LEADING TO LEARN: MOTIVATING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
IN JAPANESE COMPOSITION

by

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Abstract

This action research explored the most effective teaching method to motivate students learning Japanese composition in INTS 222: Intermediate Japanese II, at the University of Northern British Columbia. The researcher implemented three different teaching approaches: the *kata*, *ikebana*, and *writing workshop* approaches during the winter semester, and invited volunteer students to participate in an independent interview session. This qualitative research was carried out using action research, based on the cycle of analyzing, interpreting, and interviewing (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) in order to improve the current situation (Berg & Lune, 2012). Findings focused on student responses and teacher learning. The results of this case study will be used to find alternative ways than the traditional teaching method by focusing on pre-writing guidance in order to strengthen students’ motivation rather than post-writing instructional feedback.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Teaching composition to Japanese as Second Language (JSL), the students have the most undeveloped domain in JSL instruction. Methods for teaching reading, speaking, and listening skills, on the other hand, are constantly changing and being improved upon. For decades, researchers have been developing a variety of different teaching methodologies to help impart these skills. For example, the methodologies are the direct method, which uses only the target language for instruction (i.e., teaching Japanese using only the Japanese language), and the communicative approach, which is a student-oriented method that emphasizes practical language use, student interaction, and immediate teacher feedback (as opposed to the lecture-style of teaching). Teaching composition, meanwhile, has only ever employed one method of instruction, which devalues personal individuality and creativity in favour of dry, uninspired, rote prose. In order for students to express their individuality and creativity in writing (like they often do in conversation), instructors must improve the way they teach composition in JSL. One important way of doing this is for teachers to create a conducive learning environment for the students.

However, such environments are difficult to provide because unlike other language skills, instructor-training programmes do not train potential instructors on how to teach composition. To compensate for this lack of training, teachers often just repeat verbatim what the compositional textbooks want accomplished. Most of these textbooks continue to utilize only one teaching method—the kata approach, students learning by repeating a model and aim to be able to do as the same level as the model—that a) has not changed in over 60 years and b) does not take into account, nor encourage the students to express their creative individuality to boost their motivation in writing. Using the kata approach to teach composition becomes even more problematic for students with alternative learning styles. Many students feel very unmotivated to
learn and excel at composition, and in contrast to listening and speaking.

**Significance of the Project**

Contemporary Japanese compositional textbooks appear to follow a very rigid pattern of teaching. This pattern conforms to the *kata* approach. In Japanese, *kata* means molding and/or modeling; practicing *kata* involves the student to copy exactly what the textbook or teacher models repeatedly until she or he has achieved “mastery” over a particular skill. For over 50 years, Japanese instructors used this *kata* approach to teach composition, which may be questioned, and its efficacy may be debated on certain levels, but this has been the main teaching method. Nevertheless, neither instructors nor students appear satisfied with its use (Furukawa & Kitamura, 2000; Ikeo, 2002).

The main parts of the instructors’ work in the *kata* approach are pre-writing guidance and feedback (Tokumaru, 2000). Pre-writing guidance is well structured with a flow chart, a model composition to learn the structure of writing, and some lessons. Feedback is a complex process and I am going to describe this in Chapter 2. Compositions take a long time to mark from the instructor’s point of view. Grammar and spelling usually may have only one correct answer; however, assessing the content is much more difficult and time consuming because content is influenced by a writer’s personality, perspective, and way of expression. Students may not know how to express their ideas correctly since they are still learning Japanese. Marking composition assignments requires the instructor to figure out what each sentence is trying to convey in order to comprehend what the student intended to say. By doing so, the teacher can then properly correct any grammatical mistakes, and suggest how to improve the construction of the writing so the student can better express his or her ideas and feelings.

Meanwhile, students in Japan are also unhappy with the *kata* approach. Students often
struggle with their writing assignments because all their effort is focusing on conforming to a certain compositional style that leaves no room for personal expression. In effect, they are “filling in the blanks” instead of exercising creativity. Consequently, students usually feel a lack of achievement when they finish their assignments; this, in turn, leads to decreased motivation to continue to learn how to write well in Japanese. Much of the available research on compositional teaching agrees that the kata style of learning denies the importance of creativity and personal expression. For example, Sei (1995) has pointed out that while kata was effective in helping students to master compositional structures, it does not encourage creativity. Despite this, making it difficult to even envision that a more effective method for teaching Japanese composition may exist; however, many JSL instructors continue to hold a strong belief in the efficacy of the traditional kata approach (Yokomizo, 1997). The reason for this is because most JSL students study Japanese in order to pass the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) so they can attend a Japanese university; therefore, JSL instructors teach for the JLPT, which does not test for compositional skills (largely because the test is entirely multiple choice).

Based on my own experience teaching at UNBC with mixture of ikebana, creativity focused approach and the kata approach, and from discussions with my JSL instructor colleagues, I have come to believe that students learning Japanese composition need an approach that emphasizes originality and creativity, especially for intermediate learners and higher. Only a little research present about how Japanese composition is or should be taught. What little there is concentrates entirely on augmenting the kata approach with such things as synergizing with Japanese native speakers or letting classmates check each other’s writing; none of it calls for, or even suggests, that the kata approach should be replaced to more motivation based teaching approach. A small movement: workshop approach, student-oriented teaching styles, was
introduced in 2014, but has not been widely adopted yet. In addition, the primary focal point for this research is the instructor; in other words, researchers adopt the kata approach, directed from a teacher, and only allow one specific way of learning. For my project, I wanted my research to be from the bottom up; in other words, I wanted the focal point to be the student because they are the ones who should benefit.

**Research Question and Purpose of Project**

My research question was *how should I engage greater students’ motivation through trying out different teaching approaches? Does the application of different teaching approaches in Japanese composition engage greater student motivation?* My purpose for answering this question is to propose a more effective method for teaching Japanese composition that increases/engages student motivation to the fullest. The goal of this research was to begin developing an alternative approach for teaching composition to university level JSL students. As a Japanese language educator, I believe that students must be motivated to learn, and the room to exercise their creativity in writing should be given. My focus was to develop and encourage students to be creative in their writing by fostering their motivation to learn Japanese composition. Therefore, this project aimed to (1) identify and analyze student responses to a series of questions revolving around how to effectively engage students to learn composition and (2) use the results from this analysis to improve how I teach Japanese composition at UNBC. In this way, I hope to be able to better integrate the *kata, ikebana,* and workshop approaches in order to improve how I teach writing to my students. More broadly, it is my hope that this project will help persuade JSL instructors to encourage creativity during composition lessons so that students are better motivated to write, and perhaps can even develop a passion for writing.
Personal Location

I am a native-born Japanese who was a student during the Showa era, (1926 – 1989) the period of Japanese history corresponding to the reign of the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. During that time, it was expected that teachers be respected at all times in deference to their great academic knowledge. Teacher stood on a platform at the front of the room with the students’ desks lined up facing the teacher as a classroom setting. During class, the teacher delivered lectures, and occasionally asked questions to the students; the students were not encouraged, or expected, to speak or contribute unless called upon. It was a typical teacher-as-leader education setting.

However, when I was in middle school and began to learn the art of ikebana, I was introduced to another style of teaching. The instructor, instead of assuming the role of unquestionable authoritarian leadership, accepted the differences in each of the students’ personalities and in their creations. Moreover, she encouraged her students to grow according to their own wont instead of trying to conform to a pre-defined norm (i.e., a kata). What is more, students also learned from each other, not just the teacher. This type of learning environment inspired me greatly; I continued to study ikebana for about 15 years, and had hoped to become an ikebana teacher, myself. My hobby helped motivate me to become a teacher because of the open-mindedness of the instructor and of her instruction method.

Eventually, I moved to Canada to study English, settling first in Vancouver, and later in Prince George. My dream to become an ikebana teacher did not come true because of the moving. Instead, helping ensure that I would be able to support myself in Canada, I took two Japanese teacher development courses in Japan and two additional ones in Canada. These courses concentrated on understanding Japanese grammar and learning how to teach it; during
these courses, I was introduced to various teaching methodologies, some of which conformed to
the *kata* approach and some of which were more *ikebana*-like. However, although listening,
speaking, and even reading were extensively covered, at no point was the teaching of
composition brought up.

In 1995, I became a Japanese language instructor at the University of Northern British
Columbia. I teach all four linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in a general
Japanese course; UNBC does not offer any courses in specific skills, such as composition.¹
Therefore, general Japanese courses must include composition. Upon assuming my duties at
UNBC, I quickly developed a methodology whereby I introduced the students to the principles
of Japanese-style composition using the *kata* approach, and then gradually shifted to what I am
calling the *ikebana* style. Lacking any formal education for teaching composition, I taught it in
the best way I could devise regardless of my concerns that it might not be the “right” way. These
worries were soon swept aside because my students seemed to enjoy compositional writing
practice.

In 2007, while attending a conference at Kurume University, I casually mentioned to
other JSL teachers that my students appeared happy to practice composition. They were very
shocked to hear this because their own students’ experience was the exact opposite. During the
ensuing conversation, we all agreed that teaching composition is especially challenging because
of the lack of resources (e.g., textbooks, training) available to JSL instructors that could suggest
ways to give students the guidance they need to improve their writing, or to maintain their
motivation.

¹ Currently, UNBC offers a three-year Japanese-language curriculum. First-year courses were launched in 1995; the
following year, second-year courses were added at the request of students who had completed the first-year classes;
and beginning in 1999, third-year courses began. There is no official fourth-year course, but students with a desire to
continue learning Japanese can enroll in INTS 499, Independent Study.
As I reflected on what had been said, I concluded that my colleagues’ difficulties also stemmed from their use of the *kata* style of instruction to teach composition. This realization not only made me reconsider my teaching method, but it also made me aware of the importance of developing an alternative teaching method to supplement or replace the traditional one. Many JSL students and instructors are expressing their dissatisfaction with how composition is taught, but the current JSL system refuses to acknowledge them and continues to devise teaching methods based on the *kata* style of instruction (*Minna No Nihongo* [Japanese for Everyone] (1998, revised in 2003). As a Japanese instructor, I need to respond to my students’ needs by developing a better way of teaching composition in order to cultivate their creativity and increase their motivation for writing. It is my hope that my findings will be able to help other Japanese instructors to teach composition in a more effective manner.

Motivation is the starting point of any journey, and educational learning process is a journey (Otsu & Yanase, 2010). According to Kan, Nakajima, and Tajiri (2004), the job of a teacher is to clarify and provide the purpose for studying a subject, acknowledge the strengths of each student, and find out what motivates them, using this knowledge to help the students increase their self-motivation to learn. Composition teaching should adhere to these same principles by encouraging creativity; without it, writing simply becomes a mechanical exercise. Composition is the communication using the writing format and the message sent from the writer to the reader(s) (Yokomizo, 1977). Communication is valid when students have a desire to send a message. The most basic part is missing in the current composition teaching method; therefore, I want to fill this gap in this project.

**Background of the Project**

UNBC’s JSL instructors begin teaching composition during the second semester of the
first-year Japanese course. Composition in the first year courses is typically to write short paragraphs using the grammar they have so far learned. At this stage, the instructor applied the *kata* style of teaching to strengthen students’ knowledge of the structure of Japanese-style composition because the students are still learning the rudimentary basics of the Japanese language. By the *kata* style teaching, students learn the Japanese style of composition with a model and aim to be able to write like the model composition. The *kata* style learning is not conducive for emphasizing creativity, but for applying linguistic skills.

Students are encouraged to begin writing creatively in their second year. The second-year courses mark my shift from teaching composition according to the *kata* approach to doing so using my own methodology that is the *ikebana* approach. During this time, expectation to the students were to write texts of between three and four paragraphs in length. Some students can be overwhelmed by the requirement to write such compositions because of how complex the activity is.

Ishida (1995) explains that composition for non-Japanese students is not a simple discrete skill: it requires the application of all the other linguistic skills, such as grammar, characters, and vocabulary. Hence, composition is considered as a synthesized language comprehension process requiring all other factors of language. In other words, students must learn to synthesize a variety of new and old grammar and vocabulary in order to write accurately, fluently, and expressively; in addition, they must also learn when and how to use appropriate Japanese compositional formats. Therefore, some students find their second year of Japanese language study very stressful.

As an instructor, I had observed that the challenges and stresses these students encounter affect their motivation to perform well, particularly for the writing component of the course.
Reflecting on how composition was being currently taught not only by the majority of JSL instructor, but also by myself, I wanted to develop a style of teaching composition that provides maximum motivation for students to write passionately and creatively. For that purpose, I wanted to hear what my students have to say about my teaching approach so I was able to incorporate their opinions into the development of a new teaching method for composition, one that could draw out the students’ motivation for learning and writing.

**Overview of the Project**

This project sought to develop a better way to teach composition to JSL students, which I called the *ikebana* approach. Currently, the sole method used by JSL compositional textbooks to teach writing is the *kata* approach. This approach works best in the contexts of memorizing vocabulary and learning sentence structures because these areas have very set right/wrong features, and repetitious practice of the correct (i.e., “perfect”) model is often the only way to learn them. Creativity and/or originality are not required, and are perhaps even unhelpful, for achieving such skills.

However, there is another teaching style that I believe can be very beneficial for JSL students learning to write in Japanese. During this project, I will call it the *ikebana* approach. In Japan, *ikebana* means the “art of flower arrangement,” and the approach *ikebana* teachers employ for teaching it is what I describe as a *creativity emphasis method*. The philosophy behind this methodology is common in JSL education, where it is used extensively for teaching oral communication. I believe that the *ikebana* approach is powerful to apply teaching composition because writing—perhaps more so than oral communication—is the expression of the students’ own thoughts, personality, and creativity. Even though students need to know certain “facts” about compositional formats and styles, the writing itself should not be about the students
copying/mimicking the instructor’s models. Originality and creativity are important aspects of composition because the differences in styles and viewpoints make writing fun for the students to do and for the instructor to read.

Summary

This project consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 has described how composition was viewed by the current JSL teaching curriculum, described the *kata* and the creativity emphasising (i.e., *ikebana*) styles of teaching composition, and revealed the shortcomings of both the current attitude to composition and to the *kata* teaching approach. This chapter also provided the rationale for developing a new teaching method for composition. Chapter 2 reviews the current literature on the pros and cons of the standard pedagogical method of teaching composition, and the need to improve how it is done. Drawing upon this literature will provide insights into how the *kata* approach is used in Japanese traditional arts, and highlight some of the shortcomings and merits of using this approach for teaching composition. Additionally, literature pertaining to the motivation of learning will be reviewed, which affirms the importance of providing motivational support for the teaching of Japanese composition. Chapter 3 will describe and provide the rationale for the use of action research during this project and explain its methodology. Chapter 4 will provide the findings and discussion of my research. The final chapter, Chapter 5, will outline conclusions and new syllabus of teaching composition derived from my study.
Glossary

**Ikebana approach:** In Japan, *ikebana* means the “art of flower arrangement,” and the approach *ikebana* teachers employ for teaching it is what I describe as a *creativity emphasis method*. The *ikebana* approach applied in composition teaching, 1) provides a general topic and a minimum structure for the writing to follow; 2) stresses the importance of originality; 3) encourages collaboration with native Japanese-speakers (if the students wants to); and 4) provides feedback that focuses mainly on the content of a composition.

**Guidance:** Guidance is a support provided by an instructor in class during the pre-writing session. The content differs in a different approach, but it covers mainly structure of composition, content, and examples.

**Japanese language partner:** A Japanese language partner acts as a student tutor to support Japanese as the Second Language students outside of a classroom. A Japanese language partner is a native Japanese-speaking exchange student studying at UNBC for the semester or for the year.

**Kata approach:** In Japanese, *kata* means molding and/or modeling; practicing *kata* involves the student copying exactly what the textbook or teacher models over and over until she or he has achieved “mastery” over a particular skill. This *kata* approach has been a dominated method for over 50 years to teach composition. A typical lesson utilizing the *kata* approach consists of 1) providing linguistic knowledge and practice; 2) teaching compositional structures; 3) presenting a specific topic; 4) reviewing a model composition about that topic; 5) inserting appropriate ideas into a flow-chart; and 6) providing feedback on the piece of writing, mainly about its grammar and structure.
Mini Lesson: Mini lesson is a pre-writing session in the Writing Workshop approach. An instructor teaches necessary skills/information/effective ways to write a composition to class.

Structure: Structure means a framework of a composition.

Support: Support means a suggestion, collaboration, and discussion between a student and an instructor during pre-writing session in this research. An instructor supports individual student at once. On the other hand, “guidance” is supporting to all class.

Writing Rules: In Japanese composition, we have writing rules, slightly different from grammar. The writing rules are similar like styles in English composition, such as APA style. The rules are linguistic skills; such as, the location of the Japanese comma and period, the length of indent, the order of a title and a writer’s name, usage of a direct quote, and how to omit a subject in a sentence. These rules are different in a literature and a composition in school system. For example, in a literature, direct quotation must start from a beginning of a line with indent. On the other hand, in a school system, direct quotation can start from a middle of a line, but the opening of a Japanese quotation mark must be a set with a character following the mark. Students must remember the school system ones.

Writing Workshop approach: Hisako Sato (2014) treats composition class as a writing workshop. In practice, the workshop approach requires that the teacher allow the students to write about anything they wish. The teacher then accommodates her or his instruction to the needs of the students and their topics. Afterwards, the students are encouraged to share their compositions with the class, which reminds them that writing is communication.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will a) describe what Japanese composition entails; b) explain the skills required to write Japanese composition; c) inventory the contents of the compositional textbooks currently available to JSL instructors; d) describe the current teaching method for composition (i.e., the kata approach); e) show models of teaching and leadership; f) justify the importance of motivation in the learning process; g) introduce two alternative teaching approaches (the ikebana and writing workshop approaches) for teaching composition; and h) importance of feedback. The purpose for doing all this is to provide insights into how Japanese composition is currently taught in respect to maintaining and increasing student motivation. The purpose also supports my argument that a new approach is necessary. There appears to be a significant degree of mismatch between what the students need to help them learn Japanese composition and the tools, provisions, and support available to teachers of Japanese composition. To provide a more effective methodology for teaching composition, matching this gap between students’ need and what instructor provided, is necessary.

What Is Composition

Writing allows people to discover things about themselves (Kato, 1996). According to Oomoto, Goto, and Chiba (2011), writing is proof of self-existence because the act of writing is also the act of thinking, and therefore self-reflection. Because of this, many scholars have argued that composition should be thought of in terms of the journey, not the destination (Kato, 1996; Oomoto et al., 2011). However, composition requires a reader in order to complete the communicative act, just as a verbal conversation requires a listener (Kunihiro et al., 1977). By doing so, the writer and the reader(s) create a common understanding, such as sympathy, cooperation, or solidarity (Kunihiro et al., 1977). Thus, Japanese composition for JSL learners
is/should be an opportunity to express their opinions, and serve as an alternative means of communication with other people.

Is this spirit of writing—expressing one’s opinion in a communicative and creative way—really being applied in the actual learning environment? According to Ishida (1995), “composition should be considered as the most important skill among the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and it is the one that requires the most support from Japanese native speakers” (p. 197). In reality, composition skills are not considered important and are thus not emphasized by the JSL educational system. This lack of importance has been substantiated by consulting with the 2007-2008 Guide to Japanese Language Teaching Materials guide, which showed that only 22 compositional textbooks have been published or were in circulation in contrast to the 229 for general communication instruction. Based on this finding, it appears that composition learning is undervalued in the current Japanese educational system.

If composition skills are to be given equal importance with the other skills, then a) more and better textbooks must be developed and published and b) JSL instructors need to be made aware of the importance of composition skills to overall language acquisition. Ishida (1995) explains that composition is not a simple, discrete skill; instead, it requires the synthesis of all the linguistic skills, such as grammar, characters, and vocabulary. Nobuko Mizutani (1997) concurs, adding that composition helps students to practice expressing their ideas by encouraging them to explain their thought-process. Nevertheless, Japanese language schools rarely teach composition; instead, the current JSL education system focuses almost exclusively on getting students to master grammar (Nobuko Mizutani, 1997). From the elementary level on, composition practice is treated as additional grammar practice, not as an opportunity to express one’s opinion (Umemura, 2002). Thus, the function of composition in the current JSL education
system does not match with the true purpose of learning composition, which is for students to express their opinions, and to engage in an alternative means of communication with other people.

**Required skills for Japanese Composition**

Writing in Japanese is a very complex activity compared to (for example) learning grammar because it entails the use of many different language skills. Several researchers have divided the skills required for writing into two primary groups: a) linguistic, such as grammar, word-choice, vocabulary, and orthography (i.e., *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*); and b) structural, which includes sentence and paragraph construction, idea development, sentence conjunctions, and editing and revisions (Kikuchi, 1987; Kim, Matsuura, & Yanashima, 2010; Umemura, 2002; Umeoka, 1999). Umemura (2002), in particular, has argued that sentence construction and idea development should be emphasized in composition pedagogy because writing is/should be more than just grammar practice. He calls for instructors to strike a balance between the teaching of grammar and the development of ideas when teaching Japanese composition (Umemura, 2002). According to him, a good instructor will help improve his/her students’ linguistic skills, teach sentence construction, and facilitate their creativity and personal expression.

Research conducted by Kobayashi and Morikoshi (1996), however, suggests that the only reason the JSL education system teaches composition, especially at the beginner level, is to provide students with more opportunities to practice applying their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic skills to express their ideas, intentions, and goals. In other words, writing is treated as a subordinate skill meant only to help develop other linguistic skills. For example, when composition is evaluated, teachers are encouraged to focus all of their attention on grammatical mistakes, based on the idea that grammatical skills are the foundation for
compositional writing in that they support the construction of sentences, especially for JSL learners (Kanda & Yamane, 2004).²

Meanwhile, other researchers have emphasized the role composition plays in helping JSL students master how they express their opinion in the format of Japanese style essays, which are completely different from Western ones. The basic Japanese style essay that students learn follows the ki/shou/ten/ketsu [introduction, development, turn, conclusion] structure (Umeoka, 1999). Unlike the basic English essay, Japanese ones do not emphasize argument, the inclusion of outside evidence, and the proving of an assertion; they instead focus on personal opinion, a description of the writer’s thought processes, and consensus-building with the reader (Kondo, 2010; Takashi Saito, 2007). Umeoka (1999) has found that although intermediate-level JSL students generally have good vocabulary and grammar, they lack the skills to write an essay that Japanese readers are able to follow. Consequently, several researchers have suggested that teachers provide students with model essays to study and emulate in order to help them learn about Japanese textual structure (Oomoto, Goto, & Chiba, 2011; Takeda, 2011; Umemura, 2002). The current style for teaching Japanese composition relies on the use of writing models, and they make up a large part of the few composition textbooks currently available.

² A similar teaching philosophy appears to be in effect for English as a Second Language (ESL) students learning English composition in North America. Leki (1992), for example, has found that ESL students are often assigned guided composition activities to practice grammar, which typically involve exchanging words and grammatical forms and recreating a composition according to an example. Even if students are “able to do grammar-based guided compositions, and even if [they]…have a fairly good grasp of grammar, they still produce peculiar, non-English sounding texts when asked to write even somewhat more creatively” (Leki, 1992, p. 5). Learning composition in a second language is a complex activity.
Contents of Composition Textbooks

The contents of almost all JSL composition textbooks are essentially the same. In the bestselling JSL textbook, *Minna no Nihongo*, for example, each lesson proceeds according to a set, unvarying format: there is/are a) a flowchart showing the structure of the desired piece of writing, provided in an almost “fill-in-the-blank” layout; b) a model composition demonstrating how the writing should be structured; c) some lesson-specific advice about how the students can improve their writing ability; d) a list of related vocabulary that can/should be used; and e) a series of questions designed to push the students towards the desired content of the composition and to ensure that they do not make any grammatical or structural mistakes. This teaching format aims to educate students in compositional structure rather than to encourage them to express their own opinion. Most textbooks with compositional components have similar contents as *Minna no Nihongo*. This repetitious format, which forces students to perfect the mechanics of what they want to say (at the expense of the content) long before they can even begin the actual composition, is typical of composition textbooks. It is a methodology based on the *kata* approach to teaching (see also Kanda & Yamane, 2004; Sei, 1995).

How Composition is Currently Taught: the Kata Method

The needs of JSL students should dictate how educators improve compositional teaching. However, while most research on composition acknowledges that current teaching approaches are ineffective, many of these studies blame the students. For example, Oyama (2007) has pointed out that students write passively because the students do not engage with the evaluation, comments, and grammatical corrections they receive, and they gradually become discouraged from continuing to write. Umeoka (1999), meanwhile, argues that the students have insufficient linguistic skills to excel at composition. While there may or may not be some truth to these
claims, almost none of these studies suggest that the teachers’ teaching approach is the cause of the problem. Many Japanese native speakers believe that composition is boring because of how it was taught to them; several of these people grow up to become JSL instructors and end up using the same teaching method that caused them to dislike writing (Kondo, 2010; Takashi Saito, 2007; Umeoka, 1999; Umemura, 2002). This teaching method is called the kata approach, and it continues to dominate the way composition is taught not only to native Japanese students, but also to JSL ones. Many instructors can see that learning composition is a hassle for their students, and although they want to improve their composition classes, they do not know what other teaching methodologies are out there besides the traditional kata approach.

Japan has a long history where the traditional arts have played an important role in how general education is taught, and compositional JSL is no exception. The most wide-spread teaching approach is called kata. Kata can variously mean a) a mould that can create a shape, b) a style or pattern that endures as traditional or habitual activities, and/or c) a model to be followed. A typical lesson utilizing the kata approach consists of 1) providing linguistic knowledge and practice; 2) teaching compositional structures; 3) presenting a specific topic; 4) reviewing a model composition about that topic; 5) inserting appropriate ideas into a flow-chart; and 6) providing feedback on the piece of writing, mainly about its grammar and structure. Regardless, the kata approach to instruction is about copying a so-called ‘perfect’ model as closely as possible in order to ‘master’ it; conversely, it discourages the inclusion of any individual and/or personal expression. As an educational methodology, it is an ingrained part of Japanese culture. So ingrained, in fact, that a review of the literature appears to show that there is no research or discussion whatsoever about the use of the kata approach in teaching composition to JSL students. However, based on my own observations, it seems evident that the kata
approach is prevalent in the design of Japanese composition textbooks, such as *Minna No Nihongo*. In the introduction of one beginner to intermediate-level textbook, the authors consider modeling vital for students to achieve the desired composition skills (Furukawa & Kitamura, 2000).

As applied to teaching JSL composition, most instructors start by introducing beginner JSL students to those grammar and phrasal components that will be useful for the current lesson/assignment. Next, they expose the students to a model composition that contains structures that the students must learn before they can actually begin writing. Once they have “mastered” these structures, the students start composing an essay, supported by a flow chart, guided questions, and/or discussion points (Koguma, Hongo, Masuda, & Kosimaetani, 2002; Osamu Mizutani & Lee, 2002). This step-by-step, repetitive teaching and learning approach to composition is typical of the *kata* method. Although some scholars have tried to introduce alternative techniques for teaching composition, the *kata* approach continues to dominate, especially for introductory level composition learning. At subsequent levels, the influence of the *kata* approach is most evident in the fact that acquiring linguistic skills overwhelms all other considerations, especially the expression of personal opinions.

**Models of teaching and leadership**

Guiding students towards effective learning is perhaps the most important role teachers can play in the lives of their students. However, the *kata* approach to teaching composition is not a method of guidance. Instead, it is analogous to what Kaser and Halbert (2009) call the “sorting system” of education. This “sorting system” judges whether each student has the correct level of skills, knowledge, and talent, and then places them into an ‘appropriate’ category. Report cards (e.g., from 1, poor performance to 10, excellent skills) and achievement-style exams are typical
evaluation tools used by the sorting system (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). This system creates an environment where there are either winners or losers (Stiggins, 2007). In recent years, (Western) education has been shifting towards what Kaser and Halbert (2009) call the “learning system,” where instructors focus on how well the students’ overall work and progress contributes to their learning goals. In the learning system, assignments are evaluated based on the level of learning achieved, and all assignments contribute to an on-going process of acquiring knowledge or skills, with the instructors providing guidance so the students can achieve their goals (See Table 1).

Table 1

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<th>From</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction and teaching</td>
<td>Deep learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summative assessment for grading and reporting</td>
<td>Formative assessment to provide coaching feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching in isolation</td>
<td>Teaching teams working as a learning community</td>
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<tr>
<td>External school improvement model</td>
<td>Internal, ongoing improvement efforts focused on deep learning</td>
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A similar shift should take place in JSL compositional teaching. The current method for teaching Japanese composition, the *kata* approach, is very similar to how the sorting system operates. To accomplish the shift, not only must the materials and teaching techniques be changed, but also the teachers’ relationship with the students. Instead of micromanaging the learning process through models that must be copied exactly or else fail, instructors should instead trust in their students’ ability and potential to learn. Their main tasks should be to provide clear goals for the students to strive towards, and to help students find and develop their strengths (Yokomizo, 1997; Otsu & Yanase, 2010). In addition to the teacher-student
relationship, the educational environment should also be changed. According to Yoshida and Iwase (2007), there are at least seven things teachers should do to create an engaging learning environment for the students: 1) make a fun environment; 2) arrange worthwhile content; 3) introduce useful skills; 4) provide an ample reviewing process; 5) encourage students to recognize their own growth; 6) help students to realize their own potential; and 7) set up a two-way communicative process for learning. In kata approach, many of these seven components are missing because kata approach is purely skill-based approach which is helpful for self-motivated students but not for those who are still seeking their own potentials. As an instructor, we have to have a safety net for those who really need our support.

Motivation Based Learning

We all have a desire to learn new things and improve our skills (Abe & Nakamura, 2006), but for that desire to flourish, our motivation must be sustained. Once a student has found their scholastic direction, the instructor’s role in helping them retain their curiosity and motivation is to support their growth by rewarding their efforts and encouraging awareness of their own achievements (Yokomizo, Yanase, & Otsu, 2010).

Motivation revolves around the “processes involved in arousing, directing, and sustaining behaviour,” and is made up of two types: intrinsic and extrinsic (Hunter, 1995, p. 2). Intrinsic motivation is when the desire to learn and succeed are self-generated, such as when a student studies a subject “for no compelling reason, beyond the satisfaction derived from the activity itself…do[ing] something when we don’t have to do anything” (Raffini, 1996, p.3; Hunter, 1995). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is when the desire to learn and succeed has to be sustained by outside factors, such as reward or praise (Hunter, 1995). A student’s motivation is often related to their levels of “1) interest, 2) success, 3) difficulty, 4) knowledge of results, and 5) relation of...
the activity to an internalized goal” (Hunter, 1995, p. 7). Many studies emphasize the value of intrinsic motivation (Hayashi, 2006; Hunter, 1995; Otsu & Yanase, 2010; Takashi Saito, 2007; Tokumaru, 2000; Umemura, 2002; Yokomizo, 1997). Youko Abe and Nakamura (2006), for example, have advised educators to create a classroom environment that encourages and recognizes each student’s effort, confirms their progress, and seeks to find each student’s strength and particular learning style.

Tajiri (Yokomizo et al., 2010), meanwhile, suggests that educators need to imbue their students with a pleasure in learning about the unknown, and to instill in them a joy in achievement; above all, instructors must demonstrate that they have faith in the ability of their students to succeed. A good teacher must reward students for their academic curiosity and acknowledge their achievements (Yokomizo et al., 2010). Conversely, if students are provided with negative motivation, they may develop writing disabilities that will cause a negative feedback loop of poor motivation resulting in poor results causing poor motivation (Saddler, 2012). Therefore, motivation is the starting point for any learning process, and the engine powering study (Yokomizo et al., 2010).

Although motivation is recognized as playing a critical role in second language learning, the vast body of research on it (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) only pertains to English as a Second Language (ESL) scholarship, not JSL. For example, Graham and Harris argued that ESL teaching recognizes that students with writing disabilities often experience motivational difficulties that lead them to form negative assessments about their writing and their ability as writers (as cited in Saddler, 2012). Therefore, to help students write more effectively, “intervention efforts must not only address how to write but also articulate methods teachers and researchers can use to increase motivation to write” (Saddler, 2012, p. 1). Although many
Japanese researchers recognize the importance of motivation in teaching composition, their work is often prescriptive in nature (Abe & Nakamura, 2006), and focuses more on improving kata approach teaching techniques.

**Teaching composition and increasing motivation 1: ikebana approach.** *Ikebana* is the Japanese art of flower arrangement. Unlike most other arts and activities in Japan, *ikebana* does not use a kata-based teaching and learning approach because it believes that Nature never produces the same flower shapes and arrangements more than once. It therefore respects and fosters individual creativity. Rather than the teacher providing specific models that the student must replicate, the students are instead provided with the three primary materials (twigs, grasses, and flowers) and encouraged to simply begin arranging them into a pattern that is pleasing and creative. The *ikebana* teaching-learning approach is formative, rather than replicative; provides suggestions for improvement, rather than dictating that something is right or wrong; and respects individual artistic skill, rather than demanding conformity to a perfect model.

Like with *ikebana*, creativity is the foundation of writing (Takeshi Saito, 2007) and this is why I believe that *ikebana*’s teaching methodology can/should be adapted to help JSL students learn compositional writing. The *ikebana* approach applied in composition teaching, 1) provides a general topic and a minimum structure for the writing to follow; 2) stresses the importance of originality; 3) encourages collaboration with native Japanese speakers (if the students want to); and 4) provides feedback that focuses mainly on the content of a composition. Takeshi Saito (2007) has already had success adapting the *ikebana* approach to help *native* Japanese university students to learn composition, basing her teaching on the idea that finding one’s own unique idea is the first step towards crafting good prose. She supports the notion that developing ideas takes precedence over formatting or perfect grammar (Hayashi, 2006). By basing compositional
teaching on such precepts, I believe that JSL students will be better motivated to learn how to write in Japanese. JSL instructors should provide a learning environment that increases a student’s motivation to write by encouraging students to develop their own ideas, accepting them, and then guiding the development of those ideas by allowing the student to creatively express them. In short, the developments of the student’s own original idea is the key to motivating them to write, and to write better. In practice, this means that teachers should, for example, provide students with a very general topic to write about (e.g., write about a country, as opposed to write about your country, or your favourite country, et cetera) or even no topic at all (i.e., the student can write about anything). This gives each student a lot of freedom to write anything about any country they want.

**Teaching composition and increasing motivation 2: Writing Workshop.** For Japanese composition teaching, motivation based learning is a new field. At the Shinka Suru Writing Workshop [Evolving Writing Workshop] (2014), Hiroko Sato was one of the few who has stated that the purpose of teaching composition is to guide students towards becoming independent writers. Hiroko Sato (2014) treats composition class as a writing workshop, and bases her instruction technique on Flow Theory. Csikszentmihalyi has explained that Flow Theory is predicated on “flow experience,” which is “the sense of effortless action people feel in moments that stand out as the best in their lives” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 99). Fletcher and Potalpi (2012) have equated “flow experiences” with “flow activities,” arguing that these are the most suitable situations for learning because the learner’s skills and their learning needs are matched during that situation. To create these flow activities, the “important thing is to enjoy the activity for its own sake, and to know that what matters is not the result, but the control one is acquiring over one’s attention” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 129).
In practice, the workshop approach requires that the teacher allow the students to write about anything they wish. (See Appendix E for the feature of the writing workshop approach.) The teacher then accommodates her or his instruction to the needs of the students and their topics. Some may need quiet time to focus on their composition; some would like to get more advice or support from the teacher; and some may need to discuss things with their classmates to clarify their ideas. Afterwards, the students are encouraged to share their compositions with the class, which reminds them that writing is communication. This new approach to composition class has so far been applied only to Japanese high-school students at a school in Japan; however, there is no reason why it cannot also be applicable to JSL composition classes. The workshop approach (and the *ikebana*) to composition teaching is student-oriented and motivation-based. They may provide JSL teachers with alternative ways of helping students discover their own ways of writing because they treat composition as a *journey* towards the individual expression of thought and opinion.

**Feedback**

A very important element for teaching JSL composition is providing students with feedback; all three of the teaching approaches used/proposed have different methods of delivering it. The *kata* approach to feedback is for the teacher to provide the student with criticism that is pre- and pro-scripted in nature, focusing more on grammatical mistakes that must be fixed and less on how to avoid them or to improve the content of the writing (Usami, 2007). For the *ikebana* approach, feedback comes not only from the teacher, but also from the other students. It generally consists of questions about the student’s choice of position for each flower, grass, and twig, and suggestions about how the arrangement could be made even more beautiful. All feedback is positive and aims to help the student express her or himself better.
Finally, the feedback given by the workshop approach almost always comes from the other students, with the instructor acting more like a moderator ensuring that the comments and suggestions are positive and encouraging. The comments consist mainly of two types: those focusing on the style and those asking for clarification or providing encouragement (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007).

The most important element about feedback is that it should improve the students’ motivation level so they will have greater confidence in their writing abilities for the next assignment (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007). Research has shown that students who were given harsh or excessive criticism about their writing “lost touch with their potential, with writing’s rewards, with motivation, and with ‘hidden skills’” (Nelson, 1991, p. 129). Unfortunately, by using kata-based feedback techniques, where the learning emphasis is on conforming to Japanese textual structures and grammar, instructor feedback is often copious and nitpicky, and says nothing about the content, individuality, and creativity the student has expressed. If Takashi Saito is correct that the primary value of writing is/should be the “discovery of the writer’s value of life” (2007, p. 61), then such feedback is very discouraging to JSL students, especially those who are less proficient at acquiring the minutiae of the written word, and their motivation to continue learning Japanese may suffer.

Most of the scholarship out there recognizes that teaching composition “rel[ies] on feedback and comments” (Umemura, 2002, p. 96), and much of it has sought to design better methods for delivering them. For example, Komiya (1991) recommended a three-step system to help teachers provide their students with feedback. First, a writer reads out his or her own composition to the class, who are encouraged to suggest their own revisions before the teacher steps in. Next, the teacher provides the student with a check list of common errors for the student
to correct on their own before they submit their composition. Finally, the teacher marks the assignment and provides feedback to the student. The first two steps generally catch grammatical and tense mistakes, while the third focuses on structure and content issues. According to Komiya (1991), 90% of students identify their own mistakes by themselves correctly; however, their teachers still need to highlight the more subtle grammatical and structural errors because those mistakes are hard for students to identify. Although Saijou (2000) contends that oral feedback from classmates can be equally effective as instructor feedback, Ishibashi (2000) has concluded that self-monitoring is only effective with high-level students.

Meanwhile, Usami (2007) suggests that teachers use more flexible feedback styles depending on the learning environment and the purpose of learning, and that they provide more guidance on how to write better and less on what to write. Finally, Yoshida and Iwase (2007) argue that the most effective feedback is comments without any grade attached. When students receive a grade (e.g., 0 – 100%, or an A, C, or F), students often ignore feedback components other than the grade because they believe that the learning process ends with the completion of the assignment and the grade (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007). These grades do not evaluate or recognize hard work. Students who receive poor grades feel discouraged that their hard work did not achieve as much as they expected; students who received a good grade may feel pressured to maintain their grade. Either way, motivation to continue learning is often lost. However, if only comments are provided, the student is encouraged to read them. By doing so, they will find out about what was good about their writing, and what was ‘bad’ about it will be phrased in an encouraging manner. Most importantly, the comments will reward hard work. Not only is each student’s growth being supported, but they are being encouraged to evaluate their own progress and skill development, which boosts motivation to continue writing.
Summary

The kata teaching approach has been the primary way Japanese composition has been taught to JSL students for over fifty years. As a result, composition is the least developed area of JSL teaching in terms of establishing an effective teaching method that includes all four elements (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) of Japanese. The kata approach is best-suited for teaching grammar and structure, but fails in regard to non-linguistic skills, such as exploring and expressing personal opinions. To teach these non-linguistic skills, other instructional approaches, such as the ikebana and workshop approaches, have the potential to be very effective.

As a consequence, I would like to propose and assess these three approaches to teaching Japanese composition in relation to their ability to increase the students’ motivational levels. Benefits of the smooth shifting from the kata style teaching to the creativity emphasis teaching style, including increasing self-confidence and the potential to relieve students’ anxiety in writing is just beginning to develop.
Chapter Three: Research Methods

As explained in Chapter One, the purpose of this project is to find a teaching method that better motivates students to learn Japanese composition. From this, I was able to formulate the following research questions: How should I engage greater students’ motivation through trying out different teaching approaches? Does the application of different teaching approaches in Japanese composition engage greater student motivation? The current composition teaching method, the \textit{kata} approach, is good if all the teacher wants from the students is to reproduce any given ‘perfect’ model; however, it fails to tap into and to enhance each student’s potential to be original, to articulate ideas, and to be creative. Chapter 2 demonstrated that the current JSL system for teaching composition is heavily \textit{kata}-based, and considers composition as simply a way to augment grammar education. Most of the research about composition focuses on grammar teaching, evaluation methods, and correction methods. What is more, there have only been a few studies that have focused on motivation for teaching composition. In this chapter, I will explain why I chose \textit{action research} to guide my study, describe my data sources and collection methods, and justify the qualitative-quantitative approach used throughout.

\textbf{Action Research}

The case study uses a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is defined as “research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of particular phenomenon” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 5). According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), a “qualitative approach leads to hypothesis-generating research,” unlike quantitative research, which “tests whether the hypothesized relationship is actually true, using statistical methods.”(p. 4) In other words, qualitative research uses questioning, rather than measuring, to understand phenomena. It is particularly well-suited
to studies involving diversity because it does not assume that one answer can cover everything (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). In relation to my research, not only do students have different learning styles, but different teaching approaches have different strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of this research is to analyze what aspects from different teaching approaches engage and motivate students the most regardless of learning style.

The actual methodology my case study uses is action research. Reason and Bradbury (2008) have declared there is no short answer to define what action research is because the word “action” has a wide range of meanings and a researcher often acts in action research. Berg and Lune (2012) contend that action research contains participation, reflection, empowerment, and improvement. According to Lawin, action research is a process that “gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research on ‘private troubles’ that they have in common” (Adelman, 1993, p. 8). It aims to comprehend what you really would like to do and how to solve problems in such a way that both researchers and participants collaboratively identify potential problems in need of improvement (Berg & Lune, 2012). Many more traditional research methodologies focus on whether their findings are replicable in other settings or with other groups; action research, however, is more concerned with making improvements within the context of the study (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Action research has at its core “the process of ‘observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – [and] move’” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 9). In other words, a researcher observes a situation, reflects on how that situation might be improved and draws up a plan to do so, acts to change the situation according to a plan, evaluates the result(s), and moves to either refine or modify the situation, or to share the results with fellow practitioners (see Figure 1). Action
research is an ongoing process of solving problems and making improvements, and the results from it are not generalizable, but may have important relevance in similar situations.

My project employs this ‘action-reflection’ cycle. I began by observing that JSL instructors were distressed that their students were not engaging with composition. Although my own students did not appear to have this problem, that does not mean my teaching approach is the reason. I had to find out whether there was a relationship between teaching methodology and student motivation. Therefore, I developed a study where I would teach the composition portions of a second-year Japanese language course using three different approaches—kata, ikebana, and workshop—to find out which one(s) motivated students better (or worse). Through interviews, these students told the interviewers what aspects of the three approaches helped to make writing a positive experience for the students. After this evaluation was completed, I created a new teaching syllabus that incorporates my findings about how I teach second-year composition to future students.

Figure 1. Spiral Cycle Action Research Model.
(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 11).
For my case study, not only was I the researcher collecting data, but also the students’ facilitator and educator; my students, meanwhile, acted as collaborators in my research. At the beginning of the Winter 2015 Semester INTS 222 course, I (a) explained the nature of my research study to the students; (b) asked them if they would like to participate in my research; and (c) stressed that participation was completely voluntary and that anything said during the interview was kept confidential, and would not affect their final grade (because I would not see their answers until after their Winter 2015 final grades had been submitted to UNBC). Students were then asked to sign a consent form that would, again, explain the nature of the study, answered some frequently asked questions, and provided contact information if they wanted to know more about the research (see Appendix A: Information Letter/Consent Form). Throughout the semester-length INTS 222 course, I taught composition (along with other aspects of the Japanese language) to the students as I normally did. I taught Japanese-style composition using the three different methods described above and below. During the Winter semester 2015 but after teaching composition styles were done, the students would be interviewed by two assistants that I had hired for this purpose. This interview was entirely voluntary; the students would not be obligated to take part in it. After the interview, the assistants who were the same people as the interviewers both transcribed the recordings and changed each student’s name into a randomly selected alphanumeric code to keep the student anonymous from the researcher. The transcribed interviews were coded (by the researcher) to analyse what motivate students to write. Since I had the dual-role of researcher and teacher in this action research project, I had to be on guard against imposing pressure on my students to participate in this study.
Background On the Case Study Course and Its Participants

The class/course of this study. The setting for my case study was the 12-week (January to April 2015) second-year Japanese course at UNBC. The Winter Semester second-year Japanese course is an intermediate course that introduces students to a level of composition that is more challenging than the elementary level they engaged in during their first-year courses; however, it is not as demanding as the more academic-style of writing that they will do in the third year. The goal of the second year level composition is to discover one’s own writing style using Japanese grammar, sentence structure, writing rules, and idiomatic forms, among other socio-linguistic factors. It incorporates all four aspects of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The course consists of two 90-minute lecture-based classes, plus one 90-minute practice lab, per week.

Since 1997, I have taught composition to second-year JSL students using a combination of the kata and the ikebana approaches; I developed this system through informal cycles of action and reflection. In order to find out which aspects of these different approaches engage student motivation more and/or better, I have formalized this informal process for the purposes of the present research.

Students who enrolled in this class were vetted to insure that they had learned the basic rules of Japanese composition and have enough grammatical knowledge and vocabulary to be able to express their opinions and thoughts in Japanese that was appropriate for a second-year class. This vetting was done by having the students pass the two first-year courses. Although I wanted to acquire as representative a set of results as I could, this may prove impossible due to various factors. For example, the gender-ratio of my case-study group/class is four males to eight females (as of December 9, 2014); this gender imbalance could influence my results.
Nevertheless, I was confident that this research would suggest some preliminary conclusions about teaching methodology and student motivation.

**Participants recruitment.** My potential participants consisted of students enrolled in the Winter semester of the second-year Japanese course (INTS 222) and who had signed a consent form to take part in my research (see Appendix A for an information letter and a copy of the consent form). After my research was approved by the REB, I asked my class, as a whole, if any of them wanted to take part in my research. The students were informed of the nature and purpose of my research and of what was expected of them as participants (i.e., attend every class, participate in an one-on-one interview with assistants hired by the researcher/instructor, and provided honest answers to each question). Students were informed that their answers and identities remained anonymous; that their grades would not be affected by any answers they provided; and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The interviews were conducted by my assistants during the Winter 2015 semester, but after teaching all composition styles. I did not access to the interview data until after the semester and its final exams were over, and the final grades submitted to UNBC. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the assistants for the use of analysis. As part of the process of transcription, the assistants changed each student’s name (and those of any friends they happen to mention) into a randomly selected alphanumeric code (i.e., person A1, B1, C1, et cetera). The assistants were conducting the interviews because I did not want my presence to affect the students’ answers; otherwise, the students would probably feel pressured to give answers they think I (as both the researcher and their instructor) wanted/expected out of fear of insulting or angering me. By using the assistants to conduct the interviews, I hope to reassure the interviewees that their identities would be kept confidential from the research/instructor, and that
their answers would not affect their grades, therefore encouraging them to give detailed and uncensored answers to the interview questions.

All recorded interviews were saved on a USB flash drive and kept in a locked file cabinet in the project supervisor’s office. Only the project supervisor and the assistants had access to the recording; the researcher/instructor did not have any access to them whatsoever (the researcher/instructor did not even listen to them). After two years, the recordings will be destroyed. All hardcopy interview transcripts and results would be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher/instructor’s office; after two years, this material will also be destroyed. All digital material (excluding audio recordings) would be encrypted and saved on a USB flash drive, which would likewise be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office. Like the hardcopy material, the information on the USB flash drive will be deleted after two years. Students who agree to all this were my participants.

A letter outlining the purpose of the study, and requesting permission to use my students as research participants, will be sent to the university Research Ethic Board for approval. I began my study after I have obtained the Board’s approval.

**Ethical Concerns**

This project had several ethical issues to consider. First, student involvement in my class was voluntary, which meant that the course had attracted students who were already motivated to learn. Also, students who took fewer courses may participate more than those who were busy with other courses; some may drop out of my course during the semester because of other commitments. Second, this project was a case study involving one classroom during a single second year course; the results may not be applicable to other classrooms or courses. Third, I needed to explain to my INTS 222 students that their interview answers do not impact their final
grade for INTS 222 (the interviews took place in March 2015 after receiving REB approval). I must explain clearly to them that the purpose of the interview was to learn their true opinions about each of the three compositional teaching methods so I could find out which one helped motivate them the best. I must convince them that their answers would not be taken as personal criticism of my teaching style or ability. Students must understand that during the interview, they are safe to answer any questions freely, and that their answers would not affect their grades, or insult me. What was more, during the interview the assistants must encourage my students to answer each question truthfully, and not provide what they think is the “right” answer.

Three processes would help ensure that the above ethical concerns about student anonymity and safety are mitigated. One, the researcher/instructor only had access to the interview transcripts and not the recordings. Two, as part of the process of transcribing the recorded interviews, the assistants changed each student’s name into a randomly selected alphanumeric code, thereby hiding the students’ identities from the researcher/instructor. In the third process, the interviews were conducted by assistants; the researcher/instructor did not have access to their answers until the semester and the final exams were over, and the final grades submitted to UNBC.

Data collection methods and sources

Throughout the semester, I taught composition to my students by alternating amongst three teaching approaches: kata, ikebana, and writing workshop. My intention was not evaluating the improvement in the students’ writing skills because such improvement differs according to each individual, and because I cannot create the same setting for all students to experience the same level of learning composition. Instead, I would only focus on whether the students’ motivation for learning to write in Japanese has changed. To collect data on
motivational performance, I hired two assistants to conduct the interviews. The assistants conducted the interviews using questions that the researcher/instructor had prepared ahead of time (see Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions). The purpose of the interview was to inquire after what aspects from the three approaches best helped the students to a) learn Japanese composition and b) want to continue learning Japanese composition. The assistants, who were same as the interviewers (see Appendix C: Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement for Transcriber) also, during the process of transcription, converted each student’s name (and those of any peers they happen to mention) into a randomly selected alphanumeric code to conceal their identity. The interviews were audio-taped only to help the assistants transcribing each student’s answers; the research/instructor did not listen to the recordings during the course of the research.

During the composition portions of each Japanese class, the day’s lesson was taught using one of three teaching approaches; each week featured a different approach. For example, on week three, the kata approach will be used to teach composition; on week five, the ikebana; and on week nine, the workshop method. The kata approach was the first approach used because students were accustomed to it from their first year classes. The ikebana approach was used second because while it provided students with greater creative freedom, the writing and feedback process was still mostly individualistic, like the kata method. Finally the writing workshop approach was used third because it was the complete opposite of the kata approach. Throughout the semester, native Japanese-speaking partners helped the students with their writing by reviewing the assignments before the students submitted them.

As I explained in Chapter 2, a typical lesson utilizing the kata approach consists of 1) providing linguistic knowledge and practice; 2) teaching compositional structures; 3) presenting
a specific topic; 4) reviewing a model composition about that topic; 5) inserting appropriate ideas into a flow-chart; and 6) providing feedback on the piece of writing, mainly about its grammar and structure. To operationalize this approach, in the week two, the composition lesson was about the topic of “this summer,” using a journal/diary-style of writing. A model composition and an activity to organize ideas were provided. The feedback was also provided to point out what mistakes the students have made.

The *ikebana* approach does not have a strict model like the *kata* approach; instead, it 1) provides a general topic and a minimum structure for the writing to follow; 2) stresses the importance of originality; 3) encourages collaboration with native Japanese-speakers (if the students want to); and 4) provides feedback that focuses mainly on the content of a composition. In week five, I encouraged the students to be creative and original for the lesson’s composition before they started writing about the topic, “clothes.” The structure of the composition was not precisely directed. Students also had the option to get additional support from the Japanese native students during writing. Students received feedback mainly about the content of their composition.

The workshop approach involves 1) the instructor giving a mini-lesson to teach a new technique of writing; 2) the teacher asking the students to complete the writing assignment according to their own learning styles (for example, engaging in a question-and-answer forum; having a group discussion; receiving advice from the teacher; working alone) where they are allowed to work together and/or with their Japanese language partners for peer review; and 3)

---

3 Week 1 will be a trial composition. Most of the students will need the first week to refresh their memories and skills after a month of no Japanese; also, some students may not have taken my first year classes. The first week will allow me to confirm that the students’ writing and grammatical skills are appropriate for second year level composition.

4 A Japanese language pattern is a native Japanese-speaking exchange student studying at UNBC for the semester or for the year. A Japanese language pattern helps the JSL students in their studies, acting as a student tutor.
sharing their compositions with class. I have had to modify the suggested format of the workshop approach because of time constraints. Specifically, I had omitted the following elements: the introduction of useful grammar (and the time to practice using them); a general review period (students can do that at home); frequent time-outs so students can share their compositions with the class; and a summary of the day’s lesson. During week nine, the topic of the workshop approach will be either “daily life” or a free topic (i.e., the students can write about anything).

The mini-lesson introduced a new structure of composition. In order to apply the new structure, students created a composition together as a class (instead of individually, like with the kata- and ikebana approaches). Most of the students used English because the purpose of the activity was to learn a structure, not to practice speaking it. By allowing the use of English, students were encouraged to take an active role in the mini-lesson. During the lesson, one of the students started with a sentence related to the topic given. The other students tried to add sentences to create a story as a class. The style of the feedback will be similar to the ikebana approach.

My study only has one source of primary data: student interview answers. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The interviews were conducted in a small, quiet meeting room to provide a private environment for the students to express themselves truthfully. Each interview session was recorded and afterwards transcribed. Students were informed that their interview answers did not affect their final grades for INTS 222 (winter semester). The interview was conducted by assistants and it took place during the Winter 2015 semester. I did not have access to the interview data until the semester and the final exams are over, and the final grades submitted to UNBC. Up to, and even during the interview, each student had the freedom to decline their participation in the study; if they chose to do so, any data collected on them would be destroyed (see Appendix D for a partial list of the sample interview questions; see
also Appendix F, which explains to the participants what those three different approaches are during the interview.

The interviews were of the structured, semi-standardized type. I believe this type of interview is the most effective for this study for two reasons. The first is because I do not want my assistants to forget to ask any important questions; however, I also want them to have the freedom to ask impromptu questions based on the student’s answers. The loose structure of semi-standardized interviews permits greater flexibility than standardized ones, but also allows for the same questions to be asked over and over (Berg & Lune, 2012). On the other hand, I wanted to impose some kind of structure on the interviews because my assistants would be the ones conducting the interviews, not me; therefore, I prepared most of the interview questions (and their order) in advance. The assistants conducted the interviews, instead of me, in order to minimize any pressure or expectation on the students’ parts to edit or censor their answers out of fear of disappointing or angering the researcher/instructor. The students must be afforded every opportunity to give their answers, not what they thought the answers should be. In order for my study to acquire the best results, the students’ must answer the interview questions honestly and without regard to my feelings or expectations. Semi-standardized interviews provided more freedom to compensate for this problem by adding or changing questions based on information from my comments on the students’ compositions.

**Coding and Analysis Method**

Each interview was transcribed by assistants (who had signed a contract and a confidentiality agreement; see Appendix C for a sample of the latter and a consent form). As part of the process of the transcription, the assistants changed the students’ names (and the of any peers, they mention) to a randomly selected alphanumeric code (i.e., person A1, B1, C1, et
In that way, the students’ identity would be kept hidden from the instructor. Afterwards, the data were coded using the *grammatical method*, which had three different phases (Berg & Lune, 2012). I conducted this process by myself. The first phase was *open coding*, where the researcher labels large quantities of raw qualitative data, such as sentences or paragraphs. These labels summarize in one sentence, or via a subheading, the content of a particular piece of data (Ikuya Sato, 2009). They allow a researcher to identify the key point(s) of a conversation and translate them into a more systematic list of key words/phrases (Ikuya Sato, 2009). The next phase of coding was *focused coding*, a category development process. In focusing coding, a researcher re-examines the open coding results and picks out the core content of each segment. Important factors may be shown frequently. In this phase, I used in-vivo coding, which used the participants’ own words instead of one pre-selected by the researcher.

Once the data were coded, I found which aspects worked and which did not to motivate students to write. Student opinions were categorized from the most powerful opinions to the least. A powerful opinion means an eye opening opinion which had a big gap from what I expected, and the area that I have never considered. A less powerful opinion is the one which more likely the researcher aware and expected as a suggestion. This analysis revealed how students were motivated or encouraged to write in Japanese. To avoid the risk of inputting too much subjectivity into my analysis, I asked one of my colleagues at UNBC to provide feedback on my coding.

The interviews represented the insights of the participants. Tomal (2003) pointed out “the researcher must maintain high standards of ethics and integrity and always try to be neutral and objective when collecting data” (p.85). My students’ voices were most valuable when they answered my questions truthfully during the interview. The question number 10 requested...
students to make in order of the strength of students’ opinions from most challenging to the least. This measurement would witness the real meaning of the participants’ wordings. When my subjective opinion as an observer of the students’ attitudes during the semester and the participants’ opinion would match, those two data may confirm the credibility of the data.

Once the data was collected, avoiding unintentional researcher bias was another point of focus, especially when the researcher and the educator were the same person. Subjectivity may mislead analyzing the data. The data was labeled based on Hunter’s motivation theory (1995) and categorized into the components which were related to or caused of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and/or levels of interest, success, difficulty, knowledge of results, and relation of the activity to an internalized goal. As I wrote in the previous section, I asked one of my colleagues at UNBC to provide feedback on my coding to avoid the risk of inputting too much subjectivity into my analysis. Confirmation of the standard of categorization and translation of the participants’ opinions was a method to confirm credibility of the research method.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a rationale for the research method I have chosen (action research); described the sources of data (a journal and participant responses to a series of interview questions); and explained how the participants will be chosen for the interview after the semester is over, as well as the ethical considerations that are required. My research was a case study that used a qualitative research design. I analyzed and interpreted interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns for learning composition effectively. The actual methodology my case study used was *action research*, which aimed to understand and improve compositional teaching and learning practices and processes. By interviewing my students, I found out what
aspects of the three approaches helped to make writing a positive learning experience for them. Once this evaluation was completed, I created a new teaching syllabus that incorporates my findings about how I teach second-year composition to future students.
Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to find an effective teaching approach to engage greater students’ motivation among three different approaches: Kata, Ikebana, and Writing Workshop (WW) styles. This chapter begins with the description of the detailed process of applying the three different teaching styles of Japanese composition in 2015 winter INTS 222 class (January 2015 to April 2015), which is followed by the data from the interview questions, and a discussion of the results. I hired two assistants who conducted thirty minute interview sessions for INTS 222 students on March 12th and 13th, 2015. The individual interviews were recorded and transcribed by the same assistants, using letters of the alphabet to distinguish between participants. Some important codes from the interviews are provided as I present data in this chapter. Finally, I discuss my interpretation of the data and answer my research question.

Applying Three Teaching Styles in Class

In Chapters 2 and 3, I discussed the three different featured teaching approaches in the order of kata, ikebana, and WW.

The kata approach was the first approach I as the instructor used as the guidance of Japanese style composition. The kata style approach is a structured style of instruction, which allows students to focus on writing and content, rather than on writing style. In the first year, composition exercises consisted mostly of learning the rules of writing and applying the learned grammar. Students are given templates to fill in with their own words or content. Therefore, kata is a good method to aid students in the transition from the beginners’ level to intermediate. During the second year, students are still provided some structure to express their opinions, but students are expanding their range of freedom to transit gradually more creative ways of writing. The feedback of the kata approach is focused on grammar. Some suggestions and guidance in
other areas is included, but since creativity is limited by structure, the potential for grammatical errors is minimized.

The following approach used was the ikebana approach. The ikebana style has much more freedom than the kata approach. The ikebana approach asks writers to create a composition without the structure previously learned. Instead, students use their own knowledge and skills to write. By that time, students should have the basic knowledge of Japanese style writing, the rules of composition, and the skills to express their ideas. Therefore, the writers should be able to focus on originality and benefit from the freedom of creativity. The ikebana approach was intended to support the big jump from the extremely planned kata style to the creativity-focused method of writing. In order to support students in the pre-writing stages in the ikebana style, we created a story in English together in class, and which served as a model for the corresponding exercise in Japanese. The ikebana approach requires a variety of feedback and comments, as writers’ mistakes are not limited to grammar, but also include missing explanations, examples, and focus, as well as improving the flow of the writing. This approach is more suited to providing students guidance after they write a composition.

Finally, I applied the WW approach to let students write without any control of the topic. Students found the free-style writing experience challenging, but students have the option to choose their favorite topics. The flexibility made topic choice easier for the students. The WW emphasizes writers’ creativity the above all among the three approaches, and students can benefit from a variety of sources of guidance; such as from the instructor, peers, and their Japanese language partners, before writing (see Table 2). Rich pre-writing guidance is provided from the instructor for the framework and the content, and students can get support during the writing process from their Japanese exchange language partners, or their classmates. At the second year
level composition, feedback can address a variety of mistakes because students can write longer compositions and try to express their own ideas.

During the 2015 winter semester, the topic of the first composition in the second week was “My Christmas (Kata approach).” The topic of “My Christmas” was very similar to the first composition in the previous semester, “My Summer” which also used in kata approach. Therefore, students were familiar with the particular pattern of writing and were able to focus on originality and creativity.

In the third week, students wrote about “Food” and were challenged to make a title of their composition. A new four-paragraph writing method was introduced at the same time. That week had two big challenges; the ikebana approach does not have a composition model, unlike the kata style. The ikebana teaching approach respects individual artistic skill. This approach encourages students to write without the fear of being judged, and thus may support more imaginative writing. I may ask students “explain more,” but do not direct them to write in a certain way. The creativity is the students’ responsibility. The hope is that this method motivates students in their writing and their creativity.

On the fifth week, students experienced the WW approach for the first time with the topic of “A Thing I Like to Do.” The writers can choose variety of forms of guidance; one option is to use a mind map or flow chart (see Appendix F (5)) which assists students to organize their writing. Another option is that students can use informal discussion with their classmates for inspiration. Finally, students can ask for suggestions from the instructor, after a short WW lesson. At this stage, students are accustomed to the four-paragraph method and may not be struggling with the structure as they might have been in the previous lesson when the ikebana approach was used.
The students who learn composition in a foreign language must acquire synthetic language skills and creativity simultaneously, and demonstrate both on a paper. The use of all three different teaching styles (kata, ikebana, WW) assists me to understand which teaching method students find the most motivating. For this study, the teaching styles used were the kata approach first, then the ikebana approach, and then finally the WW. This was intended to facilitate the smoothest possible shifts from most structured to least structured learning methods.

Table 2

Composition Topics and Teaching Approaches Used During Winter 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Composition</th>
<th>Approach Used</th>
<th>Topic &amp; (Goal of Learning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kata approach</td>
<td>“My Christmas” (Focus on one topic, rather than describing an event in chronological order.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>“Food” (Four paragraph writing. Making a title.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
<td>“A Thing I Like to Do” (Encourages the depth of the third paragraph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview and Participants

In the middle of the 2015 winter semester, I had a training session on how to direct interviews for my two assistants on March 11th, 2015. My assistants then directed individual interviews with a total of seven participants on March 12th and 13th, 2015. These days were chosen as the interview dates, as students would soon be heading home at the end of the semester, and also classes had been cancelled due to a strike. The interview occurred in two different locations: one in a corner of the Zaffron Cuisine café after the busy lunch time was settled, and the other in a meeting room of the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society. The head of the organization and the business owner kindly offered their space for the interview sessions because I could not book a room at the university during the strike. The length of each
interview was about thirty minutes, and my two assistants conducted, digitally recorded, and transcribed the interviews. It is assumed that students would be able to answer the questions honestly with the interview conducted by someone other than the instructor.

Of the seven participants of the interviews, five interviewees were Canadian-born native English speakers, and two were Chinese-born Canadian immigrant students whose first language was not English. Among five participants, three participants were English major students. After the qualitative data were collected, the data were coded using the grammatical method, which has two phases, beginning with open coding, which uses raw qualitative data to identify the initial codes, which seem to answer the research questions, and then focused coding, which is a category development process (Berg & Lune, 2012).

In addition, after the interviews were conducted and transcribed by two assistants, the researcher noticed that many participants answered stating that they liked certain aspects or methods, or by stating that a certain approach was effective. The participants did not necessarily comment specifically about their motivation when asked. Unfortunately, follow-up interviews were impossible to conduct due to the limited time available to collect data and the necessity for participants to remain anonymous.

Endo (2000) considered that writing activity must be enjoyable and likable activity for a writer. The term like has many interpretations, but it is self-evident that without this positive feeling, students would have low levels of motivation. Raffini (1996) also revealed that motivation is fueled by students’ autonomy (independent decision to write), competence (feeling of success), belonging and relatedness, self-esteem, and involvement and stimulation (finding pleasure in what they do). Effective, another key word that the participants used, is related to competence and self-esteem as well. In this study, when participants reported that they liked a
particular style or feature, or described a style as *effective*, this was considered to be a proxy for *motivation*.

**Natural Motivation of Writing**

The first two questions in the interview inquire as to whether students enjoy writing in English/their first language, and whether students like writing in Japanese. I chose to ask this question because those who like composition in their first language may be more highly motivated to write in Japanese than those who are not fond of writing in their own language. Additionally, students who enjoy writing in their native language may learn the Japanese composition style more easily.

Students at the second year level are not expected to have comparable Japanese skills to what a student with an English major is expected to have. In order to produce English-style creative writing in Japanese, students must be provided with story details such as the setting, the characters, and the plot. Further, a variety of grammar skills would be needed to express one’s story. The concept of creativity in Japanese composition is different than what is meant by creative writing in English. In Japanese, it means to write about what you experienced, in your own style. Students have the freedom to choose what to include and exclude, and choose how to focus on a specific topic within an event. Even using the same topic, each writer would write very differently. The linguistic skill gap (knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and expression skills) can be a most frustrating part of learning composition in a foreign language. Teaching a Japanese language course has two hurdles: to support linguistic skills, and to motivate writing. Support in these areas assists learners to express themselves clearly in Japanese.

Five out of the six participants who were asked reported that they like composition in English/their first language, and five out of five participants who were asked like Japanese
composition (see Table 3). Three students answered that they like both Japanese and English composition. I cannot conclude that all students who like English writing also like Japanese composition. However, it is possible that some students who like English composition may use the same motivation to learn Japanese.

How about the students who enjoy writing in Japanese more than in their first language? Students largely recognized that Japanese and English compositions have different functions in education. The interesting fact from the Table 3 was that two participants were not enthusiastic about writing in their first language, but both of them mentioned that they like writing in Japanese. Participant S mentioned that they are “not good at [expressing] my opinion” in their first language, but “we could push our limits and see where we could go wrong, and from those mistakes, improve” in Japanese composition. Participant N who enjoys writing in both English and Japanese, added that “Japanese is kinda different” and Participants N, S, and E felt that they were able to apply what skills learned in class to their composition pieces. Participant E agreed. E considered that serious topics were challenging to write about in their first language. On the other hand, E treated Japanese composition as a part of skills practice which made the challenge of the composition easier. The purpose of composition in both languages is the same: expressing one’s opinion. However, in Japanese composition, students are not assessed by what they wrote, but by how they write.

Evaluation in English composition is largely content-based. English composition has a higher impact on the grade earned on the assignment and the final grade of a course than in Japanese courses. Participant S felt that expressing one’s opinion is hard (Table 3). The fact that the evaluation of the content is more heavily weighted in English courses may put pressure on students to express their opinions flawlessly, thus taking a toll on the student’s motivation to
write. For example, in the second year Japanese course, composition is a part of daily assignments, which collectively make up 15% of the final grade. One composition has a value of less than 3% of the final grade. In this case, students may feel less worried about what they write, bearing an effect on their motivation levels.
Table 3

Tendency of Participants to Like Writing in English and Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Q1: Do you like writing in English/your first language?</th>
<th>Q2: Do you like writing in Japanese?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Not really. It was fun, creative writing… but not so much [in] serious topics. If I like the topic, I feel more encouraged to write about it.</td>
<td>Yes. because it’s a chance to apply the grammar. I like using new Kanji. A sense of accomplishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Yeah, I guess so. Depends on what kind of writing. Essay writing if it’s a structured assignment, then --- yes.</td>
<td>Yes. enjoy what we do in class. motivated by myself. so much fun to write, it’s easy to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Yeah. Of course I like writing. Mostly, I like fictional writing.</td>
<td>Yes. Japanese is kinda different. I can utilize what I learn. When you are writing, like think more about what you want to say. take what you learned in class. tried to learn by yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Not really. I am not good at express my opinion. It takes more time.</td>
<td>Yes. because we could push our limits and see where we could go wrong, and from those mistakes, improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes. Usually something that I’m passionate about. I just find it easier to write about [sic]. More creatively.</td>
<td>Yes. it’s fun. [write] always about something you like. So, there can be that passion those as well. helps me with the grammatical structure as well as central structure. good practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Yes. I especially like creative writing.</td>
<td>[DID NOT ASK]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Motivating Teaching Approach of Composition

The third question, which asks the participant about the teaching approach that they found to be the most motivating, and why, is the most important question. I was expecting that
the result of this question may provide direction for my future teaching.

The participants’ most preferred approach was the *ikebana* approach. Three interviewees among seven chose the *ikebana* approach to motivate them to write. Only one participant preferred the *Kata* style approach. Unexpectedly, two students chose all of the styles: one participant stated that they “like a little bit of each” approach, and the other mentioned that experiencing all approaches would be effective to find one’s learning styles. I completely agree with this opinion. Providing alternative methods is always helpful for those who require a different way of learning than others. When the teaching strategy is matched with students’ needs, the writing quality improves.

Since the *ikebana* approach is the most hands-off, students are provided with a general theme, but choose their own topics and writing content. Participant *E* stated that they enjoyed writing when originality was emphasised. Another thought that some themes are hard to narrow down, but having choice is better than no choice. The majority favored the *ikebana* approach because the *ikebana* approach provides a minimum of structure, and allows for choice, which students found motivating. Motivation is the starting point of any journey, and the educational learning process is also a journey (Otsu & Yanase, 2010; Yokomizo, 1997). According to Kan et al. (2004), the job of a Japanese teacher is to clarify and provide the purpose for studying a subject, acknowledge the strengths of each student, and to motivate students, which describes the minimalist approach of the *ikebana* style.

Another reason why participants like this approach is that they find working with their Japanese language partner(s) to be an effective writing method. Having another person provide an objective point of view is really helpful to the writer to ensure all the necessary information is covered. Composition requires a reader in order to complete the communicative act, just as a
verbal conversation requires a listener (Kunihiro et al., 1977). By doing so, the writer and the reader(s) create a common understanding, such as sympathy, cooperation, or solidarity (Kunihiro et al., 1977). Japanese language exchange partners can also lend support for grammar and spelling skills.

Table 4

*Participants’ Preferred Approach(es) for Motivation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Q3: Which teaching approach—kata, ikebana, or WW—did you think motivated you to write best?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Ikebana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Ikebana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Go through all styles (The WW style, Kata, Ikebana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Kata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Not specific. Feedback is great.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Probably the Ikebana.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Effective and Ineffective Motivating Aspects of the Kata Approach*

The purpose of the following two questions was to know how students recognize that the *kata* approach is beneficial to motivate them to write. Three participants mentioned that the advantage of the *kata* approach is in improving their grammar skills. Five other students reported that the instructor-provided composition example, as well as the writing flow-chart supplied by the *kata* approach, were effective motivators. Two participants also mentioned that *kata* approach is ideal specifically for beginners because of the freedom to focus on the content or expression of the composition, without being concerned with the format of the work.

Both pre-writing guidance and feedback from the instructor are the typical features of the *kata* approach and students recognized this. Participants provided variety of opinions, but most of the effective motivators were mainly from the pre-writing activities. Over-all, participants consider having guidance (e.g., using the flow chart) before writing to be a positive feature of the
Additionally, although peer-to-peer feedback is not a defining component of the kata approach, some stated they prefer working with others (Japanese language partners and other classmates) at this stage. Others stated that they find working on their own with the assigned topic to be effective. While much of the literature highlights the importance of the instructor’s feedback (Umemura, 2002), only two of the seven interviewees agreed and reported that it was a motivating factor (see Table 5).

Table 5

Effective Kata Approach Motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q4: Which part(s) of the kata approach was effective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Japanese language partners’ guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>The flowchart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Good and bad examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Instructor's feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Listening in on other peoples’ ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Grammar and structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better than Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Specific topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Direction of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Work on by yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Freedom &amp; examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good for beginners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback &amp; grammar improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good for beginners, but not effective afterwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, participants confirmed that the kata approach is effective, but two out of seven participants did not like the kata approach and mentioned that the kata style was not motivating. Key aspects that participants stated were ineffective as motivators were the flow-chart, the structured approach, and limited idea development. One participant noted that “I don’t really fill
[the flowchart] up that much (see Table 6). I did not really know why the certain parts should be separated into the different paragraphs.” The instructor needs to be more aware of such difficulties, and it is critical that students are better supported to understand and benefit from the process. The *kata* approach is functional and effective as a tool to teach composition, but not so related to motivation. Also noteworthy is that nobody mentioned that the feedback received after a *kata*-style writing process was ineffective.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q5: Which part(s) of the <em>kata</em> approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Fill up the form was not well described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback was not well described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I’ve avoided the <em>kata</em> style a lot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kata is a little bit too structured for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivate… For me, no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kata style sometimes limits my idea development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific guidance was ineffective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
<td>The topics were too specific.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effective and Ineffective Motivating Aspects of the *Ikebana* Approach

The *ikebana* approach is the style which most respects writers’ creativity and originality, and the freedom of the structure of composition. The feedback provided is not just about grammatical mistakes, but is also advice regarding creativity. The theme offered by the instructor using the *ikebana* approach is broader than the topic provided when the *kata* style is used. The theme can be applied widely to foster the writer’s creativity.

Four participants stated that they appreciated and felt motivated by the freedom to produce their own content (see Table 7). The participants felt that they had more options when using the *ikebana* approach. This type of support with fewer restrictions assists writers to
develop and organize their thoughts. One participant commented that they found the theme that was supplied was easy to write about.

At the beginning of the semester, I explained that composition in Japanese will not produce the same result as in other courses. The role of composition in Japanese is to allow students to practice writing skills, and provides the instructor with a tool to measure progress, while composition or creative writing in English is centered on content. All students can get good marks as long as they are putting in effort, and the lessons are designed to facilitate each student improving in their own way.

Four people considered that the instructor’s feedback were helpful. One participant out of seven mentioned the “accurate feedback from the professor’s view point” was helpful and motivating, and this participant also commented that they can get better feedback when the Ikebana approach was used.

Participants had a variety of opinions about the Ikebana approach, especially with regards to how motivating the Ikebana approach was compared to the other styles (see Table 7). Participant K was the only person who stated that there was nothing about the Ikebana approach that they found ineffective. K apparently prefers the Ikebana approach. K’s writing style may be suitable to the Ikebana approach, or the participant may have had enough ideas to write by themselves. However, the Ikebana approach is not necessarily suitable for everybody. N and Z seemed to be expressing frustration for not having enough guidance and structure from the Ikebana method. S and Z felt that the Ikebana approach does not provide enough collaboration among peers. S was concerned that Ikebana did not provide enough time to write, as idea development takes time.
Table 7

*Effective Ikebana Approach Motivators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q6: Which part(s) of the ikebana approach was effective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I like having some instruction instead of just free-for-all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Accurate feedback from the professor's view point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I can apply what I learned from class and write it down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within the category (which was given), I can choose to describe more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Topic was good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback I got back was pretty helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum structure. I can just write the things you want to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikebana style is more about the content, so I can express more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can use the topic to talk about many other things. It is opinion development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback is my favorite part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I like originality as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>There was a lot less restriction which was easier for me for writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I got really good feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The example and points (to help writing), I found are very helpful as well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *ikebana* approach was the most popular approach for boosting motivation, but it is clear that I need to improve on guidance and feedback. The *ikebana* approach treats the students’ originality as the most important part of the process of writing; therefore, there is less structure than with the *kata* approach. Some students may view this as a lack of instruction (see Table 7). Collaboration can be more highly emphasized to support students to replace the lack of structure.

Also, because instruction is at a minimum in the ikebana approach, feedback from the instructor would have more impact in the learning process. However, providing grades in the middle of the learning process may decrease students’ motivation if the grade is perceived to be too low. Since students are learning how to write, the marks should not be used to support their motivation. In the future, the marking rubric will be designed to reduce the focus on grades and re-focus the students’ attention on other forms of feedback. The feedback must be positive, and easy to understand.
Table 8

*Ineffective Ikebana Approach Motivators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q7: Which part(s) of the ikebana approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback on grammar structure should also be in the ikebana style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I can’t think [of] any right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Ikebana style guidance is like a lecture, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>not much of a model to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>When I wrote it out the first time, I needed to change everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I guess there was the lack of instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know how to write and I am not confident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Takes more time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>I didn’t really like was the collaboration because it was not helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you have the peer collaboration like the Workshop style, it might make it better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I still feel like we need more structure with the ikebana style.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective and Ineffective Motivating Aspects of the WW Approach**

The Writing Workshop (WW) style approach has a unique style of offering guidance, which respects the writer’s creativity. The pre-writing instruction offered with this approach does not have a certain style. Students are recommended to choose their support source, and apply their own style of learning. The WW approach can be cooperative among students or an independent process. The writers can discuss their ideas with their friends, use a concept map, work by themselves, or ask the instructor for advice.

With the WW approach, an instructor can expect that students have less confusion when they start writing, as they have more writing supports than with the ikebana style. Providing guidance takes time, but this approach is a great transition from mimicking or following the template, to writing in their own way. Once students develop the skills to write in their own style, students can apply their style to any topic. When students improve their skills, they tend to feel more confident, which can increase motivation. Further, Koguma et al. (2000) argued that once
students are acquainted with their learning style, the WW is the most encouraging approach for the writer.

Most of the participants reported that the mini lesson, collaboration, and the concept map were effective writing motivators. Participant T preferred the freedom to choose the writing topic. With the kata and ikebana styles, students were allowed to personalize the provided topic and write in their own way, but with the WW approach, students were allowed to write anything. The top motivator of the WW style was collaboration with classmates and language exchange partners (see Table 9). All of those activities were pre-writing activities, therefore I can say that when using the WW approach, students prefer to get support beforehand rather than after they write.

On the other hand, two interviewees, N and Z, also commented that feedback after the WW writing process was an effective motivator. N appreciated hearing other classmates’ title ideas. Participant Z mentioned “the whole feedback part of the WW style, that’s really helping you out.” It was very curious to know that students prefer to receive pre-writing support, rather than the instructor’s response to the writing. Students may thrive on supports which are more pro-active in nature, rather than re-active. As well, finding inspiration for what to write may be the first and biggest difficulty in composition writing, which can be made easier with pre-writing instruction.
Table 9

**Effective Writing Workshop Motivators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q8: Which part(s) of the writing workshop approach was effective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>The in-class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Hearing from other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Both being able to talk to people and freely express and the structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Pre-writing guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Work with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback about title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>See others’ writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Mini lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Title (collaboration with classmates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Peer collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Concept map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some participants negatively criticized the WW approach (see Table 10). The WW approach requires some modification in order to better motivate students. Many participants indicated that the pre-writing guidance was insufficient, stating that it was “unclear,” or that the process was “too hard.” The WW approach offers guidance on an as-needed basis, preferring to foster the writer’s creativity rather than providing structure. Students who felt there was not enough pre-writing instruction may have struggled with the WW approach and achieved better results using the kata approach. A smooth shift between approaches may be key to solving this issue.

Since some participants stated that the theme of the WW approach is “too broad,” another strategy is to give students the option to choose their own topic and theme, or select a topic within a theme that is supplied by the instructor. Each student has different strengths and weaknesses. It may be helpful for students to have the option of more guidance if necessary, to accommodate different learning styles.
In contrast, participant $K$ felt that the pre-writing instruction was sufficient, but both $N$ and $K$ were concerned that the advice offered by other students may not be sound. Further, $K$ indicated that peer opinions were not as valuable as instructor feedback. This statement was surprising because I anticipated that collaboration would be really helpful for idea development. There may be a lack of trust in one’s classmates. Unfortunately, the interview questions were standardized, therefore more information regarding trust during collaboration is not available. $S$ also mentioned a lack of comfort with sharing their composition with others. When we share the content of past assignments in class, I always ask students’ permission and only discuss the compositions of students who have given me permission. It may be helpful in the future to emphasise to the class that after the mini lesson, time is provided that can be used to share ideas with others, ask the instructor questions, or students can write quietly by themselves. They are not required to share their work, and they can spend their time in the way that they feel is the best way to motivate themselves to write.

One very key comment regarding the instructor feedback was that “the originality of composition was not evaluated.” I created and distributed a rubric based on the major criteria of Japanese composition, but was not aware that it did not include originality. This is a vital point, because originality is an important feature of Japanese composition. I must reconstruct the rubrics in order to include originality.
Table 10

*Ineffective Writing Workshop Motivators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pre- vs. Post-writing</th>
<th>Q9: Which part(s) of the writing workshop approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>The guidance part at the beginning is a little too ‘less.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>The originality is also really a good thing to be graded on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Students’ comments may not be correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The WW approach is too big of a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I do not like this style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Class interaction did not really work too well for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>I don’t really get that much feedback from my peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Post-writing</td>
<td>I think I do not want to share my writing with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Embarrassing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t constrict us with our topic or anything like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What I didn’t really like was the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Challenging Aspects of Writing**

The most challenging aspect of writing for participants, from the most challenging to least, was expression, grammar, content (including the title), and finally, learning from feedback (see Table 11). My students have limited vocabulary and grammar in Japanese. Students can express themselves richly in their first languages, but do not have the same tools to express themselves fully in Japanese. Almost all foreign language learners face this challenge. It is only by their second year that students have enough grammar and vocabulary to be able to write a composition. I usually deal with this issue by simplifying the original English expression which the student wishes to translate. For instance, I often advise students to convert a single English sentence into two Japanese sentences. The student may feel that it is not exactly what they would like to express, but it works when direct translation is too difficult. In the past, I have taught this technique for use with a project translating Japanese folklore in the second year class. In the future, I plan to teach this technique to the students the very first day of the semester, instead of teaching it specifically for the translation assignment.
Collaborating with their Japanese language partners would be another way of tackling the problem. Japanese native speakers know how to express the writer’s idea in Japanese in an authentic way. I encourage students to make use of their Japanese language partners to obtain a more authentic expression and to practice Japanese skills, in conjunction with the use of the dictionary and with assistance from the instructor. It must be emphasized to the students that copying what their Japanese language partner stated is not enough to learn -- that it requires some input from the student as well. The same idea can be applied to learning grammatical skills, which is the second most challenging aspect, as well.

Content is rated as the third most challenging aspect of writing, largely because it is something that each writer must work on independently. Many participants expressed frustration with creating content without the instructor’s input. Participant Z wondered, “How do I add more to this [composition]? [I] already added… to it.” As an instructor, I cannot tell students what to write; I can only help them shape and polish their writing. For the *ikebana* approach, students are assigned a theme, but are required to find a topic within the theme that they wish to write about.

Participant *E* mentioned that “I struggled, especially when we switched from the three to four paragraph style.” When students are challenged to expand their compositions from three to four paragraphs, the extra paragraph provides further depth to the topic presented in the three-paragraph composition. I used the *ikebana* approach to introduce four paragraph writing, but students may need more guidance when they initially learn the four-paragraph format. I plan to experiment with the *kata* approach or some combination of approaches to support students in this transition. Participant *T* commented that they found writing titles to be challenging. Creating a good quality title can be challenging because many students have not received instruction specifically regarding titles. Titles must be well-personalized, specific and representative of the
content of the writing. At the beginning of the semester, I showed students two examples of poor quality titles, for instance, “My (Topic),” or “Good (Topic),” as well as an example of a strong title. Then, we created a title for a sample composition. For a small number of assignments, with the writer’s permission, we created some improved titles, beginning with the ones that students had used in their work. In my experience, students generally are successful in finding a strong title for their compositions using in-class discussions. For students who do not want to share their work with the class, I either provided two or three sample titles, or just a reminder of how to avoid a bad title. Even though some students are not good at creating titles, some progress is visible each time, and usually once students understand how, creating a strong title is much easier.

Feedback is the main tool used to teach composition (Yokomizo et al., 2010). The instructor has been using a three-colour system -- which consists of blue for grammatical mistakes, red to point out students’ strengths, and green for providing advice -- for over ten years. Originally, Takashi Saito (2005) introduced this “tri-colour” method as a reading method to help engage students and find out students’ levels of comprehension. This feedback system covers all necessary aspects of students’ mistakes and the instructor’s comments.

Despite the colour-coded Japanese-designed system, it is the most difficult part of my job. Participants indicated that they struggle with making use of feedback from the instructor, complaining that the feedback was unclear. One participant remarked that it would be helpful to know why the instructor is recommending a particular improvement. The burden of improving the quality of feedback is on the instructor, rather than the students. I also include an evaluation rubric as part of the feedback system, which can also be challenging to administer. Research has shown that students who were given harsh or excessive criticism about their writing “lost touch
with their potential, with writing’s rewards, with motivation, and with hidden skills” (Nelson, 1991, p. 129). I truly respect students’ originality, feature, and own style of writing – nurturing this aspect of writing is far more important than having correct grammar. I have proposed two strategies for improving my feedback in Chapter five.

Ultimately, the goal in composition is to motivate students to develop their own style of writing, rather than writing what they perceive the instructor wants to read. In other words, students learn to write for themselves, rather than writing for the teacher. Tajiri (Yokomizo et al., 2010) suggests that educators need to imbue their students with a pleasure in learning about the unknown, and to instill in them a joy in achievement. Tajiri also suggests that the instructor’s job is simply setting fire to students’ motivation (Yokomizo et al., 2010).

Table 11

Participants’ Opinions About Challenging Aspect(s) of Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Q 10: What aspect(s) of writing was most challenging for you? You can choose more than one. &lt;Grammar, Theme, Content/Idea, Title, Expression, Others&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Nothing is too challenging. Maybe—maybe ‘Grammar’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback: good, but lacking the reason for modification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback: good, but very confusing how to improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ Preferred and Least Preferred Writing Topics

Students’ motivation may very well be more related to the writing topic, rather than the teaching approach. According to Umemura (2002), there are certain topic areas that students find
the most motivating. Umemura suggests beginning with personal and concrete topics, moving to social topics and ending with the most abstract concepts. For instance, my first and second year students write about “My Family,” and “What makes me happy,” more personal and concrete concepts. By the third year, students are able to transition to abstract topic assignments, such as comparison or speech. Takashi Saito (2007) notes that using a familiar topic helps to decrease students’ writing anxiety, whereas students find it exhausting when writing about a topic in which they are not interested. Additionally, most interviewees had much to say in this section, compared to other sections of the interview, again suggesting that the students were excited about their writing topics, likely revealing a high level of motivation.

Most participants mentioned that they did not enjoy “My Summer” and “My Christmas” (see Table 12). Nobody chose “My Christmas” as a likable topic. Participant E mentioned that many fun events happen during the Christmas time, therefore they felt that focusing on one topic was hard. This participant felt that their motivation and desire to write was not well-matched with the style of composition. Preferences between the “Food” and “Clothes” topics were divided. Nearly the same number of participants liked the topics as those who disliked them – the difference was only one person.

On the other hand, it is evident that choosing a topic can be an issue for some. Participant K implied that WW may have offered too much freedom regarding topic selection. Additionally, most participants did not comment on the selection of their topic/theme for the WW writing assignment, suggesting indifference -- that this ‘free choice’ was not the most motivating.Outside of class, students may be asked to complete assignments in which they are required to write about a prescribed topic. However, in my class, I refrain from assigning topics in this way in order to avoid quashing their motivation. Especially at the beginning of learning composition,
providing a familiar topic for students would make composition writing less of a burden.

One unexpected finding of the interviews was the strong impact of grade on the students. Participant $K$ and the interviewer had a short discussion about the motivation with regards to the Ikebana approach (see Table 7). $K$ mentioned that the ikebana style approach is their preferred teaching method, reportedly because $K$ perceived that they received a good grade on that assignment. Another participant stated that their least favorite topic was the one in which they could not get a great mark. As shown in Table 12, participant $I$ commented “The ones that I don’t like are the ones probably that I don’t get a good mark on...”

Table 12

Participants’ Choice of Enjoyable Topic(s) to Write

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q11: Which topic(s) of composition did you enjoy writing about?</th>
<th>Did Not Enjoy Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed Writing Topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 My Summer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 My Christmas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Food</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Clothes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 What I like to do</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Free Topic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 All of the Topics</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Low Mark Topic(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations to Improve Motivation

For question twelve, the participants were asked to offer suggestions as to what they felt was the most effective approach for writing motivation. Three participants chose the *ikebana* approach, but mentioned that they would like to have extra activities in the pre-writing session. The ikebana approach has less instruction compared with the other methods. Specifically, participants $E$ and $K$ suggested discussion with their classmates, and Participant $I$ would like to have a checklist of the writing rules and effective grammar to use. Participant $N$ appreciated that the instructor went through all three approaches because in that way, students can choose the
learning style(s) that most suit them. Participant N mentioned that people learn differently -- the kata style is good for individuals who excel with structure, and the WW is for students who learn best by looking at others’ work and with collaboration. N suggested teaching with the WW approach before using the ikebana approach, rather than using the WW style last. N considered that the WW approach makes use of collaboration and sharing one’s work as the pre-writing activity, whereas the ikebana approach has less support in pre-writing. I intend to restrict use of the ikebana method until the end of the second year teaching. S had a slightly different opinion as N. Participant S proposed the fusing of the kata and the WW approaches. Over-all, there were many suggestions to strengthen the pre-writing activities. Nobody mentioned feedback or any other post-writing activities.

Table 13

*Participants’ Suggestions to Motivate Writing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Q 12: Please provide your opinion about the most effective teaching method that motivated you to write, and would be helpful for future second-year JSL students at UNBC. Why do you think so?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Unity of Learning: Match the theme of writing to what we’re learning in class. [Write about what we learned] motivates me more. Ikebana: Ikebana approach is my favorite one. Collaboration in pre-writing activity for the ikebana: [I would like to add] the peer feedback and peer discussion before you write for ikebana approach. Grammar feedback for ikebana: I would add [more] grammar feedback, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Check list of the rules in pre-writing: If she had a print out – like the list, this would really help. Plus, extra rules. List of grammar: A list of grammar that we’ve learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Q 12: Please provide your opinion about the most effective teaching method that motivated you to write, and would be helpful for future second-year JSU students at UNBC. Why do you think so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| K    | The ikebana approach  
Ikebana. I can apply what I learned from class. and write it.  
I’ll just look up [something I don’t know] by myself, and learn that way.  
Brainstorm and pre-writing activity for ikebana approach  
always you need to brainstorm [to learn more expressions].  
Ami-sensei will go over the writing strategy of this type.  
Limited category for ikebana approach  
Within that category, you can choose. And expand. |
| N    | WW and the Kata  
Kata for beginners  
If you’re just starting, maybe that one [Kata].  
Go through all three approaches  
It’s good that she went through all of them. Then, you get to like listen and feel like how each one works. |
| S    | Kata style to build foundation  
Ikebana approach as the last  
Ikebana style can put in the last part of the second-year. When you get used to Japanese writing, move to ikebana.  
Sharing other’s work in WW  
[Sharing] other people’s work will be help in the WW.  
Mix with Kata and WW  
Kind of mixing of these two (Kata and WW).  
You’re given a structure, but then you can share your work and get peer reviews from other students. |
| T    | Combination of the three approaches  
Sort of a combination or progression with all three styles.  
In the beginning, a specific topic is important [to learn skills].  
As we move along, we’ve been doing, a more general topic is nice.  
Instructor’s feedback, hearing feedback in class  
I do like the feedback she gives out-loud in class – [which part was well done, what to improve, and to include examples]. That is a great encouragement. |
| Z    | The ikebana approach  
It gives you some wiggle room to figure things [out] on your own while still giving you a bit of structure. Example and your points [of grammatical advice].  
Fusing the ikebana and WW is better  
You still get the structure of the ikebana. The paragraph ideas are really great in WW. The ikebana style will tell you details like when, where, who why, how.  
Collaboration in the ikebana  
Adding more peer feedback in the ikebana. 5-10 minutes discussion [in pre-writing] for brainstorming. It helps you think of a topic, too, and helps you to figure out a title. |
Additional Comments to Learn Japanese Composition

As the final question, the interviewees were asked if they had any additional comments. Most of the participants were satisfied with the current teaching approaches and they wished to reflect their opinions from the previous parts of the interviews. Participant E mentioned that sticker usage as a prize was really encouraging. Providing stickers was the only post-writing activity that participants mentioned, and others emphasized reinforcing the pre-writing activities.

Table 14

Participants’ Additional Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Q 13: Is there anything more that you would like to say about learning Japanese composition?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Sticker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>More examples for structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Q 13: Is there anything more that you would like to say about learning Japanese composition?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>I’m really encouraged by stickers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I enjoy it. I love her comments, it’s always so helpful. Kind of like a sense of accomplishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>More of a model-like structure and the examples would be more helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Writing sample. We can see what kind of writing style can be considered as good writing for all styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>I like what she does with that right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Ami-sensei has done a really good job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the data with my analysis. Most participants liked composition in their first language, and all participants like composition in Japanese as well. Over-all, the data do not indicate that any particular approach is significantly superior to another, just that each approach is different.

Some participants preferred to have more pre-writing instruction, such as with the kata approach, or use of flow charts. The kata approach allows the writer to focus on the content, rather than other details such as grammar and formatting, making the writing process less complicated. Therefore, the kata approach was effective, especially for beginners, but
participants did not find it highly motivating due to the strict structure, guided content, and limited creativity.

The shift from the kata approach to the ikebana approach was difficult for several students. The reason was that the ikebana approach does not provide an example composition (in a hand-out) or a flow-chart, as with the kata approach. On top of that, the students have to develop their ideas independently of the instructor. About half of the participants favored and were motivated by the ikebana approach because the themes of the ikebana approach had less restriction. Students felt more motivation when they were given some choice in the topic.

The participants also considered that the instructor’s feedback was helpful. Feedback written on students’ assignments is intended to encourage students and also to show appreciation for their own ideas with minimal support from the instructor. Some students were able to make use of the feedback more than others.

The WW style is a very different approach. The time allotted to the lecture component of the writing process is minimized compared to the kata approach, and more importantly, students can choose their own writing process: discussion with their classmates, talking with the instructor, or simply writing by themselves. The WW approach, which has most freedom of writing, was helpful because of the collaboration before writing: mini lesson, pre-writing guidance, the concept map, and peer collaboration, or starting to write by themselves. Regarding of the guidance, the participants had big range of the opinion from the guidance was unclear, to satisfactory. This indicates a need for the instructor to become more proficient in this teaching method.

Students felt that composition writing in Japanese is challenging, but they were motivated and like writing Japanese composition. Participants were mainly happy with the current teaching
methods with some improvements. They suggested that the pre-writing activities should be
enriched with a checklist of grammar and the writing rules, collaboration with their classmates,
and sharing ideas and work from the past. In the next chapter, I will summarize this research and
describe my final reflections to improve the current teaching syllabus of composition.
Chapter Five: Discussion

This final chapter describes how to apply the meaning of the results to create a more motivating composition teaching method for students, and discusses research limitations, and some suggestions for future research. The purpose of the research was to learn more about how to better engage students with a new teaching approach. I would like to create a new teaching syllabus that incorporates my findings about how I teach second-year composition to future students, which will be my starting point of the next study of the action research. Action research is concerned with making improvements, which in turns informs the nature of the following study (Creswell, 2008).

Over this semester-length research, I reconfirmed my students are my teachers who can lead me to be a better teacher. The result of this study may affect only for my course or just the students in that year because this study is a case study, therefore I cannot generalize my learning by recommending to others as is the case for all qualitative research. However, sharing my experience and insights may highlight a tiny step from a traditional teaching method.

Implications of the Study

In this study, I explored how to motivate student engagement while teaching Japanese composition by comparing three different approaches: the *kata*, *ikebana*, and *WW* approaches. I believe that improving composition teaching is necessary and is an urgent issue in Japanese teaching. This research may provide suggestions to other Japanese instructors to concentrate on providing adequate instruction before writing, and shift to a formative assessment based feedback to increase student motivation.

The participants of the interview provided their opinion, based on their personal learning styles, on the various teaching approaches and offered suggestions to improve motivation and
instruction, such as: pre-writing guidance is valuable, emphasizing a safe learning environment and a sense of control over their learning and their grades, providing more student collaboration in regards to learning, and ensuring that originality is a key component of the rubric to reflect the formative assessment of composition to balance the summative assessment. The data of this research clearly explained that students required more support from an instructor before beginning composition. The students’ need for additional support was rooted in the fear of making mistakes and getting less-than-satisfactory grades. I underestimated how insecure students felt, because I thought providing a pre-writing session and a handout would be enough. To fulfill this need, the instructor must improve the information session at the beginning of a semester and the pre-writing sessions before writing, to create a safer learning environment.

According to Kaser and Halbert (2009), trust is one of the most important foundations of the six leadership mindsets because trust creates a positive school culture. Without a solid foundation in a class, no techniques are as effective as they should be.

After students produce their composition, the feedback section is another aspect to improve. Instructor should acknowledge and evaluate students’ originality because that is the aim of the composition in the second year courses. Some students have strong fears about receiving lower grades than they expect; therefore, the main feedback should be a formative approach rather than the summative approach. Students need to be encouraged to maintain their motivation.

The new curriculum of teaching composition produced in concert with this study meets the need to support students’ ideas and creativity by using above three teaching methods: kata, ikebana, and WW. Since this research is a case study, the results may not applicable for larger classes, or with other language aims (learning Japanese for International business), but the
method should be applicable among university and college courses teaching the second year Japanese courses, and even expanding the themes to third and fourth year Japanese. Based on my findings, in the future, I would like to suggest this alternative approach of teaching composition to the community of Japanese instructors, both in Japan and Canada.

Limitations

The first limitation was I was a new researcher. Many better ways of conducting a study may exist, but so far, this method was the way that I thought appropriate. The sample in this study was biased as it contained only individuals who reported enjoying Japanese composition writing, and the participants found the teaching methods to be motivating. It is also possible that a social desirability bias existed. Participants were aware that the instructor would eventually read what participants said, and so may have been consciously or unconsciously tempted to make comments that were positive, or that they perceived as me wanting to see. Nevertheless, several major steps were taken to minimize this risk. The interviews were not conducted by the principal researcher, and participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to mask their identities. Most importantly, it was made clear to participants that the researcher would not have access to the interview transcripts until after the final grades for the course were submitted, so as to reassure the students that their participation would not negatively affect their grades. This provision was set up to ensure that students were able to speak as freely as possible during the interview process. Although measures were taken to eliminate social desirability bias, the participants may not have even considered that aspect because students chose to take Japanese courses; there is no Japanese language requirement for most courses of study, and International Studies requires language, but only two years of a language of their choosing between Japanese, French, and
Spanish. The participants were the volunteers, and most of the participants expressed that they enjoyed writing, which was why they chose to participate in this interview.

Other than the sample, the standardized style of interview presented limitations as well. The interviews lacked more in-depth questions because the interviews were fully standardized. Part of the reason for using standardized questions was to protect participant confidentiality. If we asked deeper questions related to the topics or contents of their compositions, then participants could have unknowingly revealed self-identifying information. For the same reason, it would have been logistically very difficult to arrange follow-up interviews with the same participants without identifying them. The assistants would have had to re-contact the participants on my behalf, and neither the assistants nor the students were available to conduct interviews by the time transcripts were made available to me.

Finally, the minimal training that the assistants received and some unprofessional conduct was also a major issue. I was not permitted to conduct my own interviews, so I chose a former student assistant, and another individual who served as a Japanese language partner to interview participants. Both assistants were trained how to direct a standardized interview; however, the interviewers were undergrad students who were unfamiliar with formal interviews. One interviewer did not follow the interview protocol during two interviews, which rendered some of the data from those interviews unusable. In the future, the interviewers would need to receive more training to ensure more reliability between the interviews.

Even though this case study has the above limitations, this study brought the researcher many important suggestions and concerns from the participants. The following section presents how to improve each category of the findings to engage students’ motivation.
Motivating Topics and Themes

Topics and themes are the first guidelines provided to the writers, but no perfect topic and/or theme exists that will motivate all students because every student has different preferences. Youko Abe and Nakamura (2006) suggested to choose a theme about which students are curious or interested to increase students’ motivation. Students feel more comfortable writing on themes or topics about which they are familiar, but pointing one perfect topic which works for all students is impossible. All topics and themes for the composition assignments are related to the topics that students learn during that semester. Therefore, the topics should be familiar to the students, but some prefer a certain topic over others. “Food” and “Clothing” were the most typical topics which had positive and negative opinions. “My Christmas” was the least enjoyable topic to write for about half of the students because choosing one main event that they enjoyed during Christmas was difficult. From this example, I interpreted that the main issue for creating motivation is different from simply choosing the topics for a composition. Organizing and developing the content in a language that is not their first language created a sense of fear and insecurity about their ability to write well.

The level of difficulty in the theme or topic is also important for motivation. Students’ assignments should be challenging, but achievable (Abe & Nakamura, 2006). Thus, when the composition topic is too easy, students may not take the writing seriously, and do not pay attention to the instructor’s feedback. When the topic is too difficult, students worry more. When students are not confident while writing, they may use google translate, which results in poor-quality translations. When assigned an appropriately challenging topic, students find it rewarding to learn new vocabulary, and they gain knowledge from the instructor’s feedback. Also, as students take pride in their accomplishments, it may boost self-confidence. Therefore, as an
instructor, I would like to improve the least enjoyable topics and/or themes. For example, a participant mentioned that choosing one specific event from many events from their Christmas holidays was very difficult for them. That was why the participant felt that writing about “My Christmas” was very hard. From an instructor’s point of view, Christmas provides many topics for most of the Canadian students to write an interesting composition. Moreover, some of the non-Canadian students usually write about their various ethnic traditions during the same holiday period rather than writing about celebrating Christmas. Since the topic of Christmas presents a challenge for students, one way to simplify the topic, without losing the diversity, is to change the topic to one that gives students more autonomy to write about their experiences. Therefore, I am going to change the theme from “My Christmas” to “My Favorite Season” or “Time.”

On the other hand, some pointed out that too much freedom was also difficult to manage. For example, I plan to replace the “food” theme with “experience with cooking.” Some students write about what food means to them, but it would be more appropriate to write about one’s experience with food, or about a story which involves food or cooking. It is critical to include one’s self in Japanese composition writing. In this way, students are provided a more specific theme but can still select their own topic.

By the end of the semester, students are ready to shift to the third year level composition. In the third year, students aim to apply their writing to variety of composition styles: comparison, surprise ending, speech, opinion emphasis, and an essay about a book. By that time, students should know their strengths and their own writing style. Hence, students should have enough skills to narrow the theme to their favourite topic. That was why I thought that the feature of the WW approach, free topic should not be so hard for the students. Even though, “A Thing I Like to Do” seemed very hard for the students, and only one participant enjoyed writing about that topic.
Most of the participants mentioned that they had hard time choosing a topic on which to write. Sometimes students forgot what they learned previously and could not find a link between the pre-learned knowledge and their topic. An instructor can visualize the link by adding some words with the theme to decrease the difficulty, and can change the theme to one that is more accessible, such as: “My Hobby,” or “Things I Like to Do.” To improve topics and themes, some hints of direction are added on the themes (see Table 15).

Table 15

*How to Improve the Composition Topics and Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Topics and Order</th>
<th>How to Improve Topics and Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTS 222 Week 2: My Christmas</td>
<td>My Favorite Season or Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTS 222 Week 3: Food</td>
<td>Experience with Food or Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTS 222 Week 5: A Thing I Like to Do</td>
<td>My Hobby, or A Thing I Like to do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding of the level of motivation for the topic and/or theme, one very interesting response was the strong impact of grades on the students. Two participants mentioned that a good topic/theme is the one for which they received a good mark. My interpretation of these responses was that the real concern of those students were the fear of judgement, but not a choice of the topics/themes.

**Overcoming Students’ Fear of Challenges to Increase Motivation**

One of the unexpected findings was the fact that students feel anxious in having their work judged - students fear making mistakes, challenges in learning new skills, and receiving poor grades. In fact, one participant complained that the topics they did not like were the ones in which they were awarded lower marks.
Abe and Nakamura (2006) suggested that an instructor should create an enjoyable and safe learning environment to enable students to control their anxiety. Providing a safe environment in which to challenge pupils is one of the things that a teacher can do to motivate students. When students are anxious, their focus is on the chance of their success, rather than how to achieve the goal. To minimize student anxiety and perseveration on grades, and to widen their focus to include learning for learning’s sake, I made a number of factors clear at the beginning of the semester.

Students were informed that (a) length does not matter as long as the composition is completed, and (b) they would get more than “satisfactory” (average mark, awarded if the composition is complete) as long as they use grammar and Kanji characters from the class lectures. Moreover, (c) they can earn extra points if they use most recent grammar learned and new words or Kanji characters that were not taught in class. When students employ new skills, it may also foster a feeling of competence. Grammar, spelling, and formatting mistakes are easily avoided, and most students catch on quickly. As well, (d) the unique concept of Japanese composition will be highlighted to students. In contrast to English composition, it is intended to present an opportunity to practice expressing opinions by using the grammar and vocabulary learned in class. There are many composition assignments, and individual compositions do not have a significant influence on students’ over-all grade in the class; this practice opportunity may relieve some of the pressure to excel and assist students to focus on learning. When students are getting busy with other assignments and studying, it may benefit their motivation levels to be reminded of the information in the handout. This explanation is also to be provided in written format and not simply stated in class.

Even though students start practicing composition in the first year course, the second year
level composition is required to have more depth and freedom. Students are required to choose content more independently, as compared with the first year. The second year composition is certainly a challenge for the students. To reduce and to overcome students’ fear of challenge, learners must have enough confidence in their Japanese skills. An instructor must create an environment of trust through the use of a variety of tactics to support the students’ ability to challenge themselves and their grasp of Japanese.

While not directly related to the research questions, the data also indicates how critical it is to create an environment of trust when teaching composition. Trust building takes on many forms: as trust in self, as well as trust in peers, and trust in the instructor. These are all necessary components of an environment of trust. For instance, I also aim to strengthen and increase the level of instruction provided before the writing activities so that I may bolster trust during class (see following section); as trust has an important implication for the theory of teaching Japanese composition, writing activities rely heavily on feedback.

Firstly, a specific marking rubric for composition will be distributed as a part of the syllabus. Students will then have access to the marking style at the beginning of the course and will have time to become familiar with it. Also, more detail will be added to the syllabus with regards to the assignment topics, and an explanation will be provided on the meaning of composition and the purpose of composition writing. Adding these extra details is hoped to curb students’ anxiety, as they will know what to expect. This growth in trust also supports the feedback system, as students could be more disposed to benefiting from constructive criticism, and less likely to feel judged by the feedback.

Lastly, a specific exercise in learning how to create a good-quality title, using a class discussion, may serve a dual purpose. Many students find this discussion very beneficial, and
afterwards, are more successful in composing a strong title—thus this experience can heighten students’ trust in each other’s input.

By working with the framework provided in class, students can get a taste of writing on their own, in a safer, supported context. As well, discussing with one’s classmates assists in idea development. Many students find collaboration helpful and inspiring, and it may make composition an enjoyable activity. However, idea and content development is a real hurdle, especially for a novice writer, as it is a mostly independent task. Students need to know that they have the necessary skills, and they are together with their classmates at the start of this journey.

More emphasis is needed to ensure a collective feeling of belonging, of competence, and of involvement in class. Those qualities are the fuel of motivation. It is vital that students know that their upcoming challenges are the birthplace of their reward when they overcome the challenges. With a variety of supports, a student can overcome their challenges to find a topic and theme from which they can skillfully organize their ideas.

**Enhance pre-writing support to motivate students**

Preparing an appropriate writing support system encourages a writer, especially at the beginning of learning. As an instructor, conducting an information session that explain the aim of composition at the beginning of a semester and hosting a pre-writing session before actual writing begins, provides all the tools which supports the students.

The first step of pre-writing support is to provide an information session at the beginning of a semester. This information session is to inform the students about the purpose and the function of the composition and to create a more secure environment to challenge their Japanese composition skills. Students will receive the information regarding the general goal, as second year students, through the information session and will be informed that the base of the grading
is not on the competition with others. This will be effective because students will know that
composition is a practice to improve their skills, but not a judgement of their current ability. The
criteria should be on the writer’s improvement, not solely on their skills. Each student’s starting
point is different; therefore, the goal should be set differently for each writer, as long as the
students’ works are in the range of the general goal. Otherwise, those who can write well from
the beginning would not exert as much effort and may not improve as much as students who
exert great effort and make great gains in their composition skills. Students will recognize that
everyone can start from where they are beginning during the information session.

The second step of teaching composition is a pre-writing session. I would like to merge
all three approaches to cover all the shortcomings of each approach, and make one new pre-
writing session using the revised approach. A pre-writing session is effective to reduce students’
fear and to inform the framework of composition, such as the learning structure and the content
planning. A pre-writing session would be effective to increase students’ motivation because a
writer can find a topic and their ideas by taking the writing session. Throughout the interviews,
the participants constantly recommended that the emphasis on pre-writing activities should be
increased to assist with motivation. Students prefer being ready to write their compositions
before they start, rather than writing and learning simultaneously. The students’ desire to have
security while learning indicates a need for a sense of competency, and I intend to meet the
students’ needs by reinforcing the pre-writing session. The new pre-writing session is expected
to inspire stronger motivation through collaboration and cohort support; furthermore, the pre-
writing session will further facilitate students’ writing autonomy. This step can also be seen as
the second step to improve instruction over-all, and not just a strategy for overcoming students’
anxiety.
The pre-writing material will be further strengthened by drawing from the most effective aspects of each teaching approach. For instance, the participants appreciate and recognize the value of their freedom to choose a writing topic, but they also need a minimal framework to further their sense of security. Respecting students’ autonomy builds a stronger feeling of competence in them. Therefore, in order to minimize the weaknesses of the different methods, without losing the most effective features, pre-writing activities of all three approaches will be merged into one. The same pre-writing activities will be employed for all three approaches. The new pre-writing session will begin by introducing the structure of Japanese style composition by reviewing a model composition like the \textit{kata} style. After that, I will explain the structure of Japanese composition based on a mini-lesson of the \textit{WW} style. An instructor may use a collaborative-story creation approach, like in the \textit{ikebana} approach. If that method can stretch students’ imagination, then they will be able to create a better story on their own in the next session. Students had different opinions regarding the use of a flowchart; some participants considered that a flowchart was not as effective as other activities; therefore, filling up a flowchart will be an option used during the pre-writing session.

Once students understand the second year level composition standards, they can discuss with their classmates regarding the best way to organize their ideas. Almost all participants pointed out that the collaboration approach (\textit{ikebana}) supported their motivation. Even though an instructor must organizing the pre-writing session, a classroom discussion is needed to foster trust so students feel ready to collaborate and build cohort support by sharing ideas with their classmates during the pre-writing session. Collaboration is a style of learning through students’ experience, and teaching each other is very effective. Learners can acquire about 80 percent of a skill, and the memory remains by teaching others (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007). Creating a story as a
class, in order to learn the structure of composition in the ikebana approach, is one method to increase students’ autonomy during the pre-writing session. Collaboration and cohort support is an effective method to learn and to organize the classmate’s own ideas. Students experience support, not just from the instructor but also from their classmates, during the pre-writing session. Collaboration is an excellent way of having one’s work validated.

As the final step of the pre-writing session, some relevant vocabulary and grammar for that assignment will be supplied. Students can also suggest and share some effective words and grammar in class. When students can apply previously learned skills, their task may be easier. The pre-writing session aims to cover only basic skills so that the instructor shows respect for each writer’s originality and freedom in his or her creation; this remains unchanged.

The pre-writing support would be strengthened by hosting the information session and the pre-writing session. In such a safe environment, students can effectively begin learning composition. After setting up the pre-writing session, the next refining point is adjusting the teaching approach to assist students with developing their originality and creativity.

**Teaching Approaches to Motivate Students**

After recreating the pre-writing session, the next consideration to improve teaching composition is developing the revised teaching approaches. Two aspects needed to develop motivated writers: 1) improving teaching approaches to cover each approach’s shortcomings, and 2) reordering the teaching methods to produce more effectively motivated students.

**Renewing teaching approaches – merged Kata and WW approach.** Once the guidance at the beginning of a semester and pre-writing session are amended, the next step to improve composition teaching is to reshape the teaching approaches and alter the order in which the teaching approaches are used throughout the semester. So far, in the current system, the
instructor chooses to start with the *kata* approach to support the structure of composition, the shifts to the *ikebana* approach to start teaching originality, and finally applies the *WW* approach to allow students compose in their own way. One participant proposed that an instructor could create a style that combined the *kata* and *WW* styles, and the other suggested that an instructor could apply the *WW* approach before the *ikebana* approach. First, I would like to review those two suggestions, and a discussion of the order of the teaching approaches will follow the suggestions.

The pre-writing session’s focus is about providing more structural support during the beginning of the semester than is typically provided during the latter part of the semester; therefore, it is important to continue using the *kata* approach, which provides strong structural support, especially at the beginning of a semester. The beginning of the second year is the time of transition from the first year level to the intermediate level. According to the responses from the interviews, many students commented that the *kata* approach was suitable for beginners because of its rich support regarding the structural guidance required for the development of a composition. The focus of the pre-writing session in the previous *kata* approach has been to provide a framework for students and make writers focus on the contents by using the frame to help them write. However, the participants also considered the *kata* approach to be too structured and lacked a sense of creative freedom, as well. The new pre-writing session will also provide structure guidance and grammatical support from the *kata* approach, but the *WW* approach will strengthen the content by providing more creativity.

To overcome this lack of freedom and to better engage students, which will increase student’s motivation to write, the *WW* approach is effective. The *WW* approach has a general theme, rather than a specific topic like in the *kata* approach. Students have more choice
regarding their decisions while writing the composition, because collaboration and peer review are encouraged, and a writer can apply one’s own learning styles, rather than molding their writing into a specific style as happens in the kata approach. Moreover, the WW approach recommends that a writer find the most suitable way of working on composition. Some would like to work with friends, and some may prefer to work alone, quietly. An instructor only prepares different types of material, and students have a choice of their own learning styles. Fletcher and Potalpi (2012) mentioned that students are the ones who know what is important and the purpose of writing, and once students knows what they would like to write about, they would be motivated to write. Tatsuo Abe et al. (2015) suggested that an instructor should have two roles as a facilitator in the guidance session: 1) to provide knowledge and support to make writing easier, and 2) to support students understand what they would like to write, but not to decide for the students. Leading is a teacher’s role, but the ideas in a composition should originate with the students. To fulfill both considerations, an instructor needs to make suggestions for the students that will motivate students to write and to better support their learning.

The new merged kata and WW style is providing the kata style material, but applying the WW style teaching. From the kata approach (see Table 5), an instructor remains to lead the pre-writing session and provides handouts, including the examples, a model composition, a concept map, and flow-charts. One of the participants pointed out that a “useful grammar” list would be helpful when the students are attempting to find an appropriate expression. During a pre-writing session, an instructor provides a writing structure, as well as an outline of the introduction, body and conclusion (three paragraphs). Students summarize the reading, and clarify the framework for themselves. From the WW approach (see Table 9), an instructor is able to retain respect for
each student’s personal learning style. This merged method allows students to have the choice of participating in various writing support exercises, or working on their own. Students are advised to consult with their classmates, but consultation is not mandated.

The new merged *kata* and *WW* style is also effective to learn new writing styles; it allows students to shift from the three paragraph style to a four paragraph style, and to the creation of a title for the composition, because after conducting a pre-writing session, an instructor will still have a chance to consult with each individual to provide additional writing support. Students also can receive advice from their classmates, as well. This new merged *kata* and *WW* approach proves it is most effective when students learn new concepts because it allows the students to try new things with enough structure set in place to allow their knowledge to grow with their understanding of the style of Japanese writing.

**Renewing teaching approaches – Ikebana approach.** While the new merged *kata* and *WW* style is suitable for learning new concepts, students need a teaching approach to improve their writing skills more comfortably. The data showed that the participants’ preferred and motivating approach was the *ikebana* approach because of its freedom of choice regarding topics and creating stories as a model composition during the pre-writing session, because of its focus on the content and originality of compositions, and because of its content based feedback system. At the same time, students felt that there was a lack of instruction, which fed into their insecurity about their writing. The *ikebana* approach was the most preferred approach among the three different approaches, but the pre-writing session should be improved to motivate students. Therefore, the pre-writing session will be changed to overcome students’ fear of making unnecessary mistakes because they are insecure about their understanding of the material.

The *ikebana* approach focuses on students’ creativity and freedom to write rather than the
structure of the composition. The students begin with the same tools and are free to arrange their compositions with their own creativity, and afterwards, further instruction helps to further shape their composition into a more pleasing arrangement. About half of the participants were motivated by the freedom to produce their own content; therefore, the researcher maintained the *ikebana* approach in its original form, except for the addition of the pre-writing support. Since students have enough foundation of composition in their first language, everyone has one’s preferable style of writing in their first language. They can apply their preferred style and transfer it into the most comfortable way of writing in Japanese composition for themselves. In the *ikebana* approach, an instructor recognizes and respects students’ strengths and originality, and provides feedback to shape their composition into a more Japanese structure. This reverse-order teaching is the biggest difference between the *ikebana* approach, and the *kata* and *WW* approaches.

On the other hand, the *ikebana* approach has one shortcoming: lack of support during the pre-writing session. One of the participants suggested improving the pre-writing session of the *ikebana* approach. When students feel that there is a large gap of knowledge between the required outcome and their ability to organize their ideas of writing, the *ikebana* approach does not provide as much support as is required by the students. The new pre-writing session will cover this shortcoming, the lack of support before writing, by providing: a mini-lesson, materials (mind map, flowchart, and grammar list), and discussion with their classmates.

Providing a topic is also different from other teaching approaches. The teacher’s role in the *ikebana* approach is as a facilitator in order to support the students’ creation. In the *ikebana* approach, an instructor provides a theme, and the students create a specific topic from the area of the provided theme. For example, *Clothes* is provided as a theme, and a writer can write about
the act of wearing good clothes or the mental process of deciding upon a good outfit to wear for a date; this allows the students to narrow down the content. The *ikebana* approach is basically a hands-free approach, where students are encouraged to collaborate with their classmates or their Japanese partners. Students have a great amount of freedom to narrow down a specific topic about which to write, to decide its content, and to choose a style of composition by them. The foundation of the *ikebana* approach relies on strong trust toward students’ ability to write. Therefore, the *ikebana* approach is more suitable to use when students are more confident about their writing.

Creativity is necessary for the second year Japanese courses because the second year courses are when the students are going to develop their own writing styles in the Japanese way of writing. By the end of the second year, some students will develop their writing through a story telling style (chronological order), or through a main event style (one focal point in a composition), or through a description style (indirectly expressing opinion or thought by describing situation), as their most comfortable way of writing in Japanese.

What is meant by the terms “originality” and “creativity” in the *ikebana* approach? In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003), originality means, “When something is completely new and different from anything that anyone has thought of before.” This explanation is little different from what I would like to consider. What I would like to consider as originality in Japanese composition is the ability to write outside a model of copying a particular style and being comfortable to write in one’s own style. Students start to learn composition by mimicking particular styles of writing and learn the structure and rules of each style (*kata*). I define originality in an individual’s typical writing style, and creativity is the skill which supports a writer to compose such an original composition.
Unlike the new merged *kata* and *WW* approach, which is very well guided with the choice of learning material and is an effective way to learn new writing styles, the *ikebana* approach requires writers to have a certain levels of independency. Writers are expected to be able to compose writing by themselves; therefore, the *ikebana* approach is more suitable to practice when learners are more confident with their writing skills. Students can learn more safely and effectively using the two new, different writing approaches: the merged *kata* and *WW* approach, and the *ikebana* approach.

**Reorder of the applying teaching approaches.** To renew the composition teaching methods for the second year courses with the merged *kata* and *WW* approach, and the *ikebana* approach, changing the order of the teaching approach is another aspect. Spending more time to guide novice writers before starting to write was the main content a researcher learned from the data. In the past, an instructor applied each teaching approach for each topic or theme. The order of the teaching approaches was done in this order: first, the *kata* approach, then, the *ikebana* approach followed, and finally the *WW* approach. One participant mentioned that students can find their own learning styles by going through all the methods. As the participant suggested, I would like to distinguish the difference between the teaching methods and to create a safer learning environment in order to increase students’ motivation. The new order of the teaching approaches will be just one set: when introducing a new technique, one will use the new merged *kata* and *WW* approach, and when brushing up a composition, one will apply the *ikebana* approach.

At the beginning of a semester, teaching the new merged *kata* and *WW* approach is more useful to teach structures and to organize a writer’s idea of writing because composition is a new skill for the students. Offering writing support by using mind maps, flowcharts, and grammar
lists during the pre-writing session can support the students so they can focus more on their content rather than the structure of a composition. Reading a model of a particular composition style can provide a visual representation of the structure, and a mind map may help them develop ideas to write, and a flow-chart can assist them with organizing their ideas into a nice writing flow. Collaboration with their classmates is another important form of writing support. Once students organize a framework, writers can concentrate on the content. Writing in a foreign language requires many skills to be ready to write, such as grammar, vocabulary, structure, and ideas. Strong support before writing can decrease grammatical mistakes, and can strengthen writers’ ideas. Once writers get ideas, they can choose to organize their ideas through group discussion with their classmates, or by starting to write by themselves. The new merged kata and WW approach can deal with the diversity of the writers’ styles. As participant N suggested, students would prefer to have less stress while facing the challenge of creating a composition in Japanese by taking the pre-writing session. Therefore, applying the new merged kata and WW approach will support writers by creating a safe learning environment, and by supporting the students while they learn to focus on the content.

Students can build self-worth using various supports, such as pre-writing session and collaboration with their friends. This “I can do it” feeling builds the students’ motivation because everyone has the desire to learn new things and improve their skills (Youko Abe & Nakamura, 2006). The intrinsic motivation, the self-generated motivation, is a much stronger engine than the extrinsic motivation (Hunter, 1995). As Youko Abe and Nakamura (2006) mentioned, once students have the intrinsic motivation, all that educators need to do is to confirm the students’ progress, and to seek to find each student’s strength and particular learning style.

The new merged kata and WW approach will be much more suitable to support students
when learning new technique, but this technique also has one shortcoming. Since the new merged \textit{kata} and \textit{WW} approach provides a model composition and a frame-work based on the \textit{kata} approach, the risk remains that students will write very similar compositions. Some students may simply write the standard “fill in the blank” pattern composition by mimicking a model composition. In order to avoid such a situation, an instructor needs to prepare another teaching approach. The \textit{ikebana} approach will assist writers to reorganize their ideas by themselves.

The \textit{ikebana} approach is most suitable when writers have more confidence in their writing. When students rewrite their own composition, they can focus on content, and can focus on how to express their ideas more effectively because the students have a firm understanding of the required structure. The “freedom of creation” may be small at the beginning, but later on, writers can construct compositions that contain more originality. Every year, it is always amazing to see how much students can grow in such a short period. By the end of a semester, I do not need to confirm the writer’s name to recognize who wrote that composition because their personal writing style has emerged, and their personal creativity shines through.

In the past, it often seemed that time was the only way for writers to get used to their own writing style. However, after being introduced to the \textit{ikebana} style of learning flower arrangement, it was introduced that allowing a group of students to use the exact same flowers in whatever way they chose gave them the structure, while the instructor was able to come around to each student separately and help them refine their arrangement so it was more beautiful. The combination of similar tools and freedom to choose the format of arrangement with the refining structure of an instructor helping each one improve after the arrangement was made seemed to be an excellent cross-over method for teaching writing styles in Japanese. That was the reason why I applied the \textit{ikebana} approach when introducing the composition style during the shift from a
three paragraph structure to a four paragraph structure in the second year of Japanese courses. In
the middle of the semester, I decided to try the *ikebana* approach. I thought that the students
would be more confident in their own writing styles and skills. However there was not enough
support in the structure of the new composition teaching method (*ikebana* approach). The new
challenge was too much of a challenge for students; they still needed more grammar, style, and
structural support when they learned new things. Thus, I needed to find a better way to
accommodate the *ikebana* approach that would reinforce and apply what students learned
already. This started me thinking about what kinds of strategies would support the students in
their learning and give them adequate confidence to build their skills and creativity.

In the future, one can use the new *Kata* and *WW* approach for the very first composition
of INTS 222 with either theme “my favorite season” or “time.” In the second week when
students rewrite that composition, the *ikebana* approach should be used to best support students’
originality. The following week after the second week, students can be challenged to write about
“travel” with the new *Kata* and *WW* approach because the new textbook examines the Japanese
way to talk about a journey around the third week. When rewriting that topic, the *ikebana*
approach is used. After the midterm exam, students are challenged to write about more
complicated themes, “my favorite place in a house.” By that time, students should have
developed their own writing styles, and they should have established enough technique to write
about that more complicated theme; therefore, I am going to use the *ikebana* approach from the
beginning of this theme, instead of starting them with the merged *Kata* and *WW* approach (Refer
Appendix K).

**Using the Evaluation System to Motivate**

Providing a more detailed guidance may lead to ensuring students make fewer mistakes
or need less feedback because students may be more prepared to avoid making mistakes since they have a stronger base of grammar and structure. After students submit their composition, the evaluation system, including the instructor’s feedback, is the next most important motivation tool. By taking time to provide adequate pre-composition guidance, one can ensure that the feedback remains more formative and positive than in the previous system because students should make fewer mistakes with their composition. The current evaluation system contains two parts: a numerical assessment of linguistic categories (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and writing rules such as indenting, usage of quotes), and a summative assessment of content (structure, depth of content). The rubric allows the instructor to show both students’ strengths and shortcomings. The instructor’s feedback, located between the student’s own sentences, provides a more formative evaluation and additional guidance regarding what types of changes to make, which directly affects their composition. In this section, I would like to discuss the purpose of the instructor’s feedback, and provide an explanation of how to amend the marking rubrics to better maintain student morale so they can retain their motivation to write well.

**Motivating students by the instructor’s feedback.** Much of the literature on effective teaching focuses on the use of feedback (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007). In fact, one participant agreed that the key in teaching composition is receiving the instructor’s feedback, rather than the teaching approach itself (see Table 4). The interview data revealed that students considered improving the pre-writing session to be the most desired alteration to the teaching method in order to motivate them; however, feedback has been the main learning method of composition up to the point of this study. Feedback is still a powerful tool to guide students to improve their composition. Since feedback is a powerful tool, negative feedback may provide negative motivation for students. According to Saddler (2012), students may develop writing disabilities
that will cause a negative feedback loop of poor motivation resulting in poor results causing poor motivation. One very important point for an instructor is to acknowledge that feedback can be considered as criticism of the content of the students’ composition. However, providing a feedback is not just about pointing out students’ mistakes to avoid future mistakes; because self-esteem, involvement, and stimulation are the triggers of the motivation, one needs to ensure the feedback is positively received by students instead of being received as personal criticism (Raffini, 1996).

An instructor must keep in mind that the feedback provided should improve the students’ motivation level, and also give them greater confidence in their writing abilities for the next assignment (Yoshida & Iwase, 2007). Even though an instructor must point out students’ mistakes, the purpose of pointing out mistakes is to reach the goal of writing a composition in a way that a writer would like to write (Tatsuo Abe et al., 2015). Even though students understand the purpose of the feedback, sometimes it is still hard to see and accept their own mistakes. Though accepting their own mistakes may be difficult, students are always happy to know what they did correctly or when their writing is great. Feedback should include pointing out the students’ strengths, as well.

In order to provide feedback, the instructor would continue using the three colour feedback system, which is very effective, because it uses colour to suggest three different types of advice: blue lines for mistakes (including grammar, wording, and order of sentences); red lines for students’ strengths (like the use of great expressions), such as applying the most recently learned grammar, and using unlearned vocabulary and/or Kanji; and green lines for providing advice to improve their writing and for teaching new words and/or expressions. This system, developed by Takashi Saito (2007), covers most of the feedback fields of composition and is a
very effective way to provide feedbacks. Even though this is an excellent method of using
feedback to target specific areas and provide positive motivation to the students, I would like to
place greater emphasis on the writer’s strengths to better engage students’ motivation by using
the feedback to accomplish this goal. For example, if a student has many grammatical mistakes, I
should have more comments on green (advice) and also provide a short section of feedback to
build their strengths. Feedback is strongly connected with students’ motivation  (Nelson, 1991).
Tetsuo Abe et al. (2015) suggested to maintain the following three points: (1) bringing the
feeling of anticipation of success, (2) giving students confidence, and (3) bringing a feeling of
accomplishment. In order to fulfill above three points, I am planning to make the following
changes (see Table 16).

Even though the instructor tried to provide appropriate feedback, some participants
mentioned that the instructor’s feedback was not clear. Sometimes, what students tried to express
and their ideas were sufficiently well-organized and well-focused. In these cases, I am able to
provide more specific and constructive advice, which the students appear to appreciate.
However, often students do not focus their ideas well enough or they present too many topics in
one piece. In that case, my feedback is more vague, simply asking for more details. Students find
this frustrating, because the instructor’s feedback does not provide exact instructions on what to
do next. The frustration is strong; however, as an instructor it is impossible to anticipate what a
student is trying to say if their composition is unclear or has too many vague ideas; the students’
creativity must be shown before the instructor is able to give clear direction to students about
what to write. Otherwise, the composition is not original.

Since this point is very finicky, the guidance at the beginning of a semester needs to
include the limitation of the instructor’s feedback, and an outline of what the instructor can and
cannot provide in a variety of cases. The purpose of the feedback should be provided so as to
give students greater confidence in their writing abilities for the next assignment and to also
ensure the students are properly informed as to what can be expected from the guidance provided
in the feedback. Students must understand that the Japanese composition is a “practice to learn”
method about how to express one’s opinion in Japanese, but not an exam to be judged. When
students have prior knowledge about feedback, and what kind of feedback an instructor can
provide, they may have more confidence in their work. The information may better support trust-
building while learning composition in Japanese. Other than the above points to revise,
improving my feedback skills will be necessary, but that will be a future research topic.

Motivating students through the rubric. The evaluation is usually the first thing that
students check upon receiving their composition after grading; it is that “quick look” that gives
them an instant understanding of where they can place themselves on the scale of success or
failure. This is one reason students look at a rubric first. As noted by one of the participants in
the study, students expect very accurate feedback from the instructor, and more than half of the
participants in the study considered feedback important; furthermore, they appreciated when the
instructor provided detailed feedback. Participant S commented that receiving a sticker
encourages and motivates students to write, as well. Students felt that the evaluations were part
of their reward for their hard work.

Usually, students check their final assignment grade first, then, they look over the rubric
that describes what types of errors were made or what skills they demonstrated well, and finally
review their own composition to understand the detailed feedback given between the lines of
their composition. One issue with this process is that some students may not read the feedback at
all, even after they check their grade. That practice would cause students to improve more slowly
because they do not look at how to fix their mistakes, but simply check their grade and avoid thinking about how to improve. This strategy means that students who are not doing well, grade-wise, will experience the pain of seeing their low grades, especially if they thought they would do better than their grades turn out to be; however, they do not go out of their way to understand their errors in a way that would change their behavior, which would change how they write. They stay discouraged by the grade, but cannot find a way to overcome their challenges to improve and find better motivation through gradual success. The numbers are a powerful message delivered by an evaluation, but the numbers are not the whole picture. Students who choose to read the feedback have the opportunity to change their writing, or ask questions during office hours to clarify the feedback if they are confused. This way, they are able to challenge themselves and fully understand how to improve their grade. This problem of grades first and feedback last needed to be changed, so the rubrics have been modified to reflect the need to tie the feedback to the grade better. It is important to minimize student anxiety and fixation on grades, and to widen their focus to include learning for learning’s sake, because that is the purpose of feedback and evaluation. The weight of the evaluation should be shifted from the summative evaluation (point system) to more formative evaluation (feedback).

Some students only understand that an evaluation is a judgement of their works, but an evaluation has multiple purposes. According to Tohsaku (2016), assessments have three different purposes: assessment of learning which is the most commonly used, assessment for learning which would support and accelerate students’ learning, and assessment through learning which elevates students’ meta-skills. The evaluation of composition is not a judgement, but a tool to improve one’s composition skills. Providing feedback can be the assessment for or through learning because composition is a process of learning Japanese. The rubric and feedback should
be a tool for effective learning; therefore, those formative assessments should be used as the main part of the evaluation system over the summative assessment.

The first step to improve the evaluation system is changing focus of students’ mind-sets from numbers (grade) to formative assessment (feedback and rubric). Some participants’ main impetus when checking their composition was to see how well they did on composition (grades). I was not aware this fact until I read the interview results. Finding this fact was disappointing for me in two ways: one, to find out some of the students’ value of learning was not about their improvement, and two, to discover that I was not aware of students’ anxiety until I had done this research. In order to change their focus from the point system and to minimize their anxiety about receiving bad marks, I merged the students’ grades, starting with how the points were distributed among the different rubric sections (style, grammar, content, etc.), with the rubrics to make the point system a smaller part of the rubric. So, the grade is at the top, but the various rubric sections and the points assigned to each section are more closely tied to the feedback and the encouragement where students have done well. For instance, if their structure was their main composition issue, then they can see alongside the points assigned that there is feedback available on how to improve. The students can still go through the composition and read more specific comments between the lines of the composition, but if they can immediately see positive and negative feedback with the point, there is less risk of creating too much discouragement that might hurt the student’s motivation to write. As an instructor of a university education, I must provide marks by the end of a semester. I also cannot offer A+ to everybody unconditionally because that is not fair for the students who work so hard to achieve that mark. This is one tiny trick instructors can use to ensure that the student’s motivation stays high. Even though it is just a visual effect, shifting the focal point from grades to improving writing strategies can be effective
(refer Table 13) to build students’ confidence and motivation. This way, when students glance at the rubric, they can easily identify their strengths and what improvements need to be made to increase their level of success, which then by extension, increases their self-esteem and competence.

The next step to motivating students is adding the category of originality in the rubric. The current rubric does not assign points to evaluate students’ creativity, which would be listed in the rubric as “originality”, even though creativity is the main objective to achieve in the second year level composition. Thankfully, participant E in question 9 (see Table 10) proposed that the creativity should be evaluated. So, the first step of revising the rubric would be adding the category of originality to the rubric to establish a feeling of anticipation of success, because originality is a subjective assessment, and therefore, something that can inspire creativity in composition. When teaching Japanese composition, originality means presenting one’s own writing style. In the second year Japanese courses, establishing one’s own composition style is the goal of composition which is the foundation for the next level (3rd year composition). Once students accomplish a solid foundation, they can start learning applications: comparison, surprise ending, opinion writing, speech, etc. The originality category would help students discover how successfully they can provide their opinion, and an instructor can better comprehend their writings.

Recognizing the students’ effort through the rubric is also expected to encourage them to write. I would like to keep in mind that students can only start from where they are; therefore, some may write very well organized compositions from the first day, and some may start writing only the minimum amount. The starting point is not a problem; the most important accomplishment is that everyone reach the goal of improving their composition skills and of
being self-motivated to improve their composition. In order to avoid discouraging students regarding their various starting points in reference to their composition skills, the assessment the instructor provide should concentrate on how much they have improved from their own previous writing, and should never be in comparison with the way others use their writing skills (refer Table 16). The new rubric system includes the above changes (refer Appendix J).

Table 16 How to Improve Providing Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Methods</th>
<th>How to Improve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal guidance to explain the meaning of “composition practice” in Japanese writing</td>
<td>Provide a handout which includes examples and explanation of the feedback, the function of feedback is to guide students to improve their writing, and explain the meaning of composition practice in the second year class at the beginning of a semester. Explain the meaning of “originality” in Japanese composition in the handout to provide students with the opportunity to have prior knowledge about feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No category to evaluate students’ originality in composition.</td>
<td>Create “originality” category to support students in the discovery of how successfully they expressed their opinion in that writing. Explain the meaning of the “originality” in the handout. Students need to know that they must express their own idea/opinion/thought into their writing clearly and establish their own writing style in the Japanese style, in order to get a full mark in the “originality” category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade and Comments were separated. Students focused on the grade more than comments.</td>
<td>Emphasize more on the formative assessment. Explain the meaning of the evaluation in a second year composition. Merge point forms into the rubrics in order to emphasize that the evaluation is formative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Through this project, I acknowledged the disconnect between what an instructor provides and what students need from a lesson about composition; the disconnect was much larger than was imagined before beginning this research. During the exploration phase of the research, the mismatched points between students’ needs and the traditional teaching methods used for composition (kata) became so clear. I was mistaken in my original theory: If I change the kata and use ikebana and WW to improve my teaching, it will naturally make the students more
confident and engaged. However, I was unaware of the intense level of fear the students had regarding composition and the implementation of ikebana without adequate support led not to greater student confidence, but to greater student insecurity about their grades and writing. Through the process of this project, I found that motivation and support were the vital keys to discovering and filling the learning gaps students experienced.

This lack of confidence and the subsequent lack of learning support came from my underestimation of how difficult the challenge of writing a composition in Japanese, for non-native Japanese students, actually was. The addition of the pre-writing session to reduce students' anxiety of writing is a natural bridge that helped to increase writers’ motivation and confidence. The new kata and WW approach produces a complementary effect by increasing the effectiveness of each approach which provides greater support, linguistically and stylistically, for the students. The kata approach provides framework that compliments the WW’s choosing approach. Once students learn the new technique, the focus on learning shifts to the improvement of composition. In such a case, the ikebana approach provides more freedom of learning for students. When students are able to access their intrinsic motivation, learning will be most effective.

Other than the improvement of the teaching method, a variety of materials needed to be developed for students; these materials assist the instructor to teach a variety of students since each student has different skills. Another effective method to motivate students is using collaborative discussion to develop composition ideas and peer review of compositions to provide feedback on compositions. When a safe learning environment with enough support is provided, students are motivated to learn composition because they are more confident to overcome the challenges of writing.
During writing, students can choose to either receive support from their classmates or Japanese partners, or to write alone. Some students prefer writing alone. One aspect of composition remains challenging; students must work alone when developing their content because this aspect relates to their originality. An instructor can only support the student by helping them to organize their idea. No one can avoid this solo-process of composition; therefore, the pre-writing session must provide the strong motivation necessary for writing; the session must adequately support the students so they feel less fear during these solitary writing processes.

The final piece to this puzzle is, of course, the instructor’s evaluation of the composition. Feedback has been the traditional method of teaching composition, and students were mostly happy with the instructor’s feedback; however, from my research I have noticed that the feedback must be constructive and accurate in order for student motivation to thrive. Students must feel competent, confident, involved, and stimulated to be motivated (Raffini, 1996). Feedback must nurture those qualities. Thus, formative evaluation, which is mainly a rubric and instructor’s comments, should be the main method of feedback rather than a summative evaluation, which is grading. Students prefer to get rewarded for their academic curiosity and get their achievements acknowledged (Yokomizo et al., 2010).

Throughout this project, I was able to confirm that any small chance to motivate students is the best key to success when teaching composition. Providing ‘a cane’ before a student is able to fall is far more helpful to students than supporting them to stand up after they have already fallen. The best ways to motivate students to learn composition are to provide enriching pre-writing sessions, which respect students’ freedom, and to acknowledge students’ effort through positive feedback. Teaching composition is more than just providing a knowledge. In this computer era, computers may provide knowledge-based information in the place of an instructor;
however, students’s learning needs have also changed. Instead of students adjusting their skills to
fit in the textbook or content of learning, as used to be done for generations of students who
learned by rote, instructors should provide various supports that students select to learn more
effectively. The joy of learning leads to the increased motivation of learning for students. I have
become more aware of my teaching style and more reflective as a teacher through this project;
through this study I have discovered the core of teaching composition is a motivation. I would
like to share my findings and the importance of motivation with other educators of Japanese.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions

Explain the purpose of this interview with the participant to confirm her/his understanding of what is being asked of her/him. Show the participant the handout of my composition teaching method and typical composition teaching method in Japan. (5 mins.)

Q1 Do you like writing in English/your first language?
Q1-a Why do you like/dislike it?
Q2 Generally speaking, do you like Japanese composition?
Q2-a Why do you like/dislike composition?
Q3 Which teaching approach—kata, ikebana, or writing workshop—did you think motivated you to write best?
Q3-a Why do you think so?
Q4 Which part(s) of the kata approach was effective to motivate you to write?
Q4-a Why do you think so?
Q5 Which part(s) of the kata approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?
Q5-a Why do you think so?
Q6 Which part(s) of the ikebana approach was effective to motivate you to write?
Q6-a Why do you think so?
Q7 Which part(s) of the ikebana approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?
Q7-a Why do you think so?
Q8 Which part(s) of the writing workshop approach was effective to motivate you to write?
Q8-a Why do you think so?
Q9 Which part(s) of the writing workshop approach was ineffective to motivate you to write?
Q9-a Why do you think so?
Q10 What aspect(s) of writing was most challenging for you? You can choose more than one.
   ● Grammar ● Theme ● Content/Idea ● Title ● Expression
   ● Other
Q10-a Why did you choose that/those aspect(s)?
Q10-b Which approach worked the best to improve your compositional weakness(es)?
Q10-c What can/should be done to (further) support your ability to improve this aspect?
Q11 Which topic(s) of composition did you enjoy writing about?
Q11-a Why did you think so?
Q12 Which topic(s) of composition did you not enjoy writing about?
Q11-a Why did you think so?
Q12 Please provide your opinion about the most effective teaching method that motivated you to write, and would be helpful for future second-year JSL students at UNBC. Why do you think so?
Q13 Is there anything more that you would like to say about learning Japanese composition?
Thank you.
Appendix B: UNBC Research Ethic Board Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Ami Hagiwara
CC: Tina Fraser

From: Michael Murphy, Chair
Research Ethics Board

Date: March 4, 2015

Re: E2014.1210.096.00
Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition

Thank you for submitting revisions to the Research Ethics Board (REB) regarding the above-noted proposal. Your revisions have been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the REB.

If you have any questions on the above or require further clarification please feel free to contact Rheanna Robinson in the Office of Research (reb@unbc.ca or 250-960-6735).

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Michael Murphy
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Appendix C: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants

Date:

Project Title: Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition

Project Lead: Ami Hagiwara,
The Multidisciplinary Leadership specialization/ Master of Education Program
University of Northern British Columbia
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9
ami.hagiwara@unbc.ca and/or (250)960-5593

You are invited to take part in a Master of Education Degree Project, entitled Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition. The project is being carried out by Ami Hagiwara under the direction of Dr. Tina Fraser through the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

Why am I being invited to take part in this study?

The purpose of this research project is to ascertain how you, as a student of INTS 222: Intermediate Japanese II, perceive and assess your motivation levels when taught Japanese composition using three different teaching methods: *kata*, *ikebana*, and the workshop approach.

Why was I chosen to participate in this study?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because
- You are a student of INTS 222: Intermediate Japanese II
- You are learning how to write Japanese composition during INTS 222
- You have experienced both achievement and difficulties while learning Japanese composition
What does participation in this project involve?
If you agree to voluntarily take part in the study, you will be asked to

- Participate in a private one-on-one interview that will last about 30 minutes during the winter semester, but this interview will not be conducted by the instructor/researcher, but rather by a third party. This third party will record the interviews, but only for the purposes of transcription. The transcription will be done by the third party; the instructor/researcher will not have access to the recordings. During transcription, the third party will change your name to a randomly selected letter to conceal your identity from the instructor/researcher. The instructor/researcher will not have access to your transcribed answers until after the exam period is over and your grades submitted to UNBC. You have the right to terminate the interview at any time; any answers you have been given will be erased.

- During this interview, you will be asked to share your experiences of learning Japanese composition, and how the different teaching methods affected your ability to learn/improve your compositional skills. You will also be invited to provide ideas about changes that could be made for future classes that you think will enhance the teaching of Japanese composition at the intermediate level.

What are the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study?
First of all, you must understand that any answers you provide during the interview will NOT affect your grade. As stated above, even though, the interview will take place during the winter semester, the researcher/instructor will not have access to the transcriptions until after your grades have been submitted to UNBC. During the transcription, the names of the interviewees, and those of any individuals you may mention (except for that of the researcher/instructor) will be converted to a randomly selected alphanumeric code to remain anonymous from the researcher/instructor. What is more, the interviews will be conducted by third-party assistants, not the researcher/instructor.

The potential benefits of this research include learning more about your own learning style, and possibly helping to shape the direction of future Japanese courses. The anticipated risks of participating in this project are minimal. You might feel embarrassed to talk about your own writing, or feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. Since the researcher/instructor does not want to cause you any discomfort, you are under no obligation to answer any question the third-party assistant(s) ask, or to take any further part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you too uncomfortable.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw from the study during the interview, the recording and any other information you may have provided will be destroyed.

How will my identity and personal information be protected? (Anonymity)
Your interview will be transcribed (typed word-by-word) by the third-party assistant who conducted your interview. The participant’s name, and the names of any peers you happen to mention during the interview, will be converted into a randomly selected alphanumeric pseudonym. Due to the small sample size, anonymity of participants cannot be guaranteed.
How will my information be kept private? (Confidentiality)
The researcher will not have access to the consent forms until after the final course grades have been submitted. The recordings after the assistant has transcribed them, the assistant will give the recordings to my supervisor and the recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the supervisor’s office to avoid the access by the researcher. The researcher/instructor will not access the recordings. All interview answers (after transcribed and your names were changed to an alphabet), the forms you filled out, and the hardcopy results will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office and held in strictest confidence. All digital material will be kept in an encrypted file on a USB flash drive, which will also be kept in the locked file cabinet. Only my potential assistant (whose only duties will be to conduct and/or transcribe the interviews), and my supervisor will have access to your interview recordings.

What will be done with the results?
The completed research will be presented to my examining committee at UNBC. It is hoped that the results will be presented at conferences and before community organizations, and published in a journal to better disseminate a more effective method for teaching Japanese composition to Japanese as Second Language learners.

How will the information be destroyed?
Data from the study will be destroyed two years after publication. All hard copies of the interview information, the forms you filled out, and the hardcopy results will be shredded; digital material saved on the USB flash drive will be erased.

How do I obtain a copy of the results?
If you are interested, I can provide you with a copy of the final research upon completion of the research.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study at any time, even during the interview. If you decline to participate at the outset, or decide to stop participating part-way through, your choice will not impact your grades. Please be assured that even after a you have signed this consent form, you can still withdraw from the project at any time without consequence; any information collected from you up to that time will be destroyed.

Who should I contact if you have more questions?
Please feel free to contact the researcher, Ami Hagiwara, at 250-960-5593 or ami@unbc.ca, and my supervisor, Dr. Tina Fraser (250-960-5714; frasert@unbc.ca) if you have any questions about the project. Any concerns and complaints about the project should be directed to the Office of Research at the University of Northern BC (250-960-6735; research@unbc.ca).

If you would like to participate in this project, please complete and return the attached informed consent form and feel free to keep this information letter for future reference.
This information sheet must be attached to the Consent Form and a copy given to the Research Participant.
CONSENT

Please go over the consent form with the assistant(s) and submit to him/her. The researcher will not have access to the consent forms until after the final course grades have been submitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you understand what has been asked of you if you decide to participate in this research?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Have you read and received a copy of the participant information letter?  
_ A Copy must be given to you for you to keep_ | Yes | No |
| Do you understand the benefits and the risks involved in participating in this research? | Yes | No |
| Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the project at any time without academic consequence?  
_You do not have to give a reason for your choice to refuse or to withdraw._ | Yes | No |
| Do you understand that the interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to your actual words, but not your name, being published in written form? | Yes | No |
| Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide? | Yes | No |
| Have the issues of anonymity and confidentiality been explained to you? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to have your Japanese compositions kept in confidence for a period of no more than two years? | Yes | No |
| Have you been able to ask questions and to discuss this project? | Yes | No |
| Follow-up information (e.g. transcription) can be sent to me at the following e-mail or mailing address (if applicable): | Yes | No |

E-mail address:

________________________________________________________________________

Signature:

________________________________________________________________________

Name of Participant (Printed):

________________________________________________________________________

Date of Consent/Participant signed:

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Interviewer

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement (Interviewer)

This study, *Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition*, is being undertaken by Ami Hagiwara at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The study has one objective:

To examine students’ motivation levels as it concerns learning Japanese composition. The primary data-set will be one-on-one interviews of approximately 30 minutes in duration, conducted during the Winter semester. The interviews, conducted by an assistant using questions that the researcher/instructor has drafted, will ascertain how students of INTS 222-Intermediate Japanese II perceive their motivation levels when taught Japanese composition using three different teaching methods—*kata*, *ikebana*, and the workshop approach.

As an interviewer for this project, you will perform two duties. One, you will participate in a practice session to learn how to conduct interviews and how to use the recording equipment. Two, you will conduct the interviews with the research participants (i.e., the students of INTS 222).

I, (name of assistant) , agree as follows:

1. To participate in a practice session prior to the actual interviews, where you will learn how to conduct an interview and how to use the recording equipment;
2. To keep all research information confidential by not discussing or sharing any of the data/information, in any form or format (e.g. flash drives, tapes, transcripts), with anyone other than the Principal Investigator(s);
3. To keep all research information, in any form or format, secure while it is in my possession;
4. Not to use the Confidential Information for any purpose other than what the researcher dictates, and to return or destroy all copies of the Confidential Information no later than
the due date stipulated by the researcher;
5. To return all research information, in any form or format, to the Principal Investigator(s) upon completing my research tasks;
6. After consulting with the Principal Investigator(s), to erase or destroy all research information, in any form or format, regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Principal Investigator(s) (e.g. information stored on computer hard drive).

Recipient

(Print name) ____________________________ (Signature) ____________________________ (Date) ____________________________

Principal Investigator:

(Print name) ____________________________ (Signature) ____________________________ (Date) ____________________________

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:
Ami Hagiwara (250-960-5593 or ami.hagiara@unbc.ca)
or
My Supervisor, Dr. Tina Fraser (250-960-5714 or frasert@unbc.ca)

This proposed study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at UNBC. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Office of Research by email at reb@unbc.ca or telephone at (250) 960-6735.
Appendix E: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Transcriber

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement (Transcriber)

This study, *Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition*, is being undertaken by Ami Hagiwara at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). The study has one objective:

To examine students’ motivation levels as it concerns learning Japanese composition. The primary data-set will be one-on-one interviews of approximately 30 minutes in duration, conducted during the Winter Semester. The interviews, conducted by an assistant using questions that the researcher has drafted, will ascertain how students of INTS 222-Intermediate Japanese II perceive their motivation levels when taught Japanese composition using three different teaching methods—*kata, ikebana*, and the workshop approach.

The recorded interviews from this study will be transcribed to (1) make analysis of the data easier and (2) to facilitate interviewee anonymity. Your duties are to transcribe the recorded interviews and to convert the names of the interviewees, and those of any individuals they may mention (except for that of the researcher/instructor), to a randomly selected alphanumeric code.

I, (name of recipient) , agree as follows:

1. To keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing any data/information, in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts), with anyone other than the Principal Investigator(s);
2. To keep all research information, in any form or format, secure while it is in my possession;
3. To not use the Confidential Information for any purpose other than what the researcher dictates, and to return or destroy all copies of the Confidential Information no later than the due date stipulated by the researcher;
4. To return all research information, in any form or format, to the Principal Investigator(s)
when I have completed the transcription;

5. After consulting with the Principal Investigator(s), to erase or destroy all research information, in any form or format, regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Principal Investigator(s) (e.g. information stored on computer hard drive).

Recipient

(Print name)       (Signature)       (Date)

Principal Investigator:

(Print name)       (Signature)       (Date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:
Ami Hagiwara (250-960-5593 or ami.hagiara@unbc.ca)
or
My Supervisor, Dr. Tina Fraser (250-960-5714 or frasert@unbc.ca)

This proposed study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at UNBC. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Office of Research by email at reb@unbc.ca or telephone at (250) 960-6735.
### Appendix F: Interview Materials

#### Interview Material (1)

**Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition**

#### The Differences Among the Three Teaching Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Kata Style Approach</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ikebana Style Approach</strong></th>
<th><strong>Writing Workshop Approach</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- practice useful grammar</td>
<td>- teaching minimum</td>
<td>- mini lesson of a new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- teaching compositional</td>
<td>- structure</td>
<td>technique of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structures</td>
<td>- originality is important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- model composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- flow-chart, mind map,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- specific topic</td>
<td>- general topic</td>
<td>- general topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Writing</td>
<td>During Writing</td>
<td>During Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no specific guidance</td>
<td>- encourage collaboration</td>
<td>- apply your own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- mainly about grammar</td>
<td>- mainly on the content</td>
<td>- share composition with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and structure</td>
<td>of a composition</td>
<td>class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- instructor’s feedback</td>
<td>- instructor’s feedback</td>
<td>- peer &amp; instructor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition

Schedule of Composition Topics and Which Teaching Approach To Be Used (Winter 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Composition</th>
<th>Approach Used</th>
<th>Topic &amp; (Goal of Learning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kata approach</td>
<td>“My Christmas” (Write about one topic, but not in chronological order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>“Food” (Introducing how to make a title, and make four paragraphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>“A Thing I Like to Do” (Provide depth in the third paragraph)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule of Composition Topics and Which teaching Approach To Be Used (Fall 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Composition</th>
<th>Approach Used</th>
<th>Topic &amp; (Goal of Learning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kata approach</td>
<td>“My Summer” (Chronological Order of Writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>“Clothes” (Opening and Closing Paragraphs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Daily Life or Free Topic (Three Paragraph Style)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What aspect(s) of writing was most challenging for you?

- Grammar
- Theme
- Content/Idea
- Title
- Expression
- Other
クリスマスにバンクーバーへ行きました。日本人のともだちと会ったことが一番よかったです。ぜんぜん英語を話しませんでした。

一人のともだちは、プリンス・ジョージからいっしょに行きました。一人は、エドモントンからバスで来ました。そして、二人のともだちは、バンクーバーにすんでいます。ボクシング・デーでしたから、色々な店でショッピングしました。夜、私達は、おいしいりょうりを食べている時、たくさん話しました。長い間、会っていなかったから、今、していることやたいへんだったこと、楽しかったことを話しました。みんな、いそがしいですが、がんばっていました。日本人がカナダでせいいかつ(spend life)することは、たいへんです。英語もむずかしいです。マナーも日本とおなじじゃない(not same)です。でも、ともだちががんばっていることは、うれしいです。私も元気になります。

とても楽しかったです。たくさん日本語を話しました。そして、おいしい日本りょうりを食べました。その夜は、よくねることができました。ともだちは、いつも私に元気をくれます。プリンス・ジョージに帰るひこうきの中で、私はとても元気になりました。
Write about Yourself
クリスマスに、何をしましたか。何が一番楽しかった・たいへんだったですか。

Writing Memo

クリスマスに、をしました。

が一番でした。

Details (When, Where, Who, What, Why, How)

クリスマスは、でした。

What you learned from your experience.

Explanation & Reasons

Grammar Points

- All activities should be in the past tense (食べました).
- Who, when, what, where, why, and how (if necessary).
- Use numbers only if required (三人家族です).
- Make adjectives in the past tense if that item doesn't exist anymore.
- Keep adjective in the present tense if the item/person still in the same condition (きれいな人、大きいかばん).
Flow Chart “My Summer” (Fall 2014)

① 夏に、私・僕は、～ました。
Write a general activity of what you have done during this summer.

② Write details what you have done.
1st example/activity with your comment.
(2nd example/activity with your comment.)

③ Comment about your summer.

Model Composition

夏に、私は、日本へ行って、かとうさんの家へホームスティしました。

かとうさんは、三人家族です。かとうさんとおくさん（wife）とお子さんです。土曜日、いっしょに日本りょうりをつくって、食べました。とてもおいしかった（tasty）です。ごはんを食べて、お子さんとゲームをして、家族と歌を歌いました。日曜日、私たちは、でんしゃで「きょうと」へ行きました。夏やすみ（vacation）ですから、人がたくさんいました。有名なおてら（temple）で写真をとりました。

とても楽しかったです。カナダに帰りたくなかったです。

Write about Yourself
夏に、何をしましたか。それは、どう（how）でしたか。
Writing Memo

夏に、何をしましたか。

何をしましたか。 → どうでしたか。

夏は、どうでしたか。

Grammar Points

- All activities should be in the past tense (食べました).
- Who, when, what, where, why, and how (if necessary).
- Use numbers only if required (三人家族です).
- Make adjectives in the past tense if that item doesn't exist anymore (暑かったです).
- Keep adjective in the present tense if the item/person still in the same condition (きれいな人、大きいかばん).
Creating a composition together

① Poutine is a bad food. I had Poutine during my date, and she dumped me afterwards.
   (Write a general activity. Not a food. It is more likely unforgettable event.)

② It was a good date. We ordered Poutine. Everything looks great.
   Write the settings and details of that event.
   Details (When/Where/Who/What/Why/How)

② After eating Poutine, she said that we should break up.
   Since then, Poutine is a bad luck food for me.
   (Write your opinion and idea)

④ For me, the food (Poutine) means “bad luck.”
   (Connect to the future, positive, what you learned.)

Example: David’s Poutine story.
Point: Paragraph 3 is your opinion part.
   Use examples to express a difficult idea.
   Use みたい、思う.
Mind Map English/Japanese: Clothes (2014 Fall)

Make Your Idea into Sentences -> Consider the order

( )
( )
( )
( )
( )
( )
Interview Material (5)

Leading to Learn: Motivating Student Engagement in Japanese Composition

**Writing Workshop (WW) Style**

Creating a composition together

**Writing Memo**

I like

Because

Main message of this writing: Write about Yourself

For me, doing

Means

**Paragraph (1) Opening (General Guidance/Statement)**

**Paragraph (2) Event**

**Paragraph (3) What you learned from your experience/Your opinion**

**Paragraph (4) Conclusion**

**Ideas of Your Title**
Find a Topic to Write: English/Japanese: Free Topic (2014 Fall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I may be able to write (Topic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am good at (上手です)</th>
<th>I remember this event/activity/incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am curious about</th>
<th>I want to try to write about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s try to match the opening and the closing

( )

( )

( )

( )

( )

( )
Appendix G: Interview Material of *Writing Workshop* Approach

**Features of the *Writing Workshop* Approach**

*Comparison of the Current Teaching Method with the Writing Workshop Method (modified from Yoshida & Iwase 2007 p. 111).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Approach of Teaching Composition</th>
<th>Writing Workshop Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Instructor decides the theme.</td>
<td>1. Students decide the theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Instructor is the only reader.</td>
<td>2. Everybody is the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Instructor revises and proof-reads.</td>
<td>3. Everybody revises and proof-reads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructor evaluates writing.</td>
<td>4. Class and the writer evaluate writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A student writes by his/herself alone.</td>
<td>5. Students work as a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No sharing time with class.</td>
<td>7. Sharing time with class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Evaluate the end result and</td>
<td>8. Evaluate the process (and also the result)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completeness of the composition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Instructor is the arbitrator.</td>
<td>9. Instructor is a facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Many students do not like writing.</td>
<td>10. Students enjoy writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Presenting composition in class is rare.</td>
<td>11. Publication and presentation are the assumption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students are obliged to write.</td>
<td>12. Students are encouraged to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Composition can be a virtual experience.</td>
<td>13. Each process of writing is a real experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Composition practice in the second year Japanese course

Composition is a practice to express students’ activities/opinions/thoughts using your learned grammar and vocabulary. This practice would provide a great opportunity to build up students’ vocabulary skills without comparing with others. The instructor would like to see your own growth, and the evaluation is not by comparing with others. I wish by the end of INTS 222, each of you will write very unique composition, which is the one that a reader can name who wrote it just by reading. The most important component of the composition is the unique content, but never the length. We have a minimum length of a composition (like few lines), but as long as a writer expresses one’s opinion clearly, the length of a composition is not a main concern. (I strongly wish you would not write longer than five pages. It is hard to mark such a long composition.) Composition provides an opportunity to practice expressing opinions by using the grammar and vocabulary learned in class. The improvement of composition connects to the quality of the conversation skills. All linguistic skills link each other, and you can solidify your comprehension skills of Japanese.

Ultimate goal of the composition practice in the second year courses

Establishing one’s own composition style is the goal of composition in INTS 221 and 222 Japanese course. The original style of composition means writer’s “originality” in Japanese composition. The “originality” assists students to express idea quickly and effectively. Collaboration with classmates or one’s Japanese partners may be helpful to organize one’s idea.

Key points of writing practice

Use learned grammar and vocabulary, instead of accurate translation (by using computer translation programme). Instead, simplify the sentence and change the structure of a sentence to be able to express your opinion with the learned grammar. Minimize the usage of an unlearned vocabulary.

Marking System

Composition is a powerful and safe way to learn language. The individual compositions do not have a significant influence on students’ over-all grade in the class. The weight of an individual composition of one’s final grade is about 1%. Again, composition is a practice and not a judgement of your work. Unlike other courses, Japanese composition
has “plus” points. The rubric has five levels. The middle level is the second year level, which is the level that I would like to see students freely use at least the first year grammar and vocabulary. The instructor considers a students’ habitual mistake as a minus point, but students gain plus points by a students’ challenge or achievement to use the most recent grammar and/or to use unlearned words and Kanji.

I will recognize your hard work. Unlike other courses, 100% is the satisfactory level “A”, “your composition meets with the instructor’s expectation” in Japanese composition marking system. Some of the students may write more than the instructor’s expectation. “Beyond instructor’s expectation” is “A+” in INTS 222, which is more than 100%. Majority of the university courses only have minus points, even though students work very hard and they present many excellent points. Please discover your strength and use that skills.

Feedback
The feedback students will receive for one’s composition is not a judgement, but a support for your improvement. Feedback is also a message to point out the gap between the writer’s current ability and the goal of writing, and the purpose of feedback is not just pointing out, but information to reach the goal (Tatsuo Abe, et al., 2015. pp. 74).

Three colour system in the feedback
Blue: Mistakes in grammar, spelling, word usage, format, and rules.
Pink/Orange: Excellent parts: new words and Kanji, great expression, excellent sentence, great structure and expressions.
Green: Suggestions, explanation of how to improve, and what to add. Pointing out to fill the gap of the sentences.

I respect your originality in composition, but sometimes, it can be difficult to provide specific instructions within the feedback as there is the danger that I am misinterpreting the message that the writer is communicating. For example, if writer’s main point is not clear, I do not want to direct what to write, but the instructor will comment just “add more information.” If a student would like to get more advice, please come and talk to the instructor.

I would like to see the growth of your composition improve in a semester with your own style of writing. That is the goal of INTS 222 composition practice.
Appendix I: INTS 222 Pre-Writing Work

Handout of the Composition Practice in the Second Year Courses

INTS 222

Model Composition  “Christmas”

クリスマスにバンクーバーへ行きました。日本人の友達と会ったことが一番よかったです。ぜんぜん英語を話しませんでした。日本語だけ話して元気になりました。

一人目の友達は、プリンス・ジョージからいっしょに行きました。一人は、エドモントンからバスで来ました。そして、二人目の友達は、バンクーバーにすんでいます。ボクシング・デーでしたから、色々な店でショッピングしました。夜、私達は、おいしい料理を食べている時、たくさん話しました。長い間、会っていなかったから、今、していることやたいへんだったこと、楽しかったことを話しました。みんな、いそがしいですが、がんばっていました。日本人がカナダでせいいかつ（spend life）する時は、たいへんです。英語もむずかしいです。マナーも日本とおなじじゃない（not same）です。でも、友達ががんばっていることは、うれしかったです。私も元気になります。

クリスマスは、とても楽しかったです。たくさん日本語を話しました。そして、おいしい日本料理も食べました。その夜は、よくねることができました。ともだちは、いつも私に元気をくれます。プリンス・ジョージに帰るひこうきの中で、私はとても元気になりました。

Find out the Structure of the Composition

①

②

③
Effective Words and Grammar:

- **Celebration:** (お)いわい (n), おいわいする (v)
- **Christmas Carol:** クリスマス・キャロル
- **Christmas Eve:** クリスマス・イブ
- **Christmas Tree:** クリスマス・ツリー
- **Fun:** 楽しい
- **Kindness:** やさしさ
- **Present/gift:** プレゼント・ギフト・おくりもの
- **Santa Claus:** サンタ・クロース
- **Reindeer:** トナカイ
- **Turkey Dinner:** ターキー・ディナー
- **To visit:** (人に) 会いに行く
- **To wrap:** つつむ

**Giving and Receiving**

あげる、もらう、くれる

**Appreciation of receiving kindness**

〜てもらう・〜てくれる

**時 Clause**

Verb (past, current, habit) 時、〜。

**Reason**

Reason から Fact/Result。
## Appendix J: Marking Rubric for INTS 222 Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total:</th>
<th>Level 1 Inadequate Score</th>
<th>Level 2 Need Improvement</th>
<th>Level 3 Good</th>
<th>Level 4 Meet Expectation</th>
<th>Level 5 Exceed Expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spellings &amp; Conjuncture</td>
<td>Used English many times</td>
<td>Used English sometimes</td>
<td>No English</td>
<td>No English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conjunctures are not clear mistakes</td>
<td>Conjunctures are not clear mistakes</td>
<td>Some conjunctures are not clear</td>
<td>Conjunctions are smooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mistsakes</td>
<td>Some mistakes</td>
<td>Minor mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kanji</td>
<td>Many mistakes</td>
<td>Need to use more Kanji</td>
<td>Used learned Kanji with mistakes</td>
<td>Used learned Kanji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Kanji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correct usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particles</td>
<td>Review grammar</td>
<td>Many same mistakes</td>
<td>Some minor mistakes</td>
<td>Few minor mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Need to use more recent grammars</td>
<td>Good grammars, but only up to the 122 levels</td>
<td>Correct grammars, but only up to the 122 levels</td>
<td>Used the recent grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot understand the meaning</td>
<td>Some serious mistakes</td>
<td>Some mistakes</td>
<td>Few mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td>No paragraphs</td>
<td>Same messages missing in a paragraph</td>
<td>Well divided</td>
<td>Well divided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Well divided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Your opinions were unclear or disorganized</td>
<td>Paragraphs do not have main points</td>
<td>Some orders need to change</td>
<td>Few orders need to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unclear opening</td>
<td>Weak opening</td>
<td>Clear opening</td>
<td>Clear opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too general</td>
<td>Main paragraphs do not show a clear connection to the writer's opinion</td>
<td>Main paragraphs provide clear connections to the writer's opinion,</td>
<td>Main paragraphs provide clear connections to the writer's opinion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No examples &amp; reasons</td>
<td>No examples or reasons</td>
<td>May need more examples &amp; reasons</td>
<td>Good examples &amp; reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opening &amp; Closing not matched well</td>
<td>Weak closing</td>
<td>Nice closing</td>
<td>Nice closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Originality</td>
<td>No emotion Facts only style</td>
<td>Expressed feeling, but not own style yet</td>
<td>Improving toward establishing your style</td>
<td>Your writing style is emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clearly shown in your writing style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Bad Tile 私の～ いい～</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Original, but not personal</td>
<td>Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not matched w content</td>
<td>Matched w content</td>
<td>Matched w content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Did not complete</td>
<td>Less than the guided amount</td>
<td>About the guided amount</td>
<td>More than the guided amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Covered content and more than expected length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules/Manners</td>
<td>Need more achievement</td>
<td>Some mistakes</td>
<td>One or two mistakes</td>
<td>No mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No mistakes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix K: Topics/Themes and Teaching Approach for INTS 222 Composition

New Schedule of Composition Topics and Teaching Approach To Be Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Composition</th>
<th>Approach Used</th>
<th>Topic &amp; (Goal of Learning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Kata and WW approach</td>
<td>“My Favorite Season” or “Time” (Write about one topic, but not in chronological order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>Rewrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Kata and WW approach</td>
<td>“Travel” (Introducing how to make a title, and make four paragraphs, Creating a title)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>Rewrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>“My Favorite Place in A House” (Provide depth in the third paragraph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikebana approach</td>
<td>Rewrite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>