Using a Jigsaw Task to Develop Japanese Learners' Oral Communicative Skills: A teachers' and students' perspective

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Abstract:
In 2003, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) issued a set of guidelines outlining the need to improve Japanese learners' use of English. In an attempt to help meet this objective a Jigsaw task was designed and then implemented into an intermediate level University EFL program to help develop the oral communication skills of Japanese learners. This paper investigates how successful the task was in meeting the goals of MEXT and the goals of the program by interviewing the teachers who used the task in the curriculum. Data was also collected from students who participated in the task to see how motivational the task was as a means of language learning. The paper begins by defining 'tasks' and describes how they can be considered a motivational tool for language learning. The following section describes how a Jigsaw task was chosen and developed to improve learners' oral communication skills in an intermediate level course. The analysis section then describes teachers' views regarding the success of the task in facilitating students' use of English as well as meeting the goals of the course. Student data is also analyzed to determine how motivational the task was. This is followed by the findings section which discusses the implications and limitations of these results. The paper concludes that the Jigsaw task appeared to be a success in meeting the goals of MEXT, it was a suitable task for the course, and that it was motivational for students however, the results of which are bound by limitations.

Key terms: task, MEXT, curriculum, communication, communicative competence, motivation

Introduction

Recently, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has indicated the need to develop Japanese learners' use of English. MEXT was concerned that Japanese students lacked the necessary English oral skills to communicate effectively in today's global environment. Educational institutions in Japan began responding to MEXT's goals by developing English curriculums that focused on developing students' oral skills. A study carried out by Millington and Thompson (2009) examined if tasks could be used as a suitable methodology for developing learners' oral interactive skills for an intermediate level program at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). The results of the study were successful enough to introduce tasks into a newly developed intermediate level curriculum that focused on developing learners speaking and writing skills. In order to design and successfully implement an appropriate task into the course, consideration would need to be given to make sure the task not only accommodates the goals of MEXT but also the goals of the course as well as the needs and wants of the students. This paper aims to investigate how successful the task was in meeting those requirements. This was carried out in two ways. First, six teachers who taught using the task were interviewed to find out how effective the task was in developing learners' communication skills.

Second, the opinions of twenty two students who participated in the task were collected and analyzed to see how beneficial the task was as a means of oral language learning.

The purpose of this paper is to answer the following questions: How do teachers view a Jigsaw task as contributing to the development of students' use of English in an intermediate level curriculum? How do teachers view a Jigsaw task as a means to help students meet the speaking goals of the intermediate level program? How do students consider a Jigsaw task as a motivational means of language learning?

The paper begins by defining 'tasks' and how they can be considered motivational for students learning an L2. This is followed by a summary of Millington and Thompson's (2009) study that investigated whether tasks could be used to develop intermediate level learners' communicative skills at APU. The paper then discusses the speaking goals of the intermediate course, the goals of MEXT, and issues relating to learners' motivation towards learning spoken English. The next section outlines the justification for choosing a Jigsaw task and how it was developed to improve learners' oral interactive skills. The analysis then describes the teachers' views about how the task facilitated students' use of English and how it helped meet the goals of the course, as well as reporting the student data concerning the motivational aspect of the task. The findings section then discusses the limitations and implications of these results. Finally, the paper concludes that the Jigsaw task appeared to be a success in meeting the goals of MEXT, it was an appropriate task for the curriculum and it was motivational for the learners but that modifications could be made to the task to suit the needs of different learners.

Definition of Tasks

There are many definitions of pedagogic tasks, however for the purpose of this paper, we shall rely on Bygate, Skehan and Swain's definition:

A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (2000, p.11)

In other words, tasks are used so learners can communicate with each other in English in order to achieve a non-linguistic goal. The above definition differs from the definition of a task used in Millington and Thompson's (2009) paper because that task was intended to promote interaction, and elicit correct use of language form by focusing on the article system. However, the task in this study was primarily intended to promote students' use of English with more emphasis on meaning.

Tasks as a motivational means of language learning

Van Patten (1996) argued that tasks are a motivational way of language learning as they facilitate language use which is considered to be an enjoyable learning process. In 2000, Littlewood interviewed 2,307 students in eight East Asian countries about their attitudes towards learning English and his results showed that students "like activities where they are part of a group in which they are 'all working towards common goals'…when working in these groups, they all like to 'help keep the atmosphere friendly'" (ibid, p. 34). This indicates that Asian students want to take part in tasks that promote the use of English, and that tasks could be motivational for them learning an L2.

Justification for using tasks in a University curriculum

The Millington and Thompson (2009) study investigated whether tasks could be used as a methodology in an intermediate level University program by meeting the communicative goals set out by MEXT (2003). A task was developed and tested on a class of 24 intermediate level learners and the findings of the study showed the task led to improvements in students' use of English. Also, as the learners could use whatever language they felt was necessary, this appeared to motivate their performance, thus supporting Littlewood's (2000) and Van Patten's (1996) claim that tasks could be a motivational way of language learning. The success of these results led to the introduction of tasks into a newly developed intermediate level curriculum. However, in order to design and successfully implement a specific task into the course program, the task would have to accommodate the goals of the course as well as the aims of MEXT.

Speaking goals of the curriculum: Communicative competence

The speaking component of the newly developed curriculum was designed on the principles of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980). Dell Hymes introduced the concept in 1972 and there have been numerous definitions of it since. According to Canale and Swain, Hymes' original definition of communicative competence refers to learners' proficient use of an L2 that "includes not only grammatical competence (or implicit and explicit knowledge of the rules of grammar) but also contextual or sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the rules of language use) (1980, p.4)." In other words, for learners to successfully communicate in the L2, they need not only the understanding of the grammatical rules, but also the knowledge of how the L2 is used by native speakers in different social contexts.

In order for a curriculum to reflect the notion of communicative competence, in particular the sociolinguistic aspect, it would need to contain a communicative approach towards language learning (Canale and Swain, 1980). As a result, a curriculum would incorporate "communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know and emphasize the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately" (ibid, p.2). Given the variety of different social contexts in which English is used, curriculum developers of the program decided to focus on speaking goals that would allow students to develop the skills to communicate in different situations. Therefore the goals of 'giving information' and 'eliciting information' seemed appropriate as students could practice giving information in various ways such as expressing opinions and describing information whilst also eliciting information by developing the skills of asking questions. Therefore to develop a suitable task for the program, the task would need to facilitate students' use of giving formation and eliciting information.

Aims of MEXT

Another factor influencing how a task should be used was the communicative goals set out by MEXT. In 2003, MEXT published guidelines to cultivate students' basic and practical communication abilities (*Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities",* 2003). These guidelines were issued due to dissatisfaction with Japanese students' lack of ability in "obtain[ing] and understand[ing] knowledge and information as well as the abilities to transmit information and to engage in communication." In order to cultivate these communication abilities, MEXT specified one main goal for students on graduating from tertiary education: "[o]n graduating from university, graduates can use English in their work." MEXT stated that in order for students to achieve these goals it is necessary for students to know more than just grammar

and vocabulary; students also need to have 'the ability to use English for the purpose of actual communication.' Therefore, in relation to the task chosen for the curriculum, it would need to facilitate learner interaction and students' use of English.

Learner issues related to the aims of MEXT

Designing a task to meet the goals of MEXT however, could still cause problems for certain students. Brown and Kikuchi's (2009) study showed that Japanese students entering University did not appear to have benefitted from MEXT's guidelines because courses in senior high schools tended to be either entrance examination-oriented, grammar translation-oriented, or textbook-oriented. Consequently, Japanese students entering University seem to have had little opportunity to use English through oral communication and may therefore feel uncomfortable engaging in a communicative task. Greg Ellis (1996) refers to this when the gap between an old method of instruction and new experience becomes too great, learners produce passive resistance or non-learning. If the task was designed to meet the communicative goals of the course and MEXT, it may also be met with resistance from some learners who have not had sufficient exposure with using similar communicative activities in their previous educational background.

Selection and development of a task for an intermediate curriculum

In order to develop a task that helped to facilitate the goals of the course in giving and eliciting information whilst also maintaining MEXT's desire for oral communication, it was important to choose the type of task that would meet these requirements. According to Ellis (2003), task classification is important because it ensures variety on a course by providing teachers with a selection of tasks. It also gives teachers a framework for experimentation. As with the definition of tasks, task classification has also received much coverage in the TBLT literature. Ellis summarizes four approaches to classifying tasks: pedagogic; rhetorical; cognitive; and psycholinguistic. Among these different approaches, Ellis states that the psycholinguistic classification of tasks is based on how students are expected to interact in order to achieve the goals of the task. This allows opportunities for students to test their language use and work towards comprehension, and by doing so develop their language ability. Pica et al (1993) proposed the following categories:

1. Interactant relationship ("the responsibilities given to task participants to hold, request, and/or supply information needed to achieve the task goals")
2. Interaction requirement (the optional or obligatory requirements for information to be exchanged by participants in order to achieve the task goals)
3. Goal orientation (the convergent or divergent requirements of interactants in achieving the goals of the task)
4. Outcome options ("the range of acceptable task outcomes available to interactants in attempting to meet task goals")

Using this framework, Pica et al (1993) devised a typology of communication task types. The following table identifies the task types and their requirements:

	Interactant relationship	**Interactant requirement**	**Goal orientation**	**Outcome options**
Jigsaw	Each interactant holds, supplies, requests information.	Required	Convergent	1 (One outcome option.)
Information-gap	One interactant holds and supplies information. Another requests information.	Required	Convergent	1 (One outcome option.)
Problem-solving	Each interactant has access to information and supplies it if requested.	Not required	Convergent	1 (One outcome option.)
Decision-making	Each interactant has access to information and supplies it if requested.	Not required	Convergent	1+ (More than one outcome option.)
Opinion-exchange	Each interactant has access to information and supplies it if requested.	Not required	Not convergent	1± More than one outcome option, and no outcome option.

(Pica et al, 1993, p.180)

From the six task types outlined by Pica et al (1993), the curriculum developers felt the Jigsaw task type was the most conducive to facilitating interaction between students and thus provides opportunities for interactants to work towards comprehension. Based on the criteria of this type of task, an election task was devised whereby each student in a group would be given a different profile of a candidate for leader of an English Circle. Students would need to communicate with each other by describing their candidate's profiles and asking questions in order to decide which is the best candidate.

Justification for using the Jigsaw Task

The justification for using the task was based on three reasons: (1) to meet the speaking goals of the course, (2)

to meet the guidelines of MEXT, and (3) to be a motivational means of language learning for students.

1. The speaking goals of the course

According to Pica et al (1993), the Jigsaw task type requires each participant to hold, supply and request information (interactant relationship) to complete the task. This necessitates two-way interaction (interaction requirement) between participants in order to achieve a convergent (goal orientation), single outcome (outcome option). Consequently, a jigsaw task is "most likely to generate opportunities for interactants to work toward comprehension, feedback, and interlanguage modification processes related to successful SLA" (ibid, 1993, p.175). This type of interaction works well with the speaking goals of the course in giving and eliciting information. In order to successfully complete the task, students would have to engage in two-way conversation by giving information, for example, describing their leader profiles to the rest of the group. Students would also work towards comprehension by eliciting information through asking questions to the other group members to obtain information about the other profiles, and then deciding which profile should be elected as leader.

2. Guidelines of MEXT

The guidelines set out in MEXT (2003) for a more communicative approach towards language learning would appear to match the communicative rationale behind using a Jigsaw task in the classroom. Students would be required to work together in groups and interact with each other by comparing information in the L2.

3. Motivational means of language learning

The third factor relates to the motivational aspect of the task. As students would have to interact with each other in the L2 to complete the task, it was intended that they would be motivated by participating in the task and this would improve their language learning (Van Patten, 1996; Littlewood, 2000; Millington and Thompson, 2009). However, implications as a result of Brown and Kikuchi's (2009) study suggest learners with a lack of exposure in using the L2 may be resistant to participate in an interactive Jigsaw task.

Methodology

Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to find answers to the following questions:

1. How do teachers view a Jigsaw task as contributing to the development of students' use of English in an intermediate level curriculum?
2. How do teachers view a Jigsaw task as a means to help students meet the speaking goals of the intermediate level program?
3. How do students consider a Jigsaw task as a motivational means of language learning?

Data collection

Part of the data for this research was collected using a qualitative research method by carrying out interviews with teachers in an attempt to gain detailed objective responses. A quantitative approach was also used to obtain data from Japanese students of the course in the form of an anonymous questionnaire written in both Japanese and English. In doing so students could provide information with greater ease and privacy.

Participants

Six teachers from the intermediate program who used the task in the curriculum during the spring semester 2009 were interviewed. The teachers were of different nationalities – Japanese, Scottish, Canadian, Romanian, American. Twenty-two students of the intermediate level program who completed the task during the Fall 09 semester carried out the anonymous questionnaire.

Interview and Questionnaire Design

The interview data used in this study were taken from nine questions. Most of these are open questions designed to find out how the teachers felt the task contributed towards helping students meet the requirements set out in MEXT and the speaking goals of the course without asking them directly. The student questionnaire was comprised of six questions to find how Japanese students viewed the task as a motivational means of language learning. The students were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree with the question) to 6 (strongly agree with the question).

The task and how it was used

It was decided that the task would be used as a means of language learning as well as language assessment. In terms of the former, the task was used following Willis' (1996) framework for task-based learning (TBL). TBL begins with a "pre-task" stage where the function and goal of the task is introduced to the learners. This is followed by the "task cycle" which involves the students doing the task. The final part is called "language focus," where learners are given the opportunity to notice the language necessary to successfully complete the task and can then practice using it by repeating the task. As the task was also later used as a communicative assessment students were graded on using certain key vocabulary and phrases.

Interview / Questionnaire Settings and Instruments

In order to obtain teachers' views on how effective the Jigsaw task was in meeting the goals of the course and that of MEXT, the interviews were carried out after the semester had finished, in October 2009. Due to time constraints, the student data could only be collected at the same time period, at which time the students who participated in the task during the semester had changed classes. Therefore, the Jigsaw task was carried out with a new group of intermediate level students. After participating in the task, the students completed the questionnaire outside of class time via email during November 2009.

Analysis

In terms of how the teachers viewed a Jigsaw task as contributing to the development of students' use of English, the following questions were asked:

1. What do you think the task aims the students to do? / What do think are the main benefits of this task?
2. What are the strengths of the task?
3. How do you think this task makes students interact with one another?

Teacher 1 (T1)

T1 said the task helped students use language to explain their ideas, negotiate to reach a solution and ask other students questions. The task's strengths were that it was like a real life situation requiring the use of English and the students had to interact with each other by asking questions and communicating.

Teacher 2 (T2)
T2 said the main benefit of the task was that the students were able to use the language that they already had and to negotiate with each other to make a decision. The task strengths were that it was a group activity so they got a chance to work together and it was very student centered. Students had to interact by working together and sharing talking time in order to complete the task.

Teacher 3 (T3)
T3 said the aim of the task was firstly about vocabulary because students had to recognize and define words, then they had to compare profiles, give arguments, and decide on which profile was best. The task strengths were that it was easy to follow. In regard to) interaction, T3 said the students had to interact by comparing, listening and asking questions.

Teacher (T4)
T4 said the task involved students to study and practice new words related to leadership, but that it could also help students to formulate their opinions. The task strengths were that it provided vocabulary items students had to use. In response to how students would interact, T4 said that it depends on how the teacher used the task, and that it could be very interactive.

Teacher (T5)
T5 said the aims of the task were about communication, discussion and exchanging ideas. The task strengths were that it allowed students to interact naturally with each other using some required vocabulary and the students could interact by focusing on the goal of the activity whilst the teacher observed.

Teacher (T6)
T6 said the benefits of the task were to practice talking in a group and making decisions, the task strengths were in allowing students to work in a group, and finally the task allowed students to interact by expressing themselves, their ideas and decisions in a group.

From these responses it appears that all the teachers suggest the task contributed to students' use of English.

In relation to how teachers viewed a Jigsaw task as a means of meeting the speaking goals of an intermediate level program (giving information and eliciting information), the following questions were asked:

1. How do you think this task could contribute in terms of students' language development?
2. What issues or problems could arise from using this task?
3. Would this task fit in with your teaching?
4. Would you use this task at an intermediate level?
5. Would you change or adapt it?

Teacher 1 (T1)
T1 did not feel that the task was successful in contributing to the students' language development because the students were reluctant to negotiate towards comprehension. Also, students' lack of ability in the L2 could cause

problems for the rest of the group in completing the task. T1 would use the task again and at intermediate level but would supplement the task by introducing similar mini-tasks beforehand.

Teacher 2 (T2)
T2 felt the task contributed to students' language development by giving them confidence to share information and communicate with each other. The problem of the task could be preventing dominant speakers from speaking too much and allowing shy learners to participate. T2 would use the task again at intermediate level, but would like to change the task by repeating it using a different topic.

Teacher 3 (T3)
T3 said the task contributed to students' language development by allowing students to use and recycle vocabulary in different contexts, but was not sure how students could learn new things through the task. The problem of the task was that if repeated, it would not be much fun for the students and could be too easy. T3 would use the task again at intermediate level, but would change the task in order to allow students to be more creative, for example with vocabulary use.

Teacher 4 (T4)
T4 said the task contributed to students' language development by increasing vocabulary knowledge and use, and to support their own opinions in English. The problems of the task could relate to Japanese students not being good at persuading others. T4 would use the task if it could be modified and would use it at intermediate level as a warm up, but would change the task depending on the needs of the students and also by allowing them to use their own vocabulary.

Teacher 5 (T5)
T5 said the task contributed to students' language development by learning vocabulary words and then having natural communication. The task problems could be if students do not support each other or if they do not prepare for the task by learning the vocabulary. T5 thinks the task is good to have in class but would perhaps change the task by changing the situation.

Teacher 6 (T6)
T5 said the task contributed to students' language development by giving students the opportunity to practice a discussion using vocabulary. The task problems relate to certain students who may not be able to complete the requirements of the task or their personal feeling may hinder their performance. T6 was not sure if he would use the task in his teaching because he had to teach according to the curriculum. However, he would use the task at intermediate level but would change the task or the preparation for the task depending on the needs of the students.

These responses show that despite some criticisms of the task, all teachers commented how they would use the task again in an intermediate level curriculum.

Finally, in terms of how students viewed the task as a motivational means of language learning the following questions were used:

1. How enjoyable was this task? 1-6 (6 = a lot of fun)
2. Would you like to do more tasks like this in the classroom? (Yes / No)
3. Do you like speaking to your classmates using English? (Yes / No)
4. How successful do you think you were in completing this task? 1-6 (6= very successful)
5. Do you think this task was suitable for your level? (Yes / No)
6. Have you ever done this kind of task before? (Yes / No)

In terms of enjoyment, 18% of the students chose option four and 64% chose option five or six (a lot of fun). 68% of the students indicated they would like to continue using similar tasks in their lessons and 100% of the students liked speaking to their classmates using English. In terms of how successful the students were in completing the task, 32% chose option five or six with 50% choosing option four. 77% of the students felt the task was suitable for their intermediate level and 68% confirmed they had never had this type of task before.

These results show that the majority of students enjoyed using the task and that they would like to use similar tasks in their lessons. Most of the students also felt the task was suitable for an intermediate level. Therefore these findings indicate that the task appears to be a success as a motivational means of language learning despite only 32% of the students confirming that they were successful in completing the task.

Findings

The purpose of this paper was to investigate whether the implementation of a Jigsaw task into an intermediate level program was a success in terms of facilitating students' use of English, meeting the speaking goals of the program, and providing a motivational means of language learning for students.

Justification for using a Jigsaw task in the curriculum

All the teachers provided comments that the Jigsaw task gave students the opportunity to communicate with each other using English. Therefore the task appears to be a success in terms of meeting the speaking goals set out by MEXT. T3 and T4 did refer to the task's interactive function, however, initially they mentioned the main aim of the task was vocabulary learning. Although T3 and T4 did not talk in as much detail about the task's communicative role as other teachers, they did not have previous experience of using tasks. In fact, only half the teachers (T1, T2 and T6) had used tasks before in their teaching and so these results indicate a lack of exposure that teachers may have in regard to task-based teaching. As the student data shows learners are generally motivated to learn English through using tasks this could prompt the need for more teacher training on the use of tasks.

In terms of how teachers viewed the Jigsaw task as contributing to the goals of the course, in particular 'giving information' and 'eliciting information' the results were less clear cut. None of the teachers explicitly referred to the speaking goals as 'giving information' and 'eliciting information.' However, most of the teachers referred to students asking questions and giving opinions, and all the teachers said the task was suitable for an intermediate level. Therefore, it can be implied that the task was a success in meeting the goals for an intermediate program, although all the teachers gave comments on how they would alter or change the task to either seek improvements in learners' L2 speech or help to meet the needs of different students. For example, T4 would not have provided any key vocabulary and instead would have allowed students more freedom to engage in

discussion. T3 would alter the task by allowing the students to be more creative. Although this change may have the effect of making the task more enjoyable, the interaction requirements would still be the same, and therefore may still prove challenging for some students. On the other hand, T1, T2 and T6 commented on how they would introduce some form of pre-task planning before using the Jigsaw task in order to prepare their students to successfully complete the task. As suggested by T2, this preparation may be in the form of supplementary tasks whereby the interaction requirements are less demanding, such as problem-solving or decision-making tasks, and would thus allow lower-level students the opportunity to work towards more interaction when ready. This may be particularly beneficial for lower-intermediate students who lack the ability to complete the Jigsaw task, and could help teachers to identify these students' needs.

In response to the teachers' views, a Jigsaw task may be appropriate for the course in that it facilitates two-way interaction between learners and thus meets the requirements of MEXT, but in order for it to be a complete success, there needs to be opportunities for teachers to adapt the task to suit the needs of lower-level intermediate students. One way in which this can be achieved is by introducing other task-types at the beginning of the semester, and then building) up towards the Jigsaw task in order to guarantee full interaction of participants.

Student Questionnaire Results

The majority of the twenty-two students who participated in the questionnaire enjoyed using the task, they enjoyed speaking to their classmates in English, and they would like to use similar tasks in the future. These results imply that the task was a success as a motivational way of learning English. However, these results are bound by the following limitations.

Task limitations

The class was conducted with twenty-two students, and therefore any large classes may not guarantee the same results as it would be difficult for the teacher to manage more groups of students. In addition, lower intermediate levels could also struggle with the language necessary to successfully complete the task. Furthermore, Julkunen (2001, cited in Dornyei, 2002) comments how learners' motivation for using tasks can derive from two sources; the challenge of the task itself and the intrinsic interest of the language as a whole. Dornyei (ibid.) refers to these two sources as 'task-dependent' and 'task independent' factors respectively. Consequently, if the students have a general interest in English, it could be argued that the task, as a motivational means of language learning, may not be as successful as the results from the questionnaire suggest. For example, students may find any means of English language learning enjoyable, whether it be through tasks or other activities as long as they are learning English. Dornyei & Kormos (2000, cited in Dornyei, 2002) carried out a study involving two groups of students performing a task in the L2. One group did not enjoy using the task because they disliked speaking in the L2. However, when both groups of students performed the task in their L1, the group in question performed the task with greater interest. This further highlights the difficulties in assessing tasks as a motivational means of language learning due to various external variables that affect learners' motivation. Consequently any results taken from a task in relation to learners' motivation would have reliability issues.

This led us to consider other factors that may alter students' motivation when participating in the task. For example:

1. Carrying out the task using a different group of students
2. Carrying out the task with students who are friends / not friends
3. Carrying out the task at different times of the day
4. Carrying out the task at different stages of the semester
5. Carrying out the task with different teachers
6. Carrying out the task with lower / higher level intermediate students

Ultimately, as Dornyei points out, "Engaging in a certain task activates a number of different levels of related motivational mindsets and contingencies, resulting in complex interferences (2002, p.374)." To accurately assess learners' motivation for language learning would require a much larger scale of investigation taking into account a multiple of social variables that affect learners' behavior in the classroom. In terms of this paper, although the questionnaire results indicate the task was a motivational form, this cannot be confirmed due to the many additional variables that influence learners' motivation. Implementing tasks for lower level students however would require careful planning regarding which task types would be suitable and how teachers would best facilitate using them in the classroom.

Implications of the Student Questionnaire

The results of the student questionnaire posed a number of implications about how tasks (and subsequent tasks) could be used in the curriculum in the future. For example, all the students liked speaking English to their classmates yet only 64% of the students really enjoyed participating in the Jigsaw task. A number of implications about the task can be drawn based on the remaining students. Although all the students may want to speak to their classmates in English, this may be in a relaxed, private setting. Whilst having to participate in a highly interactive task using a variety of speech acts with the additional pressure of having to perform in front of classmates may not be appealing for some students. Consequently, the use of different task types prescribed by Pica et al (1993) such as Information Gap or Problem solving tasks which are less interactive may be a more comfortable form of language learning and hence more motivational. This could result in the use of less interactive tasks at the beginning of a semester.

Another observation from the student survey was that although 64% really enjoyed using the task and 77% recommended the task for an intermediate level curriculum, it was surprising that only 32% of the students felt they were really successful in completing the task, given the fact that 50% of the students voted option four for successful task completion. This could suggest that students felt they were successful in completing the task but did not want to appear over-confident in their L2 ability and were instead modest or shy given their L2 proficiency.

After examining the students data, there is support for Van Patten's (1996) and Littlewoods' (2000) claims that by having learners interact with each other using English this will serve to motivate their language learning. For example, a lot of students commented that they enjoyed speaking to their classmates in English, they enjoyed the task, they felt they completed it successfully and they would like to learn English by using more tasks in the future. However, other students responded differently. For example, one student did not enjoy the task and had repeated this type of task before. Therefore this learner's motivation may be attributed to the fact that the learner did not find the task challenging or interesting because they had repeated the task. This reflects T3's comments

that repeating the same type of task may result in learners losing interest. Another student did not enjoy the task, was not successful in completing the task and had not used this kind of task before, but still recommended using the task in an intermediate course. From this it could be assumed that certain students may lack the confidence or ability to speak in the L2. The consequence of this could be to incorporate a variety of different tasks into the curriculum each involving different challenges thus maintaining learners' interest. However, the tasks would have to be structured in a way that each task follows on from the last so as to gradually develop the learners' oral L2 ability, for example, starting with a less interactive task and finishing with a highly interactive task such as the Jigsaw task.

Conclusion

This study investigated how a Jigsaw task that was incorporated into an intermediate level University curriculum was considered a success in relation to three factors: MEXT's desire for Japanese learners to improve their use of English, the speaking goals of the course, and as a motivational form of language learning. To determine this, interviews were carried out with the teachers who used the task and data was also collected from students who participated in the task. The findings of our investigation confirm that all the teachers viewed the Jigsaw task as contributing towards students' use of English. Therefore the task appeared to be a success in helping to meet the communicative goals set out in MEXT. In terms of the task meeting the speaking goals of the course, the teachers did not refer explicitly to the goals of the course, however, all the teachers confirmed that the task was a success in terms of sharing information and asking questions which can be interpreted as giving information and eliciting information. A further indication of the task's suitability was that all the teachers would use the task in an intermediate level curriculum. Finally, the findings from the student data showed the task seems to be a success as a motivational means of language learning. The majority of the students enjoyed participating in the task and would like to participate in similar tasks in the future. However, there are a number of limitations regarding the student data, for example, only twenty-two students participated in the task questionnaire, and therefore any implications from this study can only be speculative. Also, as motivation is such a complex issue involving so many variables it makes it difficult to reach any accurate conclusions.

Overall our results are positive enough to continue using tasks in the curriculum. The implications from this study suggest the task could be changed to suit the needs and wants of different learners. One area relates to the highly interactive nature of the Jigsaw task which could pose difficulties for lower-intermediate level students. This could result in the introduction of other task types at the beginning of the curriculum which require less interaction and instead could help scaffold the communicative skills of students during the semester until they reach the stage where they can successfully complete a Jigsaw task and know that they are heading towards communicative competence.

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Appendix

Task materials

Cut these apart. Give one to each student. Write the eight characteristics on the board. Students should share their profiles with the group, and discuss what characteristics each leader has. Finally, each group should elect the person that they think is best qualified for the role of leader.

8 characteristics of leaders:

0. Vision
1. Persuasiveness
2. Good at deal-making
3. Tenacity
4. Team-worker
5. Confident
6. Popular
7. Fluent in English

NAME: Bill	AGE: 21
"I want to create an English Circle where students can study English online anytime, with their own computer and brand new computer programs."	
Characteristic:	
"I don't have many friends, because I spend a lot of time playing with computers, and last year started a computer company at university."	
Characteristic:	

NAME: Shunsuke	AGE: 18
"I am a member of the soccer club at university. We have 32 members, and we do everything together, as a team. If one of the members is in trouble, we help him or her, and they all help me."	
Characteristic:	
"Last year, I was chosen 'Best Player' in the university's soccer team by my team-mates. This made me really happy, because two years ago I broke my leg, and the doctor said I would never play soccer again. I practiced and practiced and trained and trained, and now I am a great player."	
Characteristic:	

NAME: Jerry	AGE: 20
"I was born and raised in America, and came to Japan last year to study at university."	
Characteristic:	
"I watch a lot of TV, and I think watching TV makes learning languages easier. I want to get giant plasma TVs in every room and on every wall of the university's buildings, all showing English movies and TV programs."	
Characteristic:	

NAME: Ayu	AGE: 17
"I love singing. I go to karaoke 4 times a week with my friends, and I have hundreds of friends."	
Characteristic:	
"Some people say singing in front of lots of people is scary, but I think it is the best feeling in the world. I I have a pretty good voice and I can sing, and talk, in front of anybody."	
Characteristic:	

NAME: Johnny	AGE: 19
"Last year, I started a Movie Club with 5 friends, and we all share the work. When I am busy, my friends do extra work, and when they are busy, I work harder."	
Characteristic:	
"Last year I had a 2hour meeting with the office staff at APU, and we made a deal to show English movies every night at APU, for free."	
Characteristic:	
NAME: Kimberly	Age: 22
"I worked with some of my friends to open a dance club at university. Every Friday we get DJs from a famous club in Beppu to come to the university and play dance music for free. In exchange, every Saturday night we go to the club to help serve food and drinks."	
Characteristic:	
"At first, no one came to our night club, but we didn't give up. We changed the music and added some decorations and now the club is full every Friday night!"	
Characteristic:	

NAME: Johnny		AGE: 19
Characteristic:		
"At first, no one came to our night club, but we didn't give up. We changed the music and added some decorations and now the club is full every Friday night!"		
Characteristic:		