Unfortunately, the survey design was flawed due to not collecting individual data on the participant gender, age, vocation, that way making specific answers correlation with these pieces of data impossible. An attempt to analyzed generalized tendencies while looking at the properties of the group will be made.

Participant	Feelings When Others Listened	Feelings When Listening to Others	Willingness to Create Music (1-10)
A	A little embarrassing, but fun.	Music like an installation, interesting.	6
B	Happy, learning experience, our music being compared to an era/genre.	Loved discipline and distortion, learned from varied approaches.	10
C	A little embarrassed.	Interested in different approaches to music creation.	5
D	Not very confident, wondered if listeners enjoyed.	Comforted by beautiful sound.	5
E	Curious about listeners' feelings.	Wanted to understand creation process.	8
F	A little embarrassed, glad people listened seriously.	Liked the variety of music from same tools.	8
G	Very nervous (heart racing).	Found the music "insanely good."	9
H	Happy that others listened with interest.	Observed different ideas from each group.	10
I	Felt respected, amused by differences.	Made them smile.	7
J	-	It was more diverse than the participant thought, different genres and methods.	10

K	-	It was interesting to see a group that made music by hitting non-instruments.	7
L	-	Even with the same instruments, it was interesting to see diverse music.	8
M	-	-	-

Figure 12: Described feelings of participants during sound presentations.

Discussion #2:

"Write down what you felt when other people listen to your music." [Figure 12]

5 people out of 10 respondents (3 did not respond) said that they ***felt shy/embarrassed*** (which, interestingly, in Japanese is the same word for both meanings in English). More specifically they experienced ***discomfort in thinking how the listeners were feeling*** **(1),** ***lack of confidence*** **(1) and** ***nervousness*** **(1).**

3 people had expressed joy due to the process, people listening to them seriously and receiving flattering comparison of their music to a painting by the facilitator. This way of listening is one that can be practiced by being conscious of their anxiety and then replacing with the specific idea that the other person is giving via comparison. Therefore, this in a way becomes practicing cognitive reappraisal (McRae et al., 2012). To be able to do so both the listeners and the talkers need to be lucid at focusing on positive light and being specific respectively. Overall, it can be seen that it is a situation, where most participants experience self-doubt, as they are wondering how they are perceived by other participants as people in Japan are aware of their public image at a high degree (Ogihara, 2017). One of the participants had pointed out in their survey answer that Japanese people have trouble in performing creative tasks in front of each other. This experiment is interesting in a sense that people often wonder about the way their public image is perceived but cannot really know for sure what is the reality of that without a

biased face-to-face communication factor. The next question is what allows the comparison of these thoughts and opinions to happen directly, with the only bias being the questionnaire itself. A strength in the questionnaire was that it was anonymous, therefore, there is less possibility of the answers being softer or untrue.

"Write down how you felt when you listened to music made by other participants." [Figure 12]

Most of the answers (8 of 13) contained the idea of finding the difference within the presented sounds designed using the same tools interesting (7) or containing learning experience (1). Other 2 participants praised the sounds as beautiful and extremely good, and 1 participant expressed interest in knowing more about the places of making and the processes themselves. The fact that the participants were not only describing the compositions of others not only as interesting but specifically fascinating in a sense of diversity**.** The fact that the participants felt uncomfortable presenting, and still find the work of others fascinating even verbally may indicate that it is a behavior of homeostasis and social intelligence in order to collectively balance out the received stress from the presentation anxiety (Maturana, Varela, 1980). The facilitators did, however, give direct comments to the authors of the compositions as soon as they were finished, therefore, the answers have a possibility being affected by the tone that was set by facilitation or the comments themselves. To explore this effect further, separate research is necessary. It can still be assumed that as this process is so vulnerability inducing, and it would be discouraging to let the participants present their music without direct feedback from the surrounding people - also not all the participants would be able to do it on their own as they do not have expertise in how music should be described in language.

Overall, even though the participants had described feelings ranging from embarrassment to happiness, a common theme was discovered - a sense of appreciation for diversity in music creation, both in approaches and outcomes. The mode willingness score of all participants being 7.75 suggests that most of the participants are likely to practice music creation in the future, indicating a positive effect on confidence to engage in self-expression of group sound design. The lower scores of 5, 5 and 6 respectively describe feelings of embarrassment and doubt, while

the higher scores such as a 7 contained a combination of the initial anxiety in combination with an obtained positive feeling as a "silver lining".

Discussion #3:

Open Question Findings and Discussion

Next topic to discuss is probably the more exploratory section in this experiment because since there is practically no prior research about the research question put forward. The answers to this question are mostly found in the free form answers induced by open questions. There were 3 open questions asked and the first of them was:

"**What were your emotions and feelings after taking the lecture?"**

12 of the answers (with one answer left blank) were relevant and valuable, yet an attempt was made to narrow down the discussion aimed towards the contents with the most relevance to the research question and the most radical ideas expressed by the participants. The highlights were the following:

"Connectedness, elevation, feeling no correct answer, nostalgia of returning to a place of the past via instrument choice…"

The answers contained some attention worthy findings. **Even though none of the participants had the time or chance to discuss the questions asked to them about the process within the class, several of their answer ideas overlapped.**

"Did your perception of composition change before and after the workshop?"

Most of the participants talked about how the concept of ***music creation is now perceived as easier, more relaxing than before, no longer scary and seen as something that anyone can do.***

Other opinions also included ideas that making music freely is also music, that things built from mistakes can also be likeable and ***that they had learned a new sense of composing in a dialogue with the environment.***

Overall, it was found that the large majority of the respondents experienced feelings of elevation, fascination and nostalgia in 2 cases. It is interesting since even though 5 the participants also experienced embarrassment and nervousness during the presentation of their creative work, they did not mention this in retrospect. That possibly means that the feeling of positivism prevailed in retrospect bringing about an effect of cognitive reappraisal, which indicates a sense of balance in how a stress can be perceived positively (Chesney et al., 2006). This needs to be explored further at another research take employing statistical analysis at a situation where the data set is large enough.

Final Thoughts

Group Creation Process

It can be concluded that the merits of sound design in groups lies in several moments. One of them is the speed through which beginners with the help of more experienced musicians can acquire skills to first and foremost to create music ($V = 0$, p-value = 0.002319), the mode levels of musicianship growing from 4.23 prior to 6.54 post after 2 hours of process.

This workshop was also created with the aim to explore the participant perception of music composition both as authors of music and as listeners. To one question that was asked the participants: “Did your perception of composition change before and after the workshop?” most answers reflected the sense of their music creation understanding evolving. Music creation proved widely to be an easy, relaxing activity. A sense of freedom even with mistakes being present, was a new concept for several people. All these ideas are possible to adapt in domains outside of music creation, by keeping the spirit of improvised music easy and getting rid of the

idea that music is unreachable to non-musicians. These ideas resonate with the effect of cognitive reappraisal, which indicates a sense of balance in how a stress, or the unknown can be perceived positively (Chesney et al., 2006).

The participants also highlighted the potential of music being a powerful tool for people to be able travel in time and place. This finding is exploration worthy as associative connections via specific atmosphere inducing musical instruments can alleviate people's homesickness in times difficulty to travel or displacement.

Music Presentations: A Dive into Vulnerability and Perception

A sizable portion of the workshop was focused on presentation of self-composed music. This aspect of the experiment was particularly unknown prior to the process, as the effects of such presentations and the listening to those of others on one's social bravery remain under-researched. The cultural context additionally added layers of complexity. As one participant rightly pointed out, Japanese individuals often grapple with showcasing creativity publicly. This stems from the inherent vulnerability in creative expression and the cultural emphasis on social harmony, sometimes at the expense of individuality. As there were participants who expressed concerns about listeners' perceptions, they reflected a heightened self-awareness and sensitivity to their public image, an observation highlighted in previous research (Ogihara, 2017). Conversely, when in the role of listeners, participants demonstrate admiration and curiosity, especially for the creative diversity of music, even when crafted with identical instruments. This paradox expresses the nuances of the Japanese cultural context, emphasizing both the collective spirit and the individual's internal struggles.

Interestingly, although several the participants admitted to feelings of embarrassment or nervousness during their music presentations, these sentiments were absent in their retrospective feedback. This suggests that positive emotions overpowered their initial reservations, pointing to a phenomenon of cognitive reappraisal (Chesney et al., 2006). However, this hypothesis needs further exploration, ideally in a setting with a more extensive dataset for more valid statistical analyses.

Facilitation played a pivotal role in this dynamic, offering immediate feedback post-presentation. While this could have influenced participants' perceptions, it was deemed as imperative in ensuring that the process encourages to express onself rather than the opposite. Observing how the participants described their vulnerability in such presentations, leaving participants without feedback might have been perceived more negatively. Moreover, initially not all participants possessed the language abilities to articulate their musical experiences. Therefore, facilitators bridged this gap by comparisons with familiar media, as a resource to cope in challenging contexts (R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L., 2012).

The fact that people who had not known each other, in around 2 hours could not only feel only connection to each other, but also feel elevation in their mood is important. The quickness of this method can possibly be presented as a time efficient tool for people who feel lonely or unhappy to rid them of their difficult states. This can be considered in situations where there is time constraint or physical closeness constraints as the described observations talked about the connection of people within music, not proximity. Music made and discussed in groups seems to not only have a potential during a pandemic, but also perhaps during other adverse situations like war - people can possibly be able to identify and recover from loneliness of a different character. This research has not been conducted without its' significant limitations - the lack of diversity in participant recruitment for both creating and facilitating is what asks for further randomized and controlled settings. There is, however, a powerful argument favoring the situation of this research happening during of a global pandemic - exploration in specific or rare situations may reveal rarely visible paths even outside the rare domain.

In summary, the workshop generated new perceptions within the participants towards music, creativity, and self-expression. While cultural nuances played a role, the universality of music and its power to evoke diverse emotions stood out. The insights from this workshop generate a balance between vulnerability, creativity, cultural context, power of facilitation and cross level learning.

IV. Use of Group Sound Design as a Tool of Social Empowerment for Visually Impaired Junior Highschool students for Communicational Empowerment Post-COVID-19 Japan

In Chapter III it was observed how quickly through facilitation not only sound design and cross level collaboration can be taught but can also break one's stereotypes about the abilities of oneself. These feelings start from doubt, but are surely overpowered by positivism, indicating a replicated effect of empathy arising through music education (Hattori, Anri, Toyoshima, Fukui, 2015). As this workshop was relatively easy to conduct and arguably brought about tangible positive change in self and surrounding perception for adults of different age and background, could this class be use socially empowering for parts of the society that are especially in need of a sense of connection in a time of increasing social detachement?

The pandemic has caused a certain amount of anguish in all countries around the world; however, it is safe to say that the degree to which it has affected different groups of people is not the same from due to sociocultural reasons. It is important to search for reliable data and evidence suggesting any psychological adversity because of the pandemic at all and there is a significant amount of evidence supporting this question from different angles. People with vision impairment disabilities experienced more loneliness than people without vision impairment. Loneliness levels remained somewhat stable for the non-disabled individuals; they did increase for people with disabilities, but reportedly to not significant levels (Heinze et al., 2021). The

moment worth paying attention to is that the loneliness score for people with visual impairment surges to the same score as for people with more than one disability during the pandemic and their increase in loneliness levels is considerably higher. From this data it can possibly be assumed that induced or accelerated social isolation factor for visually impaired people is as difficult as having multiple physical disabilities.

It is reported that social isolation has the potential to result in cognitive inactivity and depressive moods, which are connected to impairment of cognition (Livingston G., Huntley J., Sommerlad A., Orgeta V. et al., 2017, 2020). There is no single generalized experience of the pandemic, considering the diversity of lifestyles people with impairments have - the pandemic has given a way for non-disabled people to perhaps reconsider the effects of stigma connected to disability (Bookman, Stevens 2023). This emphasizes the need to explore this issue by qualitative research in cases studies, especially during such a rare case as a global pandemic - this can teach today's society what non-disabled people can learn from disabled and vice versa in different global circumstances.

The fourth chapter of this thesis, titled "Use of Group Sound Design as a Tool of Social Empowerment for Visually Impaired Junior Highschool students for Communicational Empowerment Post-COVID-19 Japan", investigates the pandemic caused social isolation issues of junior high-school students with special needs in Japan. There is a strengthened sense of social isolation due to a combination of initially narrow social circles and people with physical impairment being protected from the risks of the disease contraction, making socialization even more scarce. This purpose of this experiment is to explore if and how the process of creating music in groups contributes to positive attitude in communication (Schellenberg et al., 2015) and the willingness to self-express and to create a framework for this method to become replicable for future tests.

Methods

An experiment in form of a class on sound design was conducted at a Junior High School for Special Needs aimed at voluntary students invited to take place. There were 8 participants - all with visual impairments. The class consisted of the following steps:

Brief explanation of all the steps within the music class:

- **A quick self-introduction from the organizers and participants (5 minutes)**

- **Practical training on the use of kalimba, synthesizers, small taiko drums and recording equipment (25 minutes)**:

After introduction the participants were asked to participate in a very simplified warm up sequence: copying a clap rhythm. The goal was for the participants to move their bodies in order to feel relaxed and focused. **(5 minutes)**;

Afterwards, the facilitators demonstrated a simple set up of an amplifier connected to a guitar "loop pedal" which was connected to a microphone recording the environment. Facilitators input some sounds by using clapping, the kalimba and capturing the natural environment **(5 minutes).**

Next all the participants were presented one instrument at a time. After presenting an instrument with the help of a facilitator the participants were given the opportunity to try to play it by themselves **(15 minutes).**

Grouping, sound creation and recording (40 minutes)

Next, spaces were set up for **creating** and **rehearsing** music. The spaces were located in the same room but separated with a physical screen to be easy to access because of the vision disability of the students. Meanwhile the participants took a 10-minute break.

The participants were divided in 2 groups (3 people and 3 people) accompanied by facilitators. One person at a time was asked to create a random sound pattern with any of the instruments presented, which then was "looped" by the facilitator. The participants were asked to record next layers of the composition by one of the actions of choice:

1) picking up one of the practiced instruments;

2) clapping a rhythm with their hands or feet;

3) singing;

4) talking;

5) pushing the record button to layer the environment ambience on top of the already created composition; (silence)

The whole process of this activity has no specific requirements to meet - the goal was to let the participants enjoy each other's presence, try touching the musical instruments and be proactive in creating, listening and discussing sound. Even without ability or willingness to play the musical instruments, the participants were able to enjoy the process. Creative process was recorded with a microphone and a "loop" effect pedal connected to the amplifier in order to play the recorded sound from the instruments. The set up had the function to save all the generated material in order to share it later to one another. Another important moment to mention is that while one group was recording, the other was practicing instruments of their choice in another separate space and talking freely to the facilitators in order to make the participants more relaxed for the further steps within the experiment. This activity should take up to 30 minutes.

Presenting and listening to the created sounds. Expressing the feelings about the process by the author groups & the compliments about the heard sounds by the listener groups (20 minutes).

Assemble together after all the music made **(5 minutes);**

All of the created music pieces were listened to from one group at a time with this specific group expressing how they had felt during the sound creation process if possible. Once finished, the facilitators complimented the music with the comments and associations that they had perceived from the music. Afterwards other group was asked to express what they had felt while they were listening to this music if possible. After all the groups were done, the space was then cleaned up (**15 minutes)**

For the results to be easily comprehensible, the whole process was voice recorded and then created a map was created as seen in [Figure 13] of all the situations that had occurred during the experiment.

Table 2: Specific Facilitation Remarks Adapted for This Workshop

No.	**Aspect**	**Strategy and Implementation**	**Practical Details**
1	Adapting Workshop Dynamics	**Incorporate Physical Communication:** assist in instrument interaction.	Ensuring a safe space with a one-to-one facilitator-participant ratio for effective instruction.
2	Process Emphasis	**Focus on the Process Rather Than the Goal:** Allow open discussions about backgrounds and experiences.	Prioritizing a process-oriented environment can encourage discussions to enhance engagement, practice the ability to bond through empathy and reduce self-consciousness.
3	Balancing Participation	**Combine Active and Free Exploration:** Allocate time	Providing a free time for instrument exploration by letting the participants always have a

		for structured and free activities with instruments.	facilitator nearby to help them learn the instruments at their own pace once the recording of their group is done.
4	Communication and Rapport	**Actively Having a Free Conversation** with participants in about free topics	Using cultural references to engage participants. Encouraging quieter individuals to share their thoughts and experiences. Topics to talk about can range from personal background, music to popculture (games, anime etc.)
5	Documentation and Continuity	**Documenting the Process and Setting Future Expectations**: Focus on qualitative feedback and process documentation.	Recording the workshop through a voice recorded to analyze the observations. Talking about the likelihood of future workshops to build excitement and positivity in the participants at the end.

Results & Discussion

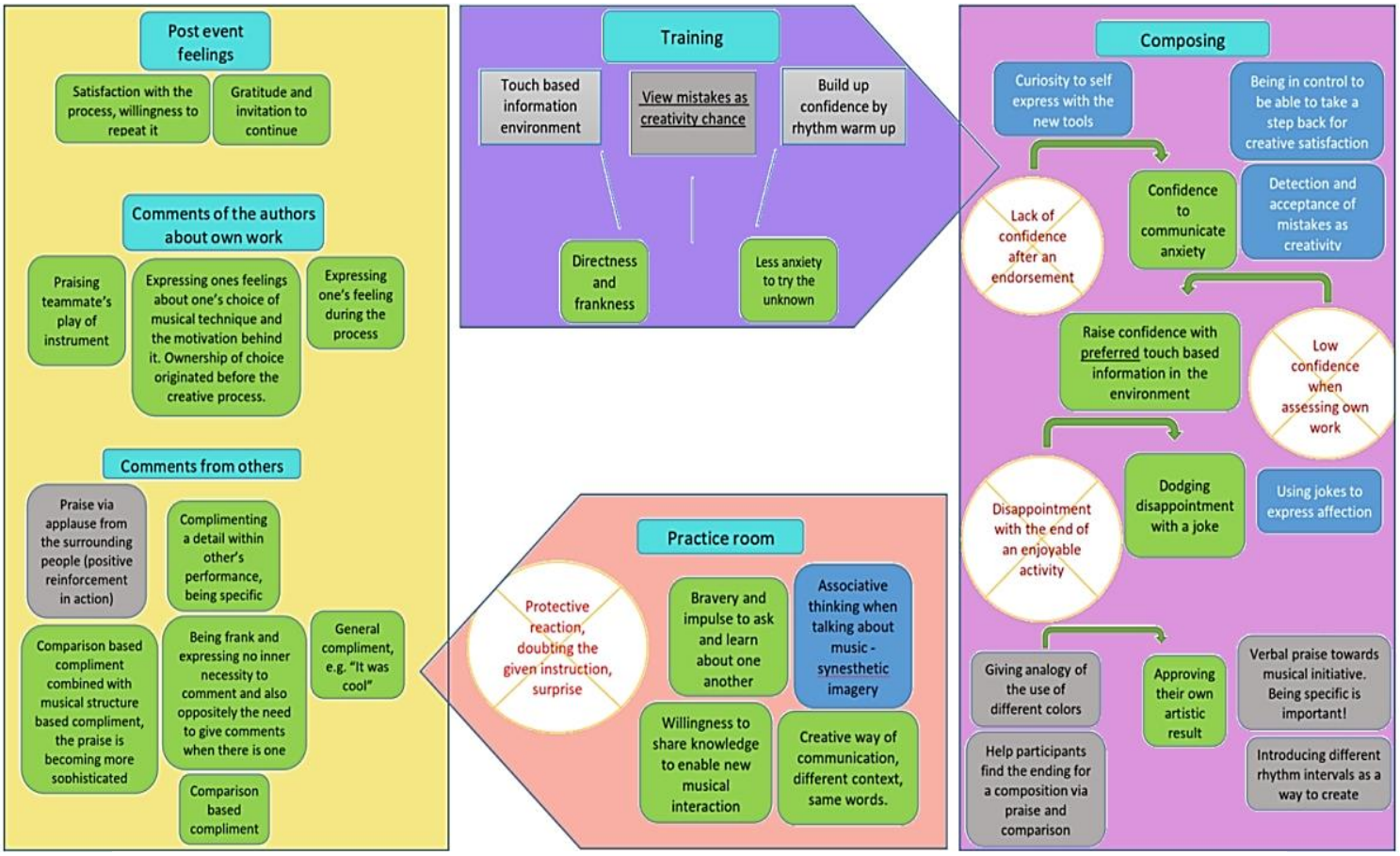


Figure 13: Scheme of activity categories, input and output actions within the experiment, refer to Appendix B for a larger size.

Cyan: Name of section

Grey: Techniques taught or employed by facilitators.

Green: Positive reaction to encountered situations

Circles: Negative reaction to encountered situations

Blue: Newly learned, employed skills

All participants: present musical experience

The levels of music skills were different and perhaps this circumstance was what brought the balance which resulted in the growth of self-confidence and the abilities to communicate with each other. This observation matches the idea that musical activities can further develop communication skills (American Music Therapy Association, 2005).

Figure 14: High level of prior musical skills. Photo by the author.

All participants: confidence boost after training.

The training process was facilitated in a way to let the participants enjoy musical, dialogue and cooperative situations as easily as possible. The participants were encouraged to have both receptive and active interactions with the music creation process, similarly to the therapeutic categories (Guetin et al., 2009) have described. After the training phase they were very direct and frank in their comments related to the ongoing process and were not shy to laugh loudly or express confusion [Figure 15]. The participants were introduced to the concept of mistakes being a chance for creativity and a real-life example was necessary to convey this idea as easily as possible. That was done during the demonstration of environmental sound recording by staging an accidental recording of a verbal text on top of an existing instrumental loop. This was presented as a humorous, positive moment and the participants took in this idea well.

Figure 15: Training activity enjoyed and done with vigour. Photo by the author.

Group #1: conscious about mistakes, willingness to try the less known, anxiety communicated, joking to substitute disappointment.

The sound creation process (composing) contained observations focused on direct feedback situations caused by the the taught skills during the training phase. The participants were divided into two groups. In the first group, the participants were not only very eager to record sounds using the instruments that they had not known of prior to the workshop, but they also had generated agency in terms of being able to undo a layer of recording as shown during the training phase. At the same time the participants were able to understand which accidental moments they had wanted to keep - those were mostly the moments containing vocal quirks, identically to how it was demonstrated to them at the beginning. There were naturally situations of lack of confidence, but the participants were able to communicate their anxiety, which is not possible to test whether it is related to what the participants had learned during their training phase or not. Interestingly, a participant used joking as a way to substitute the emotion of disappointment as soon as the music creation part was finished - he was also successfully using this method to express his joy with the facilitator presence. Both described abilities are important as they can be used to work against the pandemic accelerated social isolation caused difficulties (Murayama et al., 2020). Very possibly this was caused by the tone set by the facilitation, and further testing or observation would be required to find out more, however, the process still managed to generate an effect of social empowerment to a part of the group (Schellenberg et al., 2015).

Group #2: synesthetic thinking to find the ending in composition and to approve, continuous use of praise as support, express the feeling of difficulty to get support - different from adults.

During this phase the children were handed the methods of trying to view the layers of sounds they are working on as colors (synesthetic way of thinking), intuitively finding a finishing point within their compositions. The method of synesthetic thinking when used by a participant was followed by an approval of their own work. This method in combination to the

reaction of the participant is echoes back to socio-cultural inclusion benefits of musically creative activities (Dingle et al., 2021).

All of these processes were supported by praise in moments when confidence was lacking as seen in [Figure 16]. One of the facilitation moments included an encouragement to record a sound as they had been doing great during the training phase, however, the participant clearly had stated that they do not feel confident enough to do so. The ability to openly express difficulty contrasts with the adult behavior. The openness in expressing their difficulties signifies agency underscoring the unique potential of music in fostering communication and emotional expression. The point of significance is that the participant through expression of difficulty, was able to receive support. The observation leads to the idea that perhaps the group music creation process together with facilitation leads to avoidance in concealing personal weakness or individuality in public. Perhaps more reserved participants would be able to go a few steps further than usually and the participants with fewer chances to socialize with people that they have not known before would allow them to make new social connections. This is an idea that naturally should have to be further explored in the next experiment of this kind as the isolation policies around the world have been lifted. These situations teach that perhaps findings during times of loneliness there is a potential ability to learn new forms of being together. All the observations of both groups were aligned in [Table 2].

Figure 16: Using praise and colors as metaphor to facilitate and teach sound composition. Photo by the author.

Comparison as tool facilitate - repeated use of comparison to characterize the same situation leads in later context led to depth of the situation discussed.

The next subject important to discuss is the use of comparison to facilitate - specifically, to let the participants gather confidence to start and finish their work and allow them to use the same model of thinking and opinion expression to empower and praise their peers. A participant within this experiment was using a comparison or a metaphor "this sounds like a festival" directed at another participant's made music, which was different from how it had happened during the work with adults in the first research about group music design: they were generally verbally quite reserved, but more technically focused. The absence of the comparison within the process is probably one of the factors that kept the adults feeling more ambiguous and lacking confidence in the product of the process. The children were able to be very specific and were

able to do so in real-time, a behavior that once again displays the value of music for fostering emotional expression and connection for marginalized groups (Dingle et al., 2021). This comparison by the specific participant was used both during the composition phase and the comment phase.

Figure 17: Children with visual impairment highly focused in their use of instruments. Photo taken by the author.

Table 3: observed point compilation.

Key Aspect	Details / Observations
Musical Experience	- All participants had prior musical experience. - Resulted in growth of self-confidence and communication abilities from the beginning.
Training Outcome	- Encouraged to have both receptive and active interactions. - Became more direct and frank in feedback. - Introduced to the concept that mistakes can be a chance for creativity.
Group #1 Observations	- Eager to record sounds using new instruments. - Able to undo a layer of recording. - Communicated anxiety and used humor to cope with it. - Displayed social empowerment.
Group #2 Observations	- Used synesthetic thinking to view sound layers as colors. - Expressed difficulties and received support. - Openness might have reduced feelings of loneliness and concealment of personal weakness.
Facilitation Techniques	- Use of praise and metaphors (colors) to facilitate sound composition. - Comparison used as a tool to foster confidence and praise peers.
Comparison in Feedback	- Children used specific comparisons in feedback. - Contrasted with adult behavior which was more reserved. - Value of music in fostering emotional connection highlighted.
Inclusion of Disabled	- Fluid communication and social function observed. - Disabled participants built good social cues. - High emotional intelligence observed in all participants.

Post Workshop Questionnaire

As with the previous research with adults without special needs, it was decided to collect information regarding participant experience during the workshop and how they felt afterwards. That, however, was proved to be challenging, as there was a time constraint and inability to conduct it face to face later on.

The music teacher at the school kindly did the favor of interviewing the students much later than the workshop was done, because of the school staff and students contracting COVID-19. Answers to the questionnaire arrived after the summer vacation (1.5 months after the workshop) and the teacher made the judgement to adjust the survey by omitting the 1–10-point rating system, when the students were not able to give such detail. Additionally, the teacher did not interview the students about how they were feeling during the presentation of their own created sound, rather just focusing on the feelings about perceiving the presentations of others. The question about the willingness to repeat the process was also not asked. Possible explanations for these actions could be a lack of understanding regarding the motivation behind the question from the teacher, which is a data collection organization mistake from the facilitator perspective. Even though the teacher kindly facilitated the way into understanding how the participants felt, the moment of failure to establish a non-secondary way of interviewing the participants perhaps misrepresented their true emotions.

This moment is somewhat speculative due to the inability to collect further proof; however, it does make one contemplate whether a there could be a better way of facilitation to collect more complex surveying from participants with visual impairment.

The participants described the process of making music as full of fun (3); having sense of accomplishment (1); experiencing happiness.

The listening process of peer created music was described as (1) technically impressive; good (2 + 1 with sound characterized as “beautiful) and (1) fascination to how each person had a distinct sound - this point echoes from the previous workshop, but only from one participant within this workshop, which indicates that students with visual impairment were less surprised that the

grown-ups without special needs. This could be explained that they have regular music classes in their school.

Overall impressions about the process included sense of (3) joy, (3) gratitude and (1) willingness to repeat the process. One person described seeing the process as challenging prior, but easy and enjoyable at the end. This, again, reveals how the participants view the process differently from the first workshop in Chapter III, in a less dual way - positively . Unfortunately, it cannot be known for sure who is the author of this answer, as the questionnaire in [Table 4] was not collected from specific participants, but in bulk, which also proves to be data acquisition and communication-based limitation.

Table 4: Participant survey answer compilation

Question	Responses
Do you consider yourself good at making music?	- 1 respondent rated themselves a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10. - 4 respondents answered "Yes". - No respondents answered "No" or "Neither".
Would you like to make music again?	- 1 respondent rated their desire as a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10. - 4 respondents answered "Yes". - No respondents answered "No" or "Neither".
Describe how you felt after making music.	- Felt a great sense of accomplishment. - It was fun and wanted to do it again. - Felt happy. - Found it fun (2 responses).
Write down your impressions when listening to the music your friends made.	- Impressed by their skill in setting the tempo. - Thought it was good (2 responses). - Found it very good with beautiful sounds.

	- Interesting to note each person's distinct sound.
Write your impressions of all the sound design.	- Initially thought it would be challenging but found it easy and enjoyable. - Enjoyed the process and thanked those involved. - Expressed a desire to collaborate again and showed gratitude. - Profoundly enjoyed the experience and thanked Mr. Martins and other instructors.

Final Thoughts

The children with visual impairment all had an easy time perceiving musical directions and advice as they were already highly musically inclined due to their musical training at school. This aligns with the idea that music promotes improved communication (American Music Therapy Association, 2005)**.** Other possible success explanations: no prejudice and extra shyness due to having an open style of communication within their schools and families. Paradoxically, despite the limited socializing opportunities for visually impaired individuals outside school, their group music creation process was observed to be full of joy and positive feedback, potentially due to a lack of social stigma. It may be a sign that such events can potentially be a great form of socializing for people with disabilities, as these events are very potent for groups that already familiar with each other. Further research on combined classes focusing on both disabled and non-disabled individuals could be socially productive as people with disabilities can balancing out music presentation evoked social anxiety experienced by those without predispositions. This research has demonstrated that those with disabilities can derive just as much benefit from the social effects of group musicianship as those without visual disabilities, but in its own dimension (Dingle et al., 2021). Sound and listening are the media and skill of strength of the visually impaired, when comparing to people with no disability. Further recreated kind of research in the same way as in this one, has the potential to produce a scheme like Figure 13, which can bring closer to a specific method of pedagogy for such events to be replicated and done in a larger scale in adverse situations around the world. It is crucial as both parts of not only Japanese society, but any society could benefit - the disabled could enhance their social presence

outside their usual circles, and non-disabled individuals could adopt some of the positive behaviors from disabled peers and foster friendships.

The limitations within this research are the small participant pool, whose social and educational backgrounds were challenging to delve into due to the privacy rules of the school they attend. Another significant limitation was the inability to collect precise subjective data from the participants due to lack of time and organizational resources to have the data collection done directly by the authors of the experiment. Instead, the teacher of the students collected the information from the participants much later after the event, additionally readjusting the interview, possibly eclipsing important subjective findings. In future research there should be a further organizational consideration for more organized techniques to collect data from participants of special needs.

Group musicianship is a form that also allows the people with predispositions to boost confidence, be able to voice their anxiety, solve it and be able to explore and communicate with situations and people unknown to them. These qualities are easily attainable with confident, open minded and specific facilitation with fixed goals to teach specific skills like absence of mistakes or seeing failure as a moment of creativity. These skills easily travel to social situations as group musicianship is more of a language than just a tool. This language will play an important role in the future of communicative evolution.

V. Tuning into Silence: An Examination of *Mokuso* Techniques in Japanese Elementary Education

In Chapters III and IV it was investigated how people of different age, with physical predisposition and those without were able to benefit from newly acquired to communicate in creativity, comparison, (Schellenberg et. al., 2015) and difficulty reappraisal (McRae et. al., 2012). for communicative enhancement. Even though the settings of the learning processes are easy to recreate, they require a considerable finance and time resources and planning to be implemented in schools. The positive observations of willingness to self-express and support one another through accurate comparisons puts forward the following question: are there potential merits language learning process when employing listening and sound during the same foreign language class? The next chapter is dedicated to exploring a way of cultivating focus and attentive listening in settings that are available practically always and everywhere and can be accessed habitually. Anecdotally there is a lot of evidence that people in schools and workplaces of Japan practice their own form of mindfulness called *mokuso*.

Even though there is a familiarity with the context in Japan, official guidelines are non-existent perhaps due to the Japanese cultural tendency to maintain silence in some social processes (Kimura, 2010). During an interview conducted specifically for this research paper with a zazen monk in Fukuoka prefecture, their elaborated on their opinion that, *mokuso* in Japan, similarly as in the west, is given strong associations to religion. The perception of *mokus*o especially differs in anecdotal discussion with university students about their usage of *mokuso* during their school education - many associate *mokuso* with the moment of silence that is performed every year at schools as a moment of remembrance of the atomic bomb victims. Ministry of Education Culture Science and Sports does not describe the technique as used in class and the instructions on how and in what situations *mokuso* is performed during school processes such as lessons under its' official guidelines. The only mention of mindfulness meditation is within the program called

"CLARINET" (Children Living Abroad & Returnees Internet) - under the subpoint "Safety Measures for Children Studying Abroad" it lists breath work and mindfulness meditation practice as one of several stress coping mechanisms (MEXT, 2009). Furthermore, there are differing views on how, when and with what goals should the teaching process of the technique be done. The aspects, which are currently necessary to further explore are clear explanations of how the process should be done and with what purpose. It is also important to let students occasionally freely express themselves about their experience in drawings or writings to observe any effects previously unpredicted.

Chapter V experiments and data collection are done with the purpose of employing and comparing methods that are regularly used for improving collective work process. The observational, attentive and non-verbal aspects of active listening seem to be present within a collective silent moment of a class but perhaps it loses its' potential in lack of detail and understanding. For these methods to reveal the true merits behind them in communication and focus, they should be defined through a fixed guidance system of what needs to be done and identified through student/teacher feedback in text or creative format after the process of *mokuso.*

Experiments with control groups will be conducted and then verified by tests aimed at memory, focus and performance speed. Additional domains of exploration also include interviews of the teachers who taught their students the techniques of *mokuso* that the children practice as they vary substantially from *mokuso* without guidance or *mokuso* practice accompanied by praises made by two assigned classmates, etc.

Methods

Experiment #1: The experiment consisted of a once in two weeks English class in an Elementary School in Fukuoka prefecture, Japan, in which 45 grade 4 students participated. There were 3 different classes with 15 students in each and during the lessons they were learning and reciting a speech containing a template, which they had filled in with their own personalized information. In their practice agenda they also were asked to perform the *mokuso*/sound-based mindfulness practice or nothing. Afterwards the participants were asked to practice their speeches in pairs, after which the speeches were given one by one, in front of the classroom.

During this experiment the number of mistakes were tested in the presence and absence of *mokuso* and guided sound-based *mokuso* practices. Specifically, an attempt to identify, which of the methods if any, has the greatest magnitude of effect on the ability to memorize directions of a teacher through the numbers of grammar mistakes. The participants went through the following process:

- Practice the speech by themselves till they feel comfortable;
- Practice the speech in front of the table of their peers;
- 1st week: Practice *mokuso* (duration: 2 minutes and 30 seconds); 2nd week: practice guided sound-based mindfulness (duration: 2 minutes and 30 seconds); 3rd week: skip this step;
- All participants move to the center of the class to randomly select a pair and then recite their speech to them with all the participants going through the same process at the same time;
- Go in front of the class one by one to present the speech to the whole class.

Used Material

As described, during the first week the participants were asked to perform the process of *mokuso* as usual. During the second week the participants were asked to follow a guided mindfulness practice, by listening to guidance by the facilitator using a script titled "Mindful Hearing" by Annaka Harris from the app "Waking Up". Finally, during the third week the participants skipped this step and simply proceeded with the further steps. The following order was performed to avoid affecting the autonomous process of *mokuso,* test the efficacy of the "Mindful Hearing" and finally, see whether there are any significant changes in the performance of the speeches when this step is skipped whatsoever.

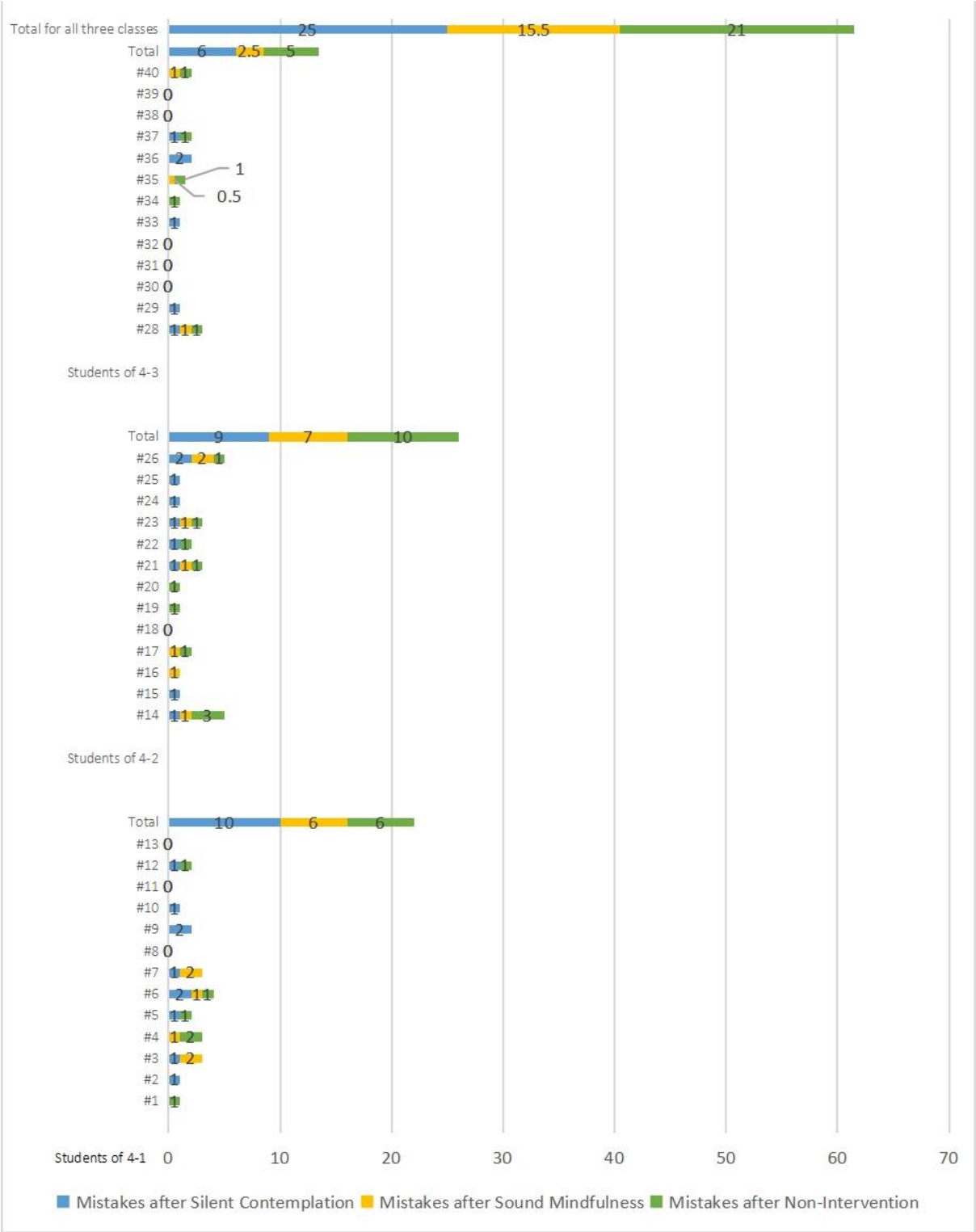
- Null Hypothesis (H0): The means of the mistakes made by students across the three conditions (*Mokuso*, Sound-Based *Mokuso*, Doing Nothing) are equal. In other words, there is no significant difference in the number of mistakes made by students across the three conditions.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): The means of the mistakes made by students are not equal across all three conditions. This hypothesis implies that at least one condition has a significantly different mean from the others.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected by counting the mistakes of the participants all three times they performed their speeches and by comparing the amounts of the mistakes to the initial amount of mistake corrections given by the teacher during the first time as seen in [Table 5].

Table 5: Amounts of Mistakes in Student Speeches After *Mokuso*, Sound Based *Mokuso* and Non-Intervention. Experiment conducted in June-July 2023 by the author.



Data Analysis for Experiment #1:

Figure 18: Statistical Calculations for Experiment #1

The collected data was analyzed by using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This is the breakdown of the output using base in the statistics software *R*:

Error: Name

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Residuals	**37**	**22.94**	**0.62**		

Error: Name:Condition

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Condition	**2**	**1.254**	**0.6271**	**1.61**	**0.207**
Residuals	**74**	**28.829**	**0.3896**		

Error: Within

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Residuals	**6**	**0.625**	**0.1042**		

Error: Name

Df (Degrees of Freedom): This represents the number of participants minus 1, which is 3737.

Sum Sq (Sum of Squares): The total variability in the data, which is 22.9422.94.

Mean Sq (Mean Square): The average variability (Sum Sq divided by Df), which is 0.620.62.

This section shows the between-subjects variability. It captures the individual differences among the participants.

The **p-value of 0.207 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the number of mistakes across the different conditions** across the three conditions (*Mokuso*, Sound Based *Mokuso*, Doing Nothing) at the 5% significance level (at the typical $\alpha=0.05\alpha=0.05$ level).

Findings from Experiment #1:

- From the analysis of data there is no statistically significant effect from either sound mindfulness process or the *mokuso* in comparison to doing nothing.
- The least number of mistakes was recorded during the use of sound-based *mokuso* process - even though the difference in mistakes is relatively insignificant, it can still be used to reduce the amounts of mistakes. The effect needs to be observed in a larger data set and longer periods of implementation.
- Subjective & Qualitative Data: To understand further potential benefits of both *mokuso* or sound-based *mokuso* processes, especially in group context, there is a need to ask for descriptions of what they experience or think about these methods. Same goes for the homeroom teachers in charge of the classes, to see whether their input affects the potency of any of the methods.
- The order in which the methods were performed is worth experimenting on in further experiments, as repeated practice may be naturally the cause for the participants to improve in their performance. That may be necessary to explore the magnitude of the effects in both methods. It seems to be clear that they do have an impact, as the participants had the equal or larger amounts of mistakes when they did nothing and that also was the last session of practice, making the repeated practice effect null. Changing the order in the three groups would have made the repeated practice effect presence or absence undetectable, and if sound-based *mokuso* was to be done the first, the next lesson's classical *mokuso* would have been biased as the participants would silently focus on listening to sounds.

Comments about *mokuso* from 4th grade students

4-1 Student A “While quiet I could hear various sounds. I also felt relaxed and felt good.”

4-1 Student B “I felt like reviewing my speech.” **Imagining study goals.**

4-1 Student C “I felt that I was by myself.” **A sense of introspection, possibly allowing the student to collect themselves before something important.**

4-1 Student D “I was worried about whether I will be able to give a good speech in English” **Student being aware of negative emotions, a potential first step to work against it.**

4-2 Student A “I felt good because I could hear the singing of the birds and the chirping of cicadas.”

4-2 Student B “I felt that my mind relaxed and that I cooled down - that felt good.”

4-3 Student A “I had this thought during *mokuso*: there were many fun and difficult things during the semester. I want to do my best in the second semester too!” **Student displaying a sense of challenge and positive feelings - a sign of well-being according to the chosen definition in Group Music #1 Section**

4-3 Student B “I listened to the sounds of cicadas and felt at ease.”

4-3 Student C “I thought the environment was much quieter and more calm than usual.”

Takeaways from student comments/drawings:

- Some students cultivated positive thoughts about summer break and then further describing it made them feel good.

- Several students described being aware of the feeling that the process was a bit too long, or that they were sleepy or tired.

- Several students described hearing specific sounds and that those sounds allowed them to think about their environment.

- Several students displayed their feelings of increased focus through drawn pictures and titled them “me: before; me after: refreshed” as seen in [Figure 19]; others also drew pictures but with them playing in the nature with friends, animals and also playing sports; there were also pictures where a character that the child likes encourages them to do best in their speech. This effect was observed in high numbers in class 4-3 indicating that the willingness to describe mental images laconically through pictures may be an explanation to the class scoring lowest number of mistakes, especially during sound-based *mokuso*;

- Copying of pictures may be seen as a negative sign of students not knowing how to react to the task of describing their *mokuso* experience. However, this process can also be seen as positively contagious as students are “feedbacking” creativity from their friends as seen in [Figure 21]. The importance lies in the idea that original visual representations of thoughts or ideas could be presented in a discreet way to the group so that other students could pick up the mindsets, ideas or feelings of the authors, without knowing their names. It could be a way of tuning into same thoughts, emotions and ideas as a group - hence, becoming and a unit that is listening to each other even in silence without insecurity of revealing one’s identity.

- The fact that the children could describe their experience in pictures related to specific thoughts of the *mokuso* process itself/upcoming speech process/out of class experience/sounds that they had perceived is an indicator of truly becoming aware of their thoughts during *mokuso* as seen in [Figure20]. The tool of expressing oneself through drawing and language is what can potentially truly enable the children to manifest the merits of mood increase, stress reduction and group creativity to themselves.

- For 4th grade classes that recorded the least number of mistakes from all three classes during sound-based mindfulness also seemed express themselves by visuals depicting thoughts of them playing, being in the nature or performing their speeches, without much further detail. This seems to indicate that the state where a student performs open scan of perceived thoughts during mindfulness practice helps with working memory practice. Further studies need to be done to prove this point to a more convincing degree.

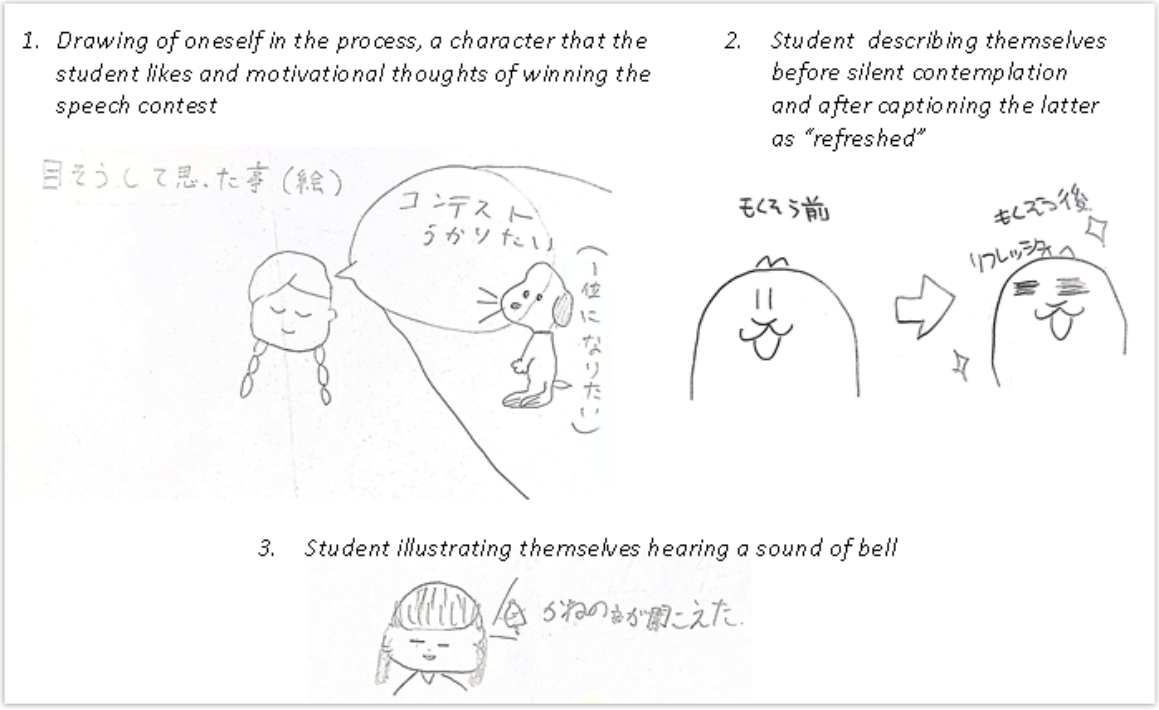


Figure 19: Drawings by Students of Themselves in the Process of *Mokuso*

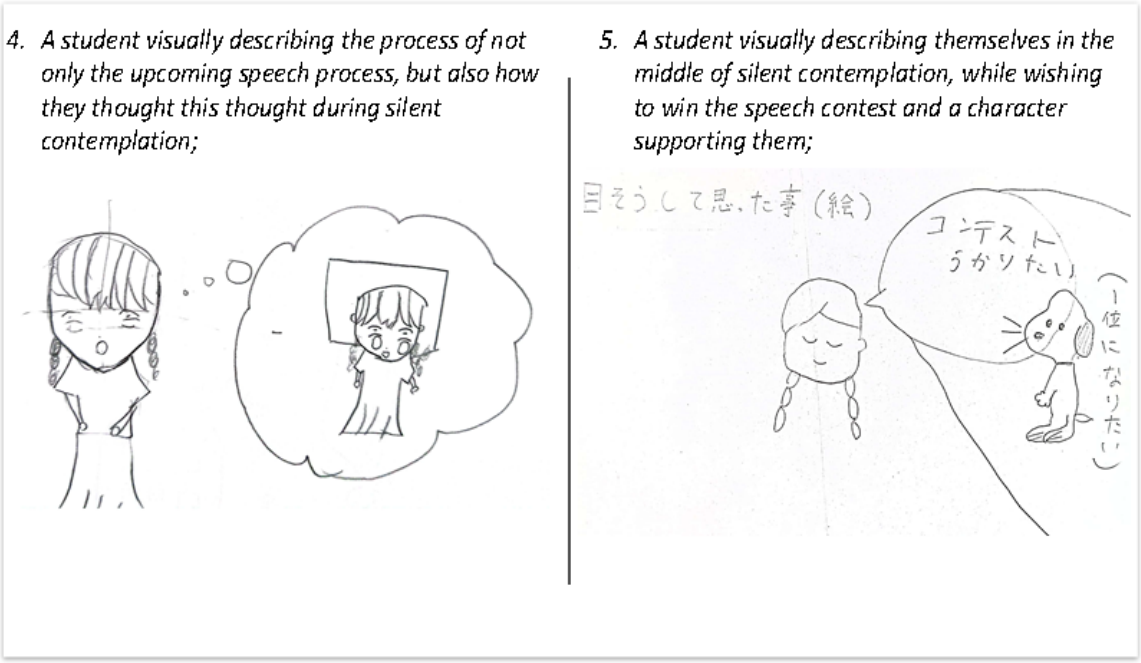


Figure 20: Drawings by Students of Themselves in the Process of *Mokuso* Seeing a Thought in Their Mind's Eye

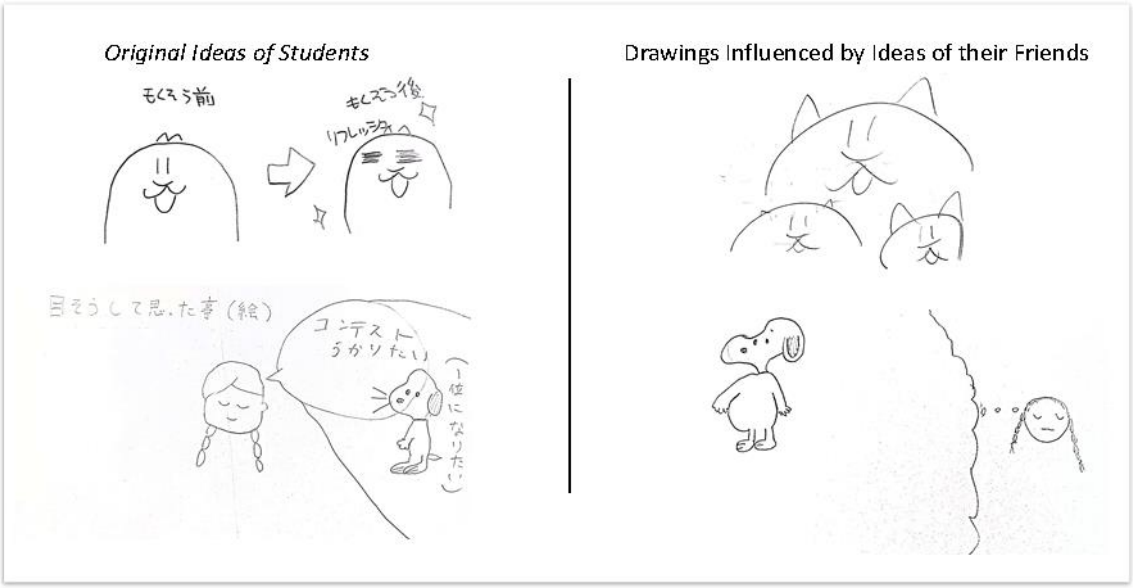


Figure 21: Drawings by Students Partially Feedbacking Creativity from Their Friends - this moment is important as original ideas can be presented in a discreet way and students could pick up the mindsets, ideas or feelings of the authors.

Experiment #2: This experiment consisted of a weekly English class in an Elementary School in Fukuoka prefecture, Japan, in which 90 students participated. There were 3 different classes with 30 students in each and during the lessons they were learning a piece of grammar in English, prior to which they were performing the *mokuso* practice/sound-based mindfulness practice or nothing. During this experiment it was tested whether the amount of grammar mistakes change after each of the described methods are practiced. Additionally, it was attempted to identify, if any of the methods, has the effect of self-controlled behavior through reduced excess movement in class. Attention was also placed on to whether self-controlled behavior in movement has a correlation to reduced amount of grammar mistakes. The specific order of actions is the following:

- 1st week: Practice *mokuso* (duration: 2 minutes and 30 seconds); 2nd week: practice guided sound-based *mokuso* (duration: 2 minutes and 30 seconds); 3rd week: skip this step;
- Drill the grammatical expressions with the teacher;
- Do a 1-minute time challenge, during which they must try and form a sentence
- Data Collection: Counting mistakes and measuring the amount of movement through movement mapping software.
- All participants assemble in 6 teams and practice the group "Role Play" (it was measured how fast and how much excessive movement is there within the process);

Used Material

In the same way as it was done in Experiment #1, during the first week the participants were asked to perform the process of *mokuso* as usual. During the second week the participants were asked to follow a guided mindfulness practice and during the third week the participants skipped this step and simply proceeded with the practicing the speech. The following order was performed to avoid affecting the autonomous process of *mokuso,* test the efficacy of the "Mindful Hearing" and finally, see whether there are any significant changes in the performance of grammar drills when this step is skipped.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected by counting the overall number of answers and mistakes within them in the span of 1 minute all three times the participants preformed the task of generating sentences with the taught grammar. The movements of the participants were also mapped with the software called *Kinovea* (used regularly to assess movement in sports *post factum*) to compare the amounts of body movement after all three methods were practiced a seen in [Figure 23]. Correlation (if any) was looked for between the amount of excess movement [Table 6] (lack of self-controlled behavior) and the ability to perform the assigned grammar with less mistakes [Table 6]. The overall number of pixels was counted for each participant head movements within the frame of 50 seconds in each video.

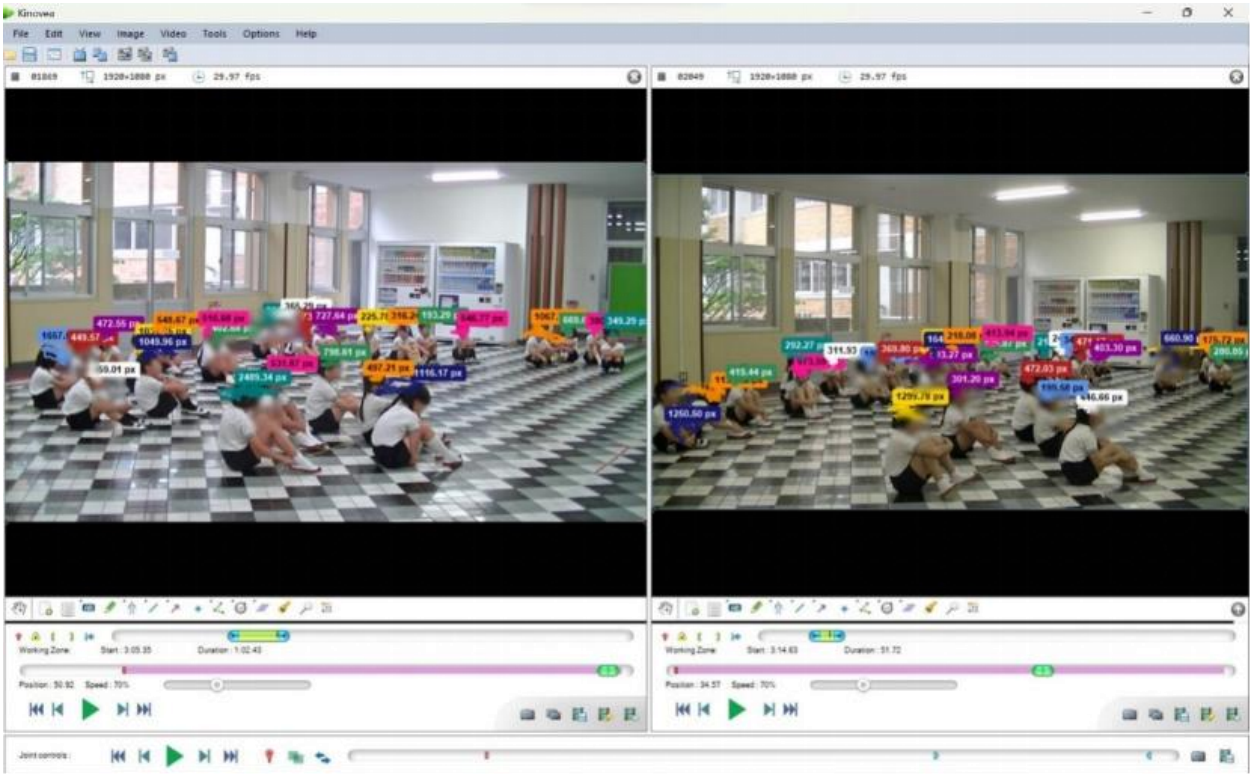


Figure 22: Described method of data measurement via tracing movements of student heads from the recording of the experiment in the software movement measuring Kinovea. Experiment conducted by the author in June – July 2023

2-2, 2-3 and 2-1 Class Data

Table 6: Data set Experiment #2: Amount of mistakes and correct answers and total body movement measured in pixels of video recordings after performing: 1) Sound Mindfulness; 2) *Mokuso* and 3) non-intervention in each of the three grammar drills.

Trial	Condition	Mistakes	Correct Answers in 1 min
First	*Mokuso*	3+2	11+11
Second	Sound Meditation	3 (6)	10 (20)
Third	Nothing	2 (4)	10 (20)

Trial	Condition	Mistakes	Correct Answers in 1 min
First	*Mokuso*	3+1	10+6
Second	Sound Meditation	2+3	13+10
Third	Nothing	1+3	14+14

Trial	Condition	Mistakes	Correct Answers in 1 min
First	*Mokuso*	2+2	10+8
Second	Sound Meditation	2 (4)	11 (22)
Third	Nothing	1 (2)	11 (22)

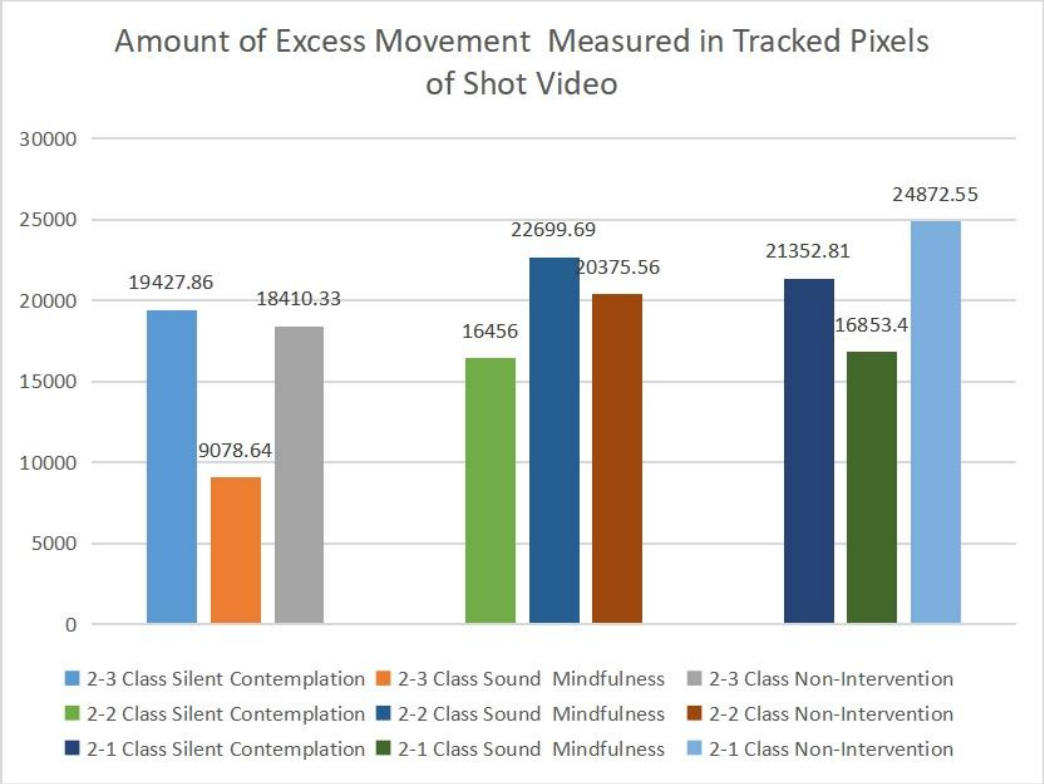


Figure 23: Amount of Excess Movement Measured in Tracked Pixels of Shot Video

Data Analysis for Experiment #2

1. Model: Total Movement ~ Condition + Class
2. Output:
   - Condition
     - Degrees of Freedom (Df): 2
     - Sum of Squares (Sum Sq): 37,898,460
     - Mean Square (Mean Sq): 18,949,230
     - F value: 0.955
     - Pr(>F): 0.458
   - Class
     - Df: 2
     - Sum Sq: 48,101,822

  - Mean Sq: 24,050,911
  - F value: 1.212
  - Pr(>F): 0.388
- Residuals
  - Df: 4
  - Sum Sq: 79,405,001
  - Mean Sq: 19,851,250

Interpretation for Total Movement Distance:

The p-values greater than the typical alpha level of 0.05. This suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in the Total Movement Distance across the different conditions and classes at the 5% significance level.

ANOVA Analysis for Correct Answers

1. Model: CorrectAnswers ~ Condition + Class
2. Output:
  - Condition
    - Df: 2
    - Sum Sq: 28.22
    - Mean Sq: 14.11
    - F value: 0.316
    - Pr(>F): 0.746
  - Class
    - Df: 2
    - Sum Sq: 157.56
    - Mean Sq: 78.78
    - F value: 1.766
    - Pr(>F): 0.282
  - Residuals

- Df: 4
- Sum Sq: 178.44
- Mean Sq: 44.61

Interpretation for Amount of Correct Answers:

Similar to the Total Movement Distance, the p-values for 'Condition' (0.746) and 'Class' (0.282) in the Correct Answers analysis are also above 0.05. This indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in the number of correct answers given under different conditions and across classes at the 5% significance level.

The analysis suggests that neither the different conditions (*mokuso*, sound based *mokuso*, nothing) nor the class differences significantly affect the Total Movement Distance and the number of Correct Answers. This implies that the interventions and class distinctions did not have a statistically measurable impact on these outcomes within the scope and scale of this experiment.

Findings from Experiment #2:

- The data analysis showed statistical insignificance which means that further evidence must be collected in different experiment settings to prove the hypothesis to be true or null. An attempt to analyze the case for each class and method will be done by taking into account observed information.
- Overall, the amount of excess movement was lowest during the practice of Sound Mindfulness, which suggests that this method might have a calming effect on the students.
- 2-3 class showed a very significant reduction in excess movement during the Sound Mindfulness technique, and as the degree in movement reduction was somewhat higher and much higher than that of other two classes, that may indicate that this method may be effective in combination of extra circumstances of the in 2-3, 2-1 and such circumstances non-existent in 2-2.

- The method of non-intervention consistently resulted in the least number of mistakes, which could suggest that this method is the most effective on impacting grammar performance, yet it could be affected by the repeated practice effect. Additional experiments with switched order may be necessary in the future.

  There are significant limitations to this experiment setting as there were times when only one of the data measuring teachers could participate, therefore the results in brackets are the measured results by one of teachers multiplied by two – this data is only assumed, hypothetical result.
- 2-2 homeroom teacher is without experience in teaching 1st graders, whereas 2-1 and 2-3 are very experienced in this domain - this could also signifies potential importance of 2-2 teacher not having the experience of teaching and facilitating the process of *mokuso* from anew.
- Subjective & Qualitative Data: To understand further potential benefits of both *mokuso* or Sound Mindfulness processes there is a need to ask for descriptions of what they experience or think about these methods. Same goes for the homeroom teachers in charge of the classes, to see whether their input affects the potency of any of the methods.

Comments about *mokuso* from 2nd grade students

2-1 Student A"*Mokuso* is used to calm down." **Student is listing down the purpose of this activity, which is a sign of deliberate action.**

2-1 Student B "I felt like there was a snail nearby." **Sensory awareness and creativity.**

2-1 Student C "I felt that the class next to us is working really hard!" **Sensory awareness and potential motivation.**

2-3 Student A "I became quiet and relaxed" **Effect of relaxation.**

2-3 Student B "I heard the sound of trees rustling in the wind and the rain hitting an object, that calmed me down." **Detailed description of sensory experience linked to relaxation.**

2-2 Student A "I felt a sense of relaxation and emptiness within my body."

2-2 Student B “When doing *mokuso*, I could hear various sounds and they made me relax.”

2-2 Student C “When doing the *mokuso,* I felt my body becoming light and I could hear sounds from different classrooms.” **Similar answers repeating**

2-2 Student D “I thought about a dream I had yesterday and then about what am I going to do tomorrow and who will I become when I am an adult.” **Drifting in rather distant thoughts from the lesson.**

2-2 Student E “Relaxed. Could hear sounds. Thoughts about tomorrow. Sound of rain.”

2-2 Student F“Relaxed. Sounds from other classroom students, rain. **Similar answers repeating.**

Takeaways from Grade 2 comments:

- Students of 2-1 seemed to be very concentrated on describing the sounds around them in combination some creatively associative thoughts related to sensory awareness, motivation to study and the description of the purpose of *mokuso*.
- Students of 2-2 seemed to look for ideas in their friend answers, a lesser focus on sound than other two classes, which may also correlate to the fact that they had the largest amount of excess movement after sound based *mokuso*.
- Students of 2-3 13 out of 15 people were merely describing the sounds that they heard. Two people talked about the effect of relaxation, which may correlate with reduction of unnecessary movement after sound based *mokuso*

3 Interviews with Teachers Who Use *Mokuso* in Their Classrooms

Three teachers were interviewed with varied experiences in implementing *mokuso* within their classrooms.

Definition of *Mokuso*:

***A**: "It's an activity that is used in order to calm the mind."*

***B**: "It's a time interval in which the students calm their minds."*

***C**: "It's about calming your mind in silence, I believe."*

A consistent theme across all three teachers was that *mokuso* is primarily a tool to "calm the mind." Interestingly, ***A*** defines it with the more action based word "activity", whereas ***B*** calls it more passively a "time interval", whereas ***C*** talks only in terms of the meaning through the word "about".

Guidance Examples (How would the teachers explain/teach this method to first graders):

***A**:* "Find a comfortable sitting a posture, close your eyes. And now, calm your mind. Then, with your eyes closed, try to imagine what you are going to do next. You are doing very well."

***B**:* "When studying at school, we often need to organize your thoughts and concentrate.

To calm our minds, we use a technique called *mokuso*. Close your eyes, posture yourself, and take time to sort out your feelings quietly. Next, I'll teach everyone how to practice *mokuso*. First, firmly place the soles of your feet on the floor.

If your feet can't reach the floor, place yourself a little forward on the chair, and make sure the soles of your feet are sticking firmly. Then straighten your spine and pull your shoulders a little bit back. Let's correct our posture! It's good to have your hands on your knees as well! Now, close your eyes slowly, hold state of feelings as it is until I say "yes", think about what you are thinking now and talk to yourself. Let's start."

C: "Close your eyes. Relax your shoulders and take a deep breath slowly. When it's quiet, you'll notice you can hear surrounding sounds better. Calm yourself and open your eyes."

The common ground in all three explanation lies in the instructions to focus on posture, introspection and sensory awareness. All three instruct the children to close their eyes and sit in an upright position.

The points of difference are most notably in ***B***'s explanation, as the teacher clearly defines the purpose, goals and the means to achieve them. ***B*** proceeds to define the process in high detail and asks then the children to become aware of their thoughts, whereas ***A*** ask the children to imagine their further activities and ***C*** focuses on calming oneself.

Table 7: Summary of definitions, methods, goals, timings, observed effects and personal practice descriptions.

Topic	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Definition	Calming the mind	Time interval to calm the mind	Calming the mind in silence
Guidance Method	Imagining next actions	Detailed posture guidance & introspection	Sensory awareness, self-calming
Goals	Setting & visualizing daily goals	Calming down & concentration	Not specified
Timing	Beginning, middle, after P.E, before test	Beginning and end, sometimes in between	Beginning, end, breaks, when restless
Effect on Students	Calmer start to activities	Enhanced focus & ease of instruction following	Helps switch moods & reduce chatter
Personal Practice	Practiced in junior high	Practices yoga and meditation	Moments of quiet reflection, but not deliberate

Major takeaways from the interviews:

1. All teachers unanimously agree on the calming nature of *mokuso*.
2. There's a diversity in guidance methods ranging from future visualization to sensory awareness.
3. Regardless of personal mindfulness habits, all teachers find *mokuso* beneficial for classroom management.

Noteworthy Quotes:

- "If they do *mokuso* once, you can expect the next activity for the class to start more calmly." - **Teacher A**
- "My instructions are easily followed, and I think the children are able to concentrate more easily." **- Teacher B**
- "Meditation, in conjunction with commands like 'straighten your posture', helps in switching the mood." - **Teacher C**

Discussion on the teacher interviews:

Mokuso is used in classroom as a tool to enhance student ability to focus, to effectively transition from one activity to another and to calm down the ambiance of the classroom. The degree to which the teachers explain or facilitate the activity for their students varies, with some teachers explaining the purpose and goals, while others give minimal guiding points, allowing the students to have agency over how they approach their time in silence. The technique varies in how the teachers ask the students to think about it – points of focus range from being aware of one's thoughts and communicating to oneself to imagining upcoming activities and finally to sensory awareness combined with relaxation. The method clearly varies in each classroom with potential for it to be more and less beneficial depending on the context. Further research is required to observe how each of these described methods works in each setting.

Discussion

This research was conducted with the goal to understand the effects of *mokuso* and sound based *mokuso* on group dynamics of students. As the Centre for Attention Studies at King's College London has shown, technology's influence on attention span remains with a potential of being significant (Duffy, Thain, 2022). Mindfulness practice in specifically established classroom environments by the homeroom teacher may hold the key to this issue.

Findings from Experiment #1 suggest that even though there was not a significant statistical difference in the impact of the two mindfulness techniques and non-intervention, the sound based *mokuso* technique demonstrated a minor reduction in the number of mistakes in student speeches. This effect could be potentially magnified over longer periods of time if applied with consistency and perhaps a larger data set.

Aspects of group dynamics that are potentially significant were discovered after subjective data analysis. Student comments and drawn pictures after the process of *mokuso* a week after the experiment was performed revealed to that students have an inner diversity of an ensemble of opinions in how they view the task of mindfulness. There is a mix of sensory awareness, relaxation, awareness-based introspection of daily thoughts and finally positive thinking regarding study goals. The visual and written representations of their experiences display students listening and inspiring from each other's ideas. This tendency seems to resemble tuning by sharing a tone, in this case a cognitive tone. This mirrors Japan's unique communicative culture, where, as Kimura describes, silence plays a crucial role in information exchange, signifying minimalism in communication (Kimura, 2010).

Experiment #2 proved further that sound based *mokuso* process has the capability to further give synchronicity in calming and harmonizing effect on some groups and some not. The absence of this effect in one of the experiment groups may be explained by the atmosphere that the homeroom teachers create in each of their classrooms, reflecting potential importance of the amount of experience that the teachers possess in teaching. The experience of particular importance seems to be the experience of teaching *mokuso* technique from anew to first graders.

Possibly, this lack of experience of the homeroom teacher is what may be hypothetically causing the students to perform the mindfulness practice without the full understanding process leading to decreased beneficial effects from it. This resonates with the importance of guidance in mindfulness practices for those who are new to it (Thera, 2009; Philips et. al., 2019).

The comments from Grade 2 students, which were collected before Grade 4 student comments and pictures, were done only in written form. Similarly, to how 4th graders described their experiences, 2nd graders revealed themes of sensory awareness, relaxation, and both present and future focused thoughts. This limited format, perhaps, has been somewhat revelatory as to how the classes are trained to perceive and act during their mindfulness practices. Grade 2-3 almost unilaterally describing detected sounds without delving too much into further detail. Speaking in orchestral analogies, every class has revealed their technical capabilities in conjunction to how their conductors had trained them. Experiments exploring styles and methodologies most fitting to each class are necessary - a created inventory of methods with a designed framework of mindfulness practice method, its' timing and specific instructions fit for specific types of groups may seem beneficial.

All the teacher interviews emphasized the calming and harmonizing effects from *mokuso*. As the three teachers revealed different guidance methodologies within the range of - visualizing classroom tasks, communicating with the self and sensory focus - it shows that every teacher possesses their own style. Exploring timing of the activity, goals, length and other personal experience of other teachers in larger quantities is crucial to build up criteria to share knowledge about mindfulness practice to educators around the world. This has the potential to grow into a pedagogical system.

There were significant limitations for this study. In the experiment exploring the number of mistakes done during a grammar drill showed that the non-intervention method seemed to display the most potent effect, meaning that repeated practice may have overshadowed any effect or absence of it within the methods, as it was implemented as the last one. Further investigation with different order is necessary to produce more convincing results. Additionally, an important limitation in the process has been the fact that experiment facilitation within a single school is very difficult and prone to constant changes due to schedule alterations, occasional staff absence and the necessity to be constantly flexible in planning. Perhaps the same experiment in different

schools simultaneously could be beneficial to safeguard a steady process of data collection. This further emphasizes the necessity to collect subjective data in research domains, which are completely new.

To conclude, both *mokuso* and sound based *mokuso* are arguable potent pedagogical tools that can bring the benefits of non-verbal communication and to synchronize class mood yet have currently proven to be statistically insignificant to have minor effects of memorization and calming. Sound based *mokuso* has the possible benefit of memorizing longer, more creative tasks in foreign language, but this needs to be further investigated to explore if statistical significance is possible. To have a focused mindset of the process and then to be able to exit it with a feeling of appreciation is an important idea to cultivate in schools (Wolf, 2020).

Conclusion

In this thesis creative methodologies were both made from a new and examined to effectively address the problem of insufficient communicative competence in learning processes for both school aged and adults and in Japan. This research sought to develop creative educational methods based on active listening for the development of communicative competence in schooling extra-curricular and adult oriented learning settings. The purpose of this thesis is to seek creative educational methods fit for a diversity of Japanese people to alleviate the inability to communicate in verbal and non-verbal peer communication with the active listening in school education and extracurricular settings. The following two research questions were developed based on the purpose:

1) (validity of active listening) Does active listening foster the development of listening skills and develop a positive attitude toward communication in foreign language lesson?

2) (applications of active listening) If so, what kind of active listening based creative methods effective, and for whom, and what situations?

This conclusion firstly describes the main findings within each chapter of the thesis. Then it proceeds to analyze the validity of active listening method and the testing process of it. Finally, the wider applications of creative educational methods in different situations and diversity of people and their testing processes are discussed.

In Chapter I, "Previous Studies," research on active listening, drama for language learning, music creation and perception, mindfulness, and *mokuso,* was reviewed by highlighting past successes and challenges. The chapter began by discussing the role of active listening in enhancing counseling interactions and its potential in language education for communication skill development. A task was proposed to incorporate these concepts into lesson plans and document lesson process for it to become a creative methodology. The review then addressed the “Model, Action, Talk” method, emphasizing physical engagement merits and the need for student-led target language “Role Play” to foster spontaneous language use. Techniques like miming, greetings, and audial cues were introduced to enhance communication, with the

memorization rate of student-decided language measured for method validation. The chapter shifted to discussing sound design in music creation as a tool for communication skill development during COVID-19, noting its benefits in increasing positive attitude in communication, empathy, reducing stress, and promoting group self-regulation. A task to develop a specific sound design workshop methodology was outlined, aiming to boost self-expression confidence in Japan through creative presentation and listening. The effectiveness of this approach was to be assessed through pre- and post-process surveys and qualitative workshop analysis. The text then addressed the issue of loneliness, particularly among those with special needs, and the cognitive benefits of music for individuals with visual impairments. A task to investigate the social skill enhancement effects of sound design for Junior Highschool students with visual impairments through qualitative data collection was proposed. Finally, the chapter considered the impact of potential distraction-based concentration difficulties, suggesting mindfulness-based methods and *mokuso* to adapt students to varying task lengths. The efficacy of these methods in improving working memory and focus on elementary classes was to be explored by measuring memorization rates and using movement tracking devices. Additionally, the absence of official guidelines for *mokuso* and its non-verbal communication aspects were discussed, proposing a task to understand its effects on group communication through interviews and response analysis.

In Chapter II, the role of students' listening and imagination in improving their memorization of a foreign language was investigated. A theatrical “Role Play” technique was used to set up a situation in which students had to listen to what others were saying in order to proceed. The students were explained in the introductory lessons that there are various ways of listening. As a result, the rate of memorization of expressions and vocabulary of others increased. In addition, the memorization rate of the situations and expressions set by the students themselves were compared to those set by the teacher. The results showed that students remembered the expressions they created better. The higher memorization rate of the self-devised expressions was probably because they were more in line with the students' own inner reality. At the same time, interest in the inner reality of others may have triggered active listening and increased the rate of memorization of expressions taught by others. The enjoyment of theater, which students create by themselves, encouraged active class participation. However, if

the play element was too large, students tended to become restless. Therefore, when using this method, proved useful for the teacher to control the students' tension by incorporating routines such as "greetings" and verbal cues such as “make a circle” in the introductory lessons. The implementation of this method took 8 lessons and most importantly requires teacher training to employ methods of controlling and engaging the class with rules and creativity-based methods.

In Chapter III, a group sound design lesson was created as an active listening method to improve not only memorization rate but also communication skills. The design of the experience was to construct a system that allows multiple recordings by a sampling looper, and to compose music by overlaying one's own selected sounds on the sounds of layers made by others containing voices, musical instruments and environmental sounds. It was aimed to identify if group sound design together with listening and discussion improves willingness to self-express and communicate. A workshop of group sound design was designed which was followed by the presentations of created work, listening to the work of others and delivering commentaries to generate bravery in self-expression through the combination of challenge and empathy inducing experience. Participants were taught the mindset that mistakes are welcome in sound design and that sound design can be understood through relatable language of comparison (metaphor). Participants were engaged in group musicality based warm up and were taught how to utilize equipment. They were then divided in groups together with facilitators, created fieldwork-based sound design. Lastly, the participants presented self-composed sounds, the process of which induced the feeling of anxiety and vulnerability, yet the feeling was anecdotally alleviated by comparison-based facilitation letting participants redirect focus on positive experience rather than stress. The pre and post intervention of this experiment contained open questions filled in before and after the process that indicated presences of anxiety, alleviation of it, connectedness and growth in musical self-esteem. This was done to analyze the changes within the experiences of the participants in during and after the presentation of own created sounds in group settings.

In Chapter IV, focus was placed on investigating if group sound design class can boost socializing prospects of students with visual impairments and if so, then in what ways. The lesson design described in Chapter III was adjusted to fit students at a junior school for visually impaired. Same two ideas were taught to the participants: mistakes are a chance for creativity and that each other’s music can be understood and praised via comparison. Participants used both ideas taught to them - they were able to praise each other’s work based on comparison, for

which the data was collected through observing the repeating nature of the skill use. During the process of the workshop moments of mutual understanding through free conversation and directness in voicing failure to then receive positively perceived assistance were prevalent. Anecdotally, the participants seemed to copy this same behavior from each other with confidence and open expression of needs and difficulties – participants were all connected in art and humor, independently of their needs. Despite the limited socializing opportunities for visually impaired individuals outside school, their group music creation process was observed to be more joyful potentially due to a lack of social stigma that people with no visual impairments may possibly have.

Finally, in Chapter V it was explored if a guided *mokuso* technique based on the perception of sounds is more effective than absolute autonomy of the practice and whether it can help elementary school children to attain collective focus and academic performance. This time instead of creating a new design, two techniques of *mokuso* were implemented, a non-guided *mokuso* command and a guided sound-based *mokuso,* which focuses on listening to environmental sounds. These techniques were implemented in a school English class with a specific timing and goal – to regulate memorization levels and concentration prior to recitation of a speech and a grammar usage task. The first experiment analyzed the influence and compared both techniques through the number of speech mistakes during 4th grade student English class speeches after which it was concluded that even though sound based *mokuso* showed a statistically arguable slight reduction in student speech errors ($V=2$, $p=0.207$), it needed further testing. The second experiment focused on 2nd grade grammar utilization performance and classroom behavior, tracking metrics such as excess movement and number of responses and mistakes when both methods were used. The effect of sound based *mokuso* tuning the group into a collective concentrated state that has less movement than during the absence of *mokuso* was found to be uncertain. In this experiment, just as for the case with Experiment #1 further evidence is necessary in the future to collect statistically significant evidence ($V=2$, $p=0.388$). An open monitoring outlook was kept to document the different methods used by different teachers through interview. This was done to seek previously undiscovered effects of *mokuso* as a means of preparation for academic work of students and to document what is known. The teachers gave a more detailed explanation on the technique of *mokuso* by being inquired about timing, way of explanation, and focused goals. Student comments and drawn pictures after the

process of *mokuso* revealed a diversity of opinions discussing the environment perception, positive thoughts regarding one's immediate and farther future and the awareness of one's state of focus and restfulness.

Regarding the question of whether active listening fosters a positive attitude toward communication, previous research showed that increase of interaction depth via active listening has the potential of being applied in foreign language learning as a means for communication skill development. Specifically, implementing the idea of activating new communicational dimensions in listening has been shown to cause the enhancement of language learning through focusing on the speaker, rather than just their used language in counseling. To prove this, the task of practically involving this idea in a foreign language lesson process and documenting was implemented. The combination of "MAT" and "Role Play" methods was influenced by further failures and successes of student behavior balance of previous literature and preparatory measures were created. The compounded method included preparatory vocal and clap cues for discipline, "Role Play" dialogue practice that was merged with self-generated expressions, the introduction of active listening ideas, drama hurdles and miming to emphasize student engagement in process focused language acquisition. The study by (Alasmari and Alshae'el, 2020) a study with more traditional "Role Play" methods aimed at text-book expressions and no preparatory additions also evaluated participant behavior. This study was used for comparison as a measure for the method in this thesis to be verified.

The experiment showed that indeed this method developed listening skills. Students lowering their noise levels and heightening confidence of performance after experiencing both situations of being listened to and not listened showed present active listening effect. The efficacy goes hand in hand with the findings of a previous research stating that effect of noise reduction in listeners is observed together with a heightened ability to perform. The comparison study did not employ this method and consequently had more noise in the classroom, further approving the efficacy of active listening in fostering listening skills.

The method has efficacy in developing a positive attitude towards communication. Communicative dimensions of developing an initiative to speak, take turns and becoming socially engaged by showing interest in each other's creativity arose after three weeks of using preparatory measures of rules, cues and raising hands. The effect of positive attitude in

communication took place at the same time as the introduction of theatrical hurdles and miming. These are forms of non-verbal language that can only be understood by employing active listening and they affirm the efficacy of the method for positive communication. This is supported by the idea from the previous studies that miming is shown to employ paralinguistic communication, making communication, easier, more fun and enjoyable. The compared study did not employ these two methods due to difficulty in teacher training and showed occasional communicational problems of embarrassment, lack of commitment, non-involvement and most importantly student dominance over others. These problems arose in all 8 weeks of implementation of the comparison study. Such behavioral difference suggests that the method of explaining active listening and utilizing non-verbal language to induce it, is valid in fostering a positive attitude in communicating in foreign language. Another aspect of positive attitude are the proven abilities of not only memorizing and creatively using one's own generated expressions, but to also become interested in peer used expressions. That was proven very well by the fact that all the expressions that the students generated were contextually related to that of their partner. The possible explanation for this is that the peer expressions were always accompanied by non-verbal communication. The effect of one's chosen language becoming well understood and used, extending to peer expressions in the form of interest and even partial understanding indicates the effect of empathic understanding effect that initially was observed in counseling as reflected in previous studies. When a student not only learns one's own choice of language through focus on process, but also focuses on the thought process of the partner, the so much needed empathic understanding in foreign language education is achieved.

Even though listening skills and positive attitude towards communication seemed to be evident, there were significant backdrops of the method, that are yet to be fixed in future research. The compounded method did not effectively address the issue of a small voice of the students. The problem was alleviated during the final public presentation, indicating a presence of motivation which echoes back to the positive attitude towards communication. The study of comparison did not have any issues with participant voice volume, which could be indicating that the method of this thesis may have to be revised in favor of raising the confidence and voice apparatus abilities of the students. Possible explanations may be related to shyness of Japanese culture or inadvertent teacher centrism present during the method use. The method of this thesis may be improved by a gradual removal of teacher led activity, with the duration of method

implementation to be extended. The next step for fostering a student-centered environment would be empowerment by interviewing the students about the process and then taking next measures stemmed from the student opinions.

Another significant issue with this method seemed the constant presence of use of first language of the students, the same way it was described in the comparison study. Method of this thesis did not utilize the rule “English only”, but perhaps a positive implementation of such rule could alleviate this problem. This idea could be introduced after the first public presentation, to make sure that students know the full cycle of the method, to then be confident enough to then gradually remove the unnecessary use of first language.

Regarding the question of what kind of creative educational methods are effective, and for whom, and what situations This thesis identified several creative methods of which only a few were proven to be effective through numerical data which are self-selected curriculum memorization and cross level music learning. Other methods showed anecdotal data in convincing case studies which need to be tested in detail in future studies. These methods are stress-reduction by empathetic listening (in sound design workshop), praise through comparison as a social skill utilizing intuitive active listening (in sound design workshop for visually impaired participants), and *mokuso* as a non-verbally communicative active listening form (classroom).

The sound design workshop with the original purpose to increase the confidence to self-express entailed a compound of methods. The purpose was to be reached by the alleviation of stress and empathy induction, and even though there was anecdotal evidence of this, this mechanism remains to be proven through a larger data set and a more accurate surveying system that can track participant data in a deeper manner in the future. Therefore, this method can be currently deemed unfit for use of communicational skill cultivation for school settings or adult settings. However, the efficacy of cross level music ability learning speed, ease and willingness to create music in the future suggests that this method has use for a different purpose. This purpose could be the supplementation of the current music class of primary education. This could be done by involving more creative sound design sessions containing mixed skill level student to cultivate collective cross level growth of de-centered musicianship as identified in the past research. A learning process with no set ideal achievement levels but filled with peer

performance that can be copied and then presented, can help students break their preconceptions of music. The elimination of such preconceptions can help the society in learning to consume the media of sound with more clarity, that one obtains by having the creator's experience. This method can also be helpful to generate self-belief that they are fit to learn creative skills – for both adults and children. And yet, this may manifest in a more of an introspective belief rather than an outer, more social one.

The use of sound design method for students with visual impairment for the purpose of alleviating loneliness through social situations of complementing peer work with metaphor-based comparisons is also inconclusive. The observation method design of mind-mapping a creative process can however be reused to observe the quantified relations between taught skills, successes and failures of skill use and participant feedback. Use of such a system can inform an educator of behavioral tendencies within a taught collective and give and opportunity to observe their own teaching process in a more detached way to gain a more objective perspective. Another important dimension of use that previous research has indicated is a need to alleviate stigma through connection between people with impairments and no impairments. The study within the thesis has reflected success of this aspect in the form of students with visual impairments showing interest and learning about foreign culture through interactive practical sound making and perception guided by a reciprocally interested foreign facilitator. Such effect can be replicated with different groups of society to build reciprocal connections through the curiosity about the particularities of the visiting group and the group with impairments, as previous research successfully pointed out the example of sound cognition strength particularity of the visually impaired.

Finally, *mokuso*, a method of preparatory silent contemplation before and after a learning experience with the purpose of focus calibration and memorization was proven ineffective as a uniform centralized educational method. This is a good explanation to why such a method is not listed in official educational guidelines of MEXT and knowledge of this sort, and it allows one to understand the decisions of education system creation process and Japanese teacher implication strategies as individuals. The variations of *mokuso* such as the addition of sound or the lack thereof cannot be ruled out as completely ineffective for memorization and focus purposes, as some groups did show improvements in measured parameters due to unclear reasons. Further trials must be done by teachers individually to decide whether such an intervention could assist a

learning process, as the method is unfit as a centralized method. Visual and written representations of students about *mokuso* occasionally feedbacked the same idea in highly articulate and precise manner. As *mokuso* is a part of Japanese culture, which appreciates silence as found out from previous research, it seems to also be productive to understand one's own perspective about the culture of silence through writing or drawing. And yet, this non-verbal aspect as it stands currently has not been proven to induce group communication in schooling settings.

The research faced several important limitations as whole. Challenges were encountered in collecting comprehensive individualized evidence, particularly in the study involving language students due to lack of time resources and inexperience to work with this issue. The choice of study of comparison, even with a partial methodological and behavioral evaluation overlay, was not without limitations, as the age of the students was different, deeming the result comparison relative, inviting for further replication of the method and its' evaluation. The sample sizes for the experiments were often restricted, and the absence of control groups further affected the generalization of the findings. Moreover, the increasing reliance on technology for proposed interventions might not find universal acceptance, as there are regions without the possibility to acquire such equipment. As the research process navigated through the unprecedented COVID-19 time, documenting specific cases and devising potential solutions tailored to these unique challenges is of high importance, yet are difficult to be repeated to achieve results of statistical significance.

This thesis attempted to draw a picture of how today's problems in language education and communication together with effective solutions can be aligned in a holistic way. Active listening triggered by non-verbal language has a strong potential in language education, while experimentation with active listening in other contexts shows the potential in non-verbal tools of understanding encouraging oneself introspectively much more than in social and extrovert ways. Methods of teaching and facilitation can work universally through different ages, social and educational contexts – the key for the future teachers to learn is that listening is a language, and it eventually reveals knowledge about oneself. To progress as a teacher at a time when today's professions can become extinct in the future, it is of paramount importance to actively listen, adapt, react to, learn and understand not only one's audience, but also oneself.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Author's Notes on Teaching and Facilitation Philosophy

Employing the Idea of Stage Presence (and other Stage Principles)

Becoming aware of one's voice tone and movement character in conjunction to the tone and movement of the class is a way to control the tone and energy of the class. Just like on stage when the body language of an actor can feedback meaning or energy, the teacher or facilitator can also possess and control similar qualities in front of their audience. Balancing the target information being delivered to the audience together with the awareness of one's current thought, physicality and the perception of audience is a combination that will not only bring the most impact in the delivery of material, but also avoid any unnecessary wording or body movements. This keeps the engagement level of the classroom high, as conciseness of information and delivery of it brings the optimal rhythm to the lesson. The perfect way to train this skill is to learn to play a musical instrument, as it entails controlling physical finesse of the instrument play together with awareness of one's mood and thoughts, perception of the sheet music or plan to be executed. All these processes happening, of course, while directing the music to the listener is a perfect simulation of teaching and facilitating.

Another important point to be aware of is the occurrence of unexpected situations, which may interrupt one's original lesson or facilitation plan. When this happens, one must operate with the momentum unexpectedness and give a substitute activity. If there is a lack of an activity to use, it is important to react to the situation in a manner that engages the student – it could be the use of humor or the involvement of the audience to solve the problem situation or engagement of the audience through another topic that may be of interest to both sides, related to

the taught topic. It is acceptable to take one's time and think for a short moment, but this process must not exhaust the attention of the student. They will become engaged with the teacher looking for the answer to the occurred problem, but not for long. As soon as the situation is in control the teacher, or the facilitator can proceed as normal.

A factor that has an impact in keeping the rhythm of the class intact is the balance between the personal experience, the student experience concerning the topic, the theoretical and historical framework of the topic that the facilitator or teacher is presenting. Following this idea contributes to the potential practical application of the taught information by the students together with the engagement levels kept high.

Encouragement in Times of Doubt

Assigning students tasks of presenting an answer or a process demonstrating the skill that is being learned in the process in front of the class and then choosing such a student. (The student is encouraged by the teacher remarking that it is fully acceptable to answer with a mistake in their answer, as they will learn from mistakes). This seems to help to remove social anxiety of the students, and this is repeated several times throughout a lesson, especially, in lesson filled with a sense of anxiety.

The task is designed to let students both fail and succeed within the same lesson to let students understand that both situations are equally important for learning. If a student provides an answer that is incorrect, the student then is told that their answer is incorrect in a direct yet kind way, which entails a friendly voice tone and a facial expression that expresses gratitude for trying. If the student is visibly disappointed, they are additionally praised for being brave enough to be able to express their opinion on the problem in front of the class and thanked.

Then another student is asked to help the class answer the same problem. If they fail, the previous steps of praise or encouragement are repeated. After that the teacher explains the correct or the necessary action for the assigned problem. The teacher then praises the students for not giving up when difficulty is encountered.

In case the answer is correct, the students are praised with a “That’s correct, thank you!”. This praise is meant to be sincere yet minimal, as there is often no true moment of difficulty, rather than just the use of a successfully acquired skill. The praise still must be given, but it should contain less detail and encouragement than the one supporting failure (this depends on the situation, if the time in which the answer is decided is lengthy, it may be important to consider a more elaborate from of praise). The praise supporting failure must be more detailed and uplifting to generate feeling in the students that challenge containing participation is welcome and to boost confidence of the student who did not provide with the necessary answer for the problem to be solved. The science on praise has proved that students should be praised in detail when they manage to overcome a challenge, as this will expand their motivation to repeat the action. If a flattering praise is given to the student during a task the lacks the element of problem solving or challenging oneself, that will hinder the progress of the student. The explanation lies in the fact that such use of unnecessary praise will make the student less motivated to engage in a self-challenging situation in the future.

These dynamics are essential in class acquiring new skills as they not only provide the teacher with a high participation ratio of the class, but also lets other students adapt the idea that allowing oneself to make honest mistakes in the process of learning is the most efficient way to learn a language or a different creative skill.

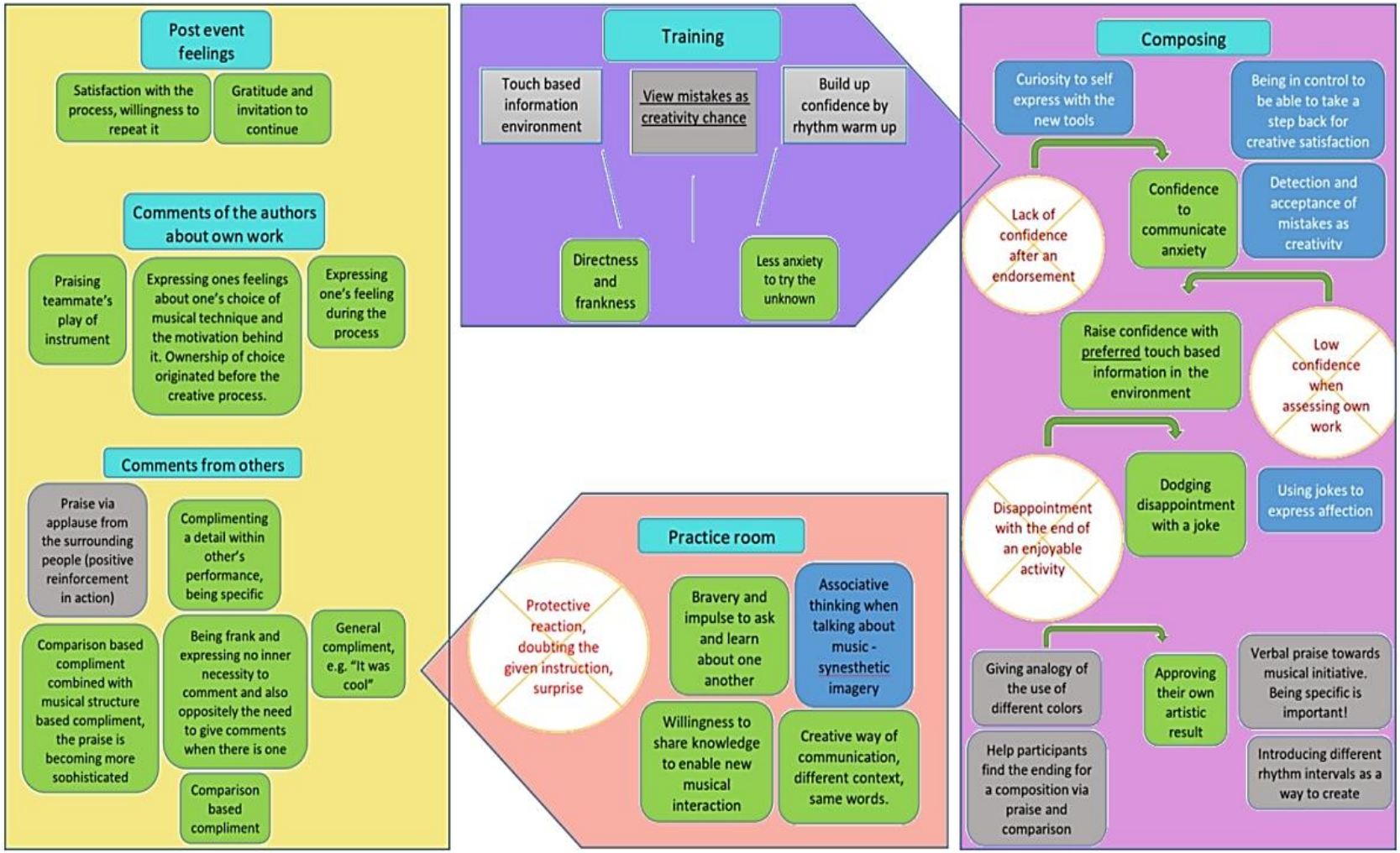
An important moment is to not provide the students with a correct answer as soon as they provide an unsatisfactory answer, because that will cause the students believe that they have done something wrong and that the only correct way to learn is by providing correct answers. This in turn will make the student unwilling to participate when they are unsure of the answer to the question presented - at this stage there is no learning happening as the teacher does not present with an opportunity to practice a new skill in training. This is as important in lingual expression as in creative expression.

It is also important for the teacher to maintain the mindset that there may be several forms of correct answers for a given problem and, when necessary, explain the existence of such

answers. The necessity usually arises when a teacher senses that there is a conflict of ideas among students and doing so will avoid the teacher suppressing one correct answer with another in case of lack of explanation. When this situation arises, that teacher can express the application of both ways of thought in real life and compare them - this idea especially works for the use of language in different contexts and cultures. Action and application of knowledge-based concepts in different contexts are like language use, therefore this should not only be applied by the teacher but should also be explained in a manner of critical thinking, allowing the teacher taking even a personal stance in the conclusion of the explanation. This may provide the students with the idea that in doing one's own analysis of a problem from different perspectives allows to construct a feasible yet personal stance in answering a problem.

Preparation

Stressing the importance of preparation at home is important to take one's time to guide the students through the scenario of what kind of lesson they would have without having taking the time to prepare: let the students imagine a task given to them an them encountering confusion of not being able to answer, other classmates waiting and most importantly them not being able to enjoy the a process of learning, that is accompanied by practical fun inducing activities. Afterwards explaining that if the students put in the work, that this will make the process easy and fun in a series of imagined activities. One can also discuss the way a routine of preparation could be constructed, describing a way of thinking, that allows one to create a routine repeated daily.

Appendix B: Scheme of activity categories, input and output actions within the experiment of Chapter IV

Cyan: Name of section, **Grey:** Techniques taught or employed by facilitators., **Green:** Positive reaction to encountered situations, **Circles:** Negative reaction to encountered situations, **Blue:** Newly learned, employed skills