

# acknowledgements

The studies reported here was supported in part by:

- **Waseda University Grant for Special Research Projects (Special Research B) / Title: Production of English Question Sentences by Japanese Learners of English: Improvements through Automatization / PI: Yasunari Harada / Number: 2016K-022**
- **Waseda University Grant for Special Research Projects (Basic Research) / Title: Test and Training of Syntactic Processing for Improved Production of English Question Sentences by Japanese Learners of English / PI: Yasunari Harada / Number: 2016K-028**
- **Waseda University Grant for Special Research Projects (Basic Research) / Title: Automatization and Proficiency Improvement among Japanese EFL learners of English through enhancement of language processing short-term memory / PI: Yasunari Harada / Number: 2015K-025**
- **JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) / Title: Autonomous mutual learning process by Japanese EFL learners through interaction / PI: Yasunari Harada Number : 15H03226**
- **JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) / Title: An investigation of the automatization process in second language processing with respect to noticing, attention and interactive alignment / PI: Hirokazu Yokokawa / Number : 26244031**

**March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 (Saturday) Building 8, Waseda University**

**Learning to Communicate in English through Interactions:  
Promoting and Prompting Japanese University Students to  
Ask and Answer Questions in English**

**JELES-47: the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the English Language  
Education Society of Japan**



**Yasunari HARADA**  
**harada@waseda.jp**

**Miwa MORISHITA**  
**miwa@gc.kobegakuin.ac.jp**



# **purpose of this talk**

- **Do we have research questions?**
  - **Certainly yes, if it's a talk on our research results.**
    - **How correctly can our students produce questions?**
    - **Does proficiency levels influence / interact with accuracy?**
    - **What are the causes of this difficulty? Are they important?**
  - **Maybe not, if it's a talk on our educational practice.**
    - **How can we promote our students to ask questions?**
    - **How can we enhance students' knowledge and performance?**
- **integration: dichotomy is only apparently real**
  - **learning and testing**
  - **research and education**
  - **data collection (for research) and practice for learning**

# **need for integration in college-level English language education (and testing) today**

- **knowledge (grammar / vocabulary) and performance (online processing)**
  - **disparity between OQPT and VET scores**
  - **production and reproduction of questions**
- **integrated tasks in language tests**
  - **Versant English Test**
  - **TOEFL iBT**
- **integration in college curriculum**
  - **problems inherent in skill-based classes**
  - **trends in English language textbooks**
  - **integration of language and computer education**
  - **integration of language and liberal arts education**

# **significance of simultaneous learning**

- **effectiveness of project-based learning**
  - hour of comprehensive study in the new study outline  
➔ Students today love group work.
  - cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary learning
  - importance of project management skills
- **necessity for learning methodology / tools / contents at the same time**
  - calculus and mechanics / R and statistics
  - prolog and logic / logic programming and feature-based syntax and semantics
  - learning English to learning in English
- **avoid proliferation of courses**
  - no need for omnibus courses
  - reduction of courses

# **three major roles English teachers are expected to perform in Japanese college education today**

- **enhance students' English proficiency (exit requirement)**
  - **what kinds of skills and / or proficiency needed ?**
    - reading / writing / listening / speaking
    - fluency / accuracy / logic / persuasion
    - pragmatics / socio-linguistic factors / awareness of BA
- **enhance students' general academic skills**
  - **integrate available information and think critically**
  - **write logically / speak persuasively**
  - **learn to quote and cite and give proper references**
  - **learn to use computers and networks**
- **enhance students' general interactive skills**
  - **College students are afraid if they can make friends.**
  - **too afraid to take chances and talk to each other**

# **purpose of our teaching practice**

- **Effective communication results in continued and successful exchange of questions and answers.**
- **Successful learners must be ready to form and utter questions on the fly.**
- **Students must be promoted and prompted to produce questions in interactive environments.**

# **Why is it so important to be able to ask complex and accurate questions in English communication?**

- **challenges: global human resource development initiatives in Japan**
- **introduction or adoption of four-skills tests for college entrance and beyond**
- **acquisition of communicative competence**
  - ➔ **one of the most important objectives of English language learning / education in Japan**
  - **as set forth by MEXT**
  - **in the recognition of teachers and students**
- **asking the right question at the right time:**
  - ➔ **an integral part of oral interactions.**
- **“communicative approaches”**
  - ➔ **less training in grammar**



# **approaches to improve students' question formation (1<sup>st</sup> year)**

- **oral response practice: exposure to 300 questions twice in 30 class sessions over a year**
  - **groups of three with a video camera and 10 question cards and peer evaluation forms 30 times a year**
  - **questioner: reads one question card aloud twice**
  - **respondent: 10 seconds to think and 45 seconds to answer**
  - **time-keeper: keeps time and video record**
  - **respondent and time keeper evaluates**
  - **change roles with the next question card**
  - **everyone writes a 500 word essay in 30 minutes**

# spring semester of 1<sup>st</sup>-year students

- shift and rotate seat assignment
- submission of homework and activity record:  
essays: topic / length / time to finish  
extensive reading: pages read / time spent
- **oral response practice**
- **essay writing / essay review and revision**
- watching CNN / EnglishCentral / STO dictation
- questions: reproduction / conversion / circle tasks
- homework
  - completion of essay / revision
  - extensive reading with graded readers / chapter books / picture books

# fall semester of 1<sup>st</sup>-year students

- shift and rotate seat assignment
- submission of homework and activity record:  
essays: topic / length / time to finish  
extensive reading: pages read / time spent
- **oral response practice**
- **small-group presentations on topics discussed**
- **essay writing / essay review and revision**
- watching CNN / EnglishCentral / STO dictation
- questions: reproduction / conversion / circle tasks
- homework
  - completion of essay / revision
  - extensive reading with graded readers / chapter books / picture books

# **self-evaluation**

- **can read one graded reader book / chapter book / picture book in one week**
- **can write a 400- / 300- / 200-word essay in half hour**
- **can start responding to a question in 10 seconds**
- **can keep responding to a question for 45 seconds**
- **can respond to a question coherently**
- **can respond to a question with examples or reasons**
- **can respond to a question with reasonable eye-contact / smile**

# **approaches to improve students' question formation (1<sup>st</sup> year)**

- **oral response practice: exposure to 300 questions twice in 30 class sessions over a year**
  - **groups of three with a video camera and 10 question cards and peer evaluation forms 30 times a year**
  - **questioner: reads one question card aloud twice**
  - **respondent: 10 seconds to think and 45 seconds to answer**
  - **time-keeper: keeps time and video record**
  - **respondent and time keeper evaluates**
  - **change roles with the next question card**
  - **everyone writes a 500 word essay in 30 minutes**

# **pedagogical findings after the facts**

- **importance of audience for authentic communication**
  - **Students read the question aloud to be answered.**
  - **Students respond to be heard and understood.**
- **inherent information gap**
  - **Respondents are not to look at question cards.**
  - **Responses are personal experiences and opinions.**
- **game-like setting and recording devices as scaffolding**
  - **realistic constraints such as response time**
  - **easier than ordinary pair activity**
- **Japanese students low in communicative competence**

# **approaches to improve students' question formation (1<sup>st</sup> year)**

- **video jam session**
  - everyone watches video clips of their own choice on CNN web site
  - 2 or 3 pages of PowerPoint slides in 5 min.
  - presentations within groups of four (or less)
  - each student is expected to pose at least one question for one presentation
  - video record the entire interactions

# **approaches to improve students' question formation (1<sup>st</sup> year fall)**

- **small group presentations**
  - **several pages of PowerPoint slides based on immediately preceding oral response practice**
  - **presentations within groups of four (or less)**
  - **each student pose one question for one presentation**
  - **video record the interaction**



# **reality check: our methodology**

- **Three tests, with Tera bytes of language data:**
  1. **Versant English Test (spoken English)**
  2. **Versant Writing Test (written English)**
  3. **Oxford Quick Placement Test**
- **Freshman students at Waseda University**
- **Administered Versant four times and OQPT three times in academic year 2015-2016**
  - **April, July, October\*, December**

# **Versant English Test**

- **Spoken English Test , 17 minutes**
- **Automated scoring with ASR**
- **Optimized for English learner speech patterns including Japanese learners of English**
- **Overall + four subscores**
  - **Sentence Mastery**
  - **Vocabulary**
  - **Fluency**
  - **Pronunciation**

# **Versant English Test**

- **High frequency vocabulary in conversation  
(Most frequent 8,000 words in Switchboard Corpus)**
- **Relatively simple structures and expressions**
- **Items recorded at natural conversation pace  
by amateur native English speakers**
- **Focus on the ability to “listen, then speak” in  
real-time (=facility in spoken English)**
- **Psycholinguistic approach**

# **Versant Writing Test**

- **Written English Test , ~40 minutes**
- **Automated scoring with Latent Semantic Analysis**
- **Overall + four subscores**
  - **Grammar**
  - **Vocabulary**
  - **Organization**
  - **Voice & Tone**
  - **Reading Comprehension**

# **Oxford Quick Placement Test**

- **Paper and pencil version (CD-ROM version includes listening)**
- **Focuses on Vocab, Grammar, Usage**
- **30 minutes, 60 multiple choice items (max 60 points)**
- **Recommended to be combined with speaking and writing test**
- **Concordance with CEFR levels**

# The relation of the VET, VWT, and OQPT to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

VET	VWT	OQPT	CEFR level	CEFR level description
79-80	77-80	55-60	C2	Mastery (Upper advanced)
69-78	67-76	48-54	C1	Effective proficiency (Lower advanced)
58-68	54-66	40-47	B2	Vantage (Upper intermediate)
47-57	44-53	30-39	B1	Threshold (Lower intermediate)
36-46	30-43	18-29	A2	Waystage (Elementary)
26-35	20-29	10-17	A1	Breakthrough
20-25		0-9	<A1	(Beginner)

# Versant Descriptive Statistics (Overall)

N = 53; Only freshman students who had both VET and VWT scores all four times

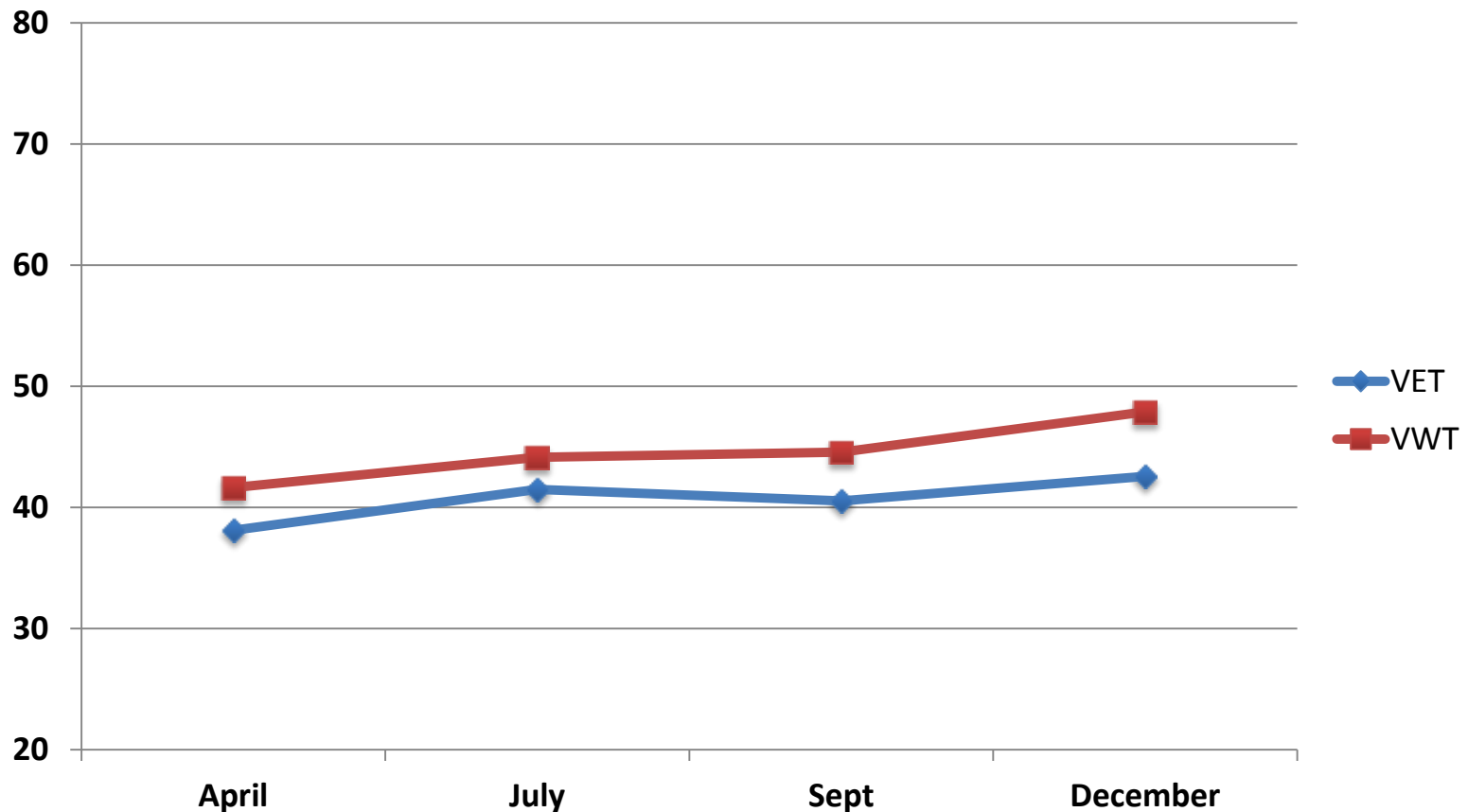
## Versant English Test (VET)

VET	April	July	Sept	December
Mean	38.89	41.47	40.57	42.42
SD	6.77	6.45	6.18	5.54
Min	27	29	25	31
Max	55	62	56	60

## Versant Writing Test (VWT)

VWT	April	July	Sept	December
Mean	41.45	44.08	44.51	47.75
SD	7.32	8.17	8.00	7.94
Min	20	20	22	22
Max	62	66	64	67

## Mean Scores of VET, VWT Overall Scores



For both VET and VWT, the differences in mean scores between April and December are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ )



# Mapping VET scores to CEFR levels

N=53

CEFR	April	July	Sept	December
A1	19 (35.8%)	9 (17.0%)	10 (18.9%)	6 (11.3%)
A2	27 (50.9%)	36 (67.9%)	36 (67.9%)	35 (66.0%)
B1	7 (13.2%)	6 (11.3%)	7 (13.2%)	11 (20.8%)
B2	0	2 (3.8%)	0	1 (1.9%)
C1	0	0	0	0
C2	0	0	0	0

April-September: More than 80% is A1 and A2  
December: Changed to A2 and B1

# Mapping VWT scores to CEFR levels

N=53

CEFR	April	July	Sept	December
A1	3 (5.7%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	2 (3.8%)
A2	32 (60.4%)	22 (41.5%)	21 (39.6%)	10 (18.9%)
B1	16 (30.2%)	25 (47.2%)	23 (43.4%)	30 (56.6%)
B2	2 (3.8%)	5 (9.4%)	7 (13.2%)	10 (18.9%)
C1	0	0	0	1 (1.9%)
C2	0	0	0	0

April-Sept: More than 80% is A2 and B1

December: B1 is more than 55%; A1 and B1 are the same number

# Oxford Quick Placement Test

## Descriptive Statistics

The same 53 freshman students.

April: One student did not take OXPT

December: 3 students did not take OQPT

	April (N=52)	July (N=53)	December (N=50)
Mean	37.08	38.06	38.24
SD	6.57	5.98	6.44
Min	20	25	21
Max	50	48	50

# Mapping OQPT scores to CEFR levels

CEFR	April (N=52)	July (N=53)	December (N=50)
A1	0	0	0
A2	7 (13.5%)	4 (7.5%)	3 (6.0%)
B1	25 (48.1%)	25 (47.2%)	27 (54.0%)
B2	19 (36.5%)	21 (39.6%)	16 (32.0%)
C1	1 (1.9%)	3 (5.7%)	4 (8.0)
C2	0	0	0

April-December: B1 and B2 have more than 80% of the students



**Thank you for your attention.  
Any QUESTIONS?**

**miwa@gc.kobegakuin.ac.jp**

**harada@waseda.jp**