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Multimodal Scaffolding Teaching: Role-Taking or Role-Creating in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Oral Communication Class in Japan [1]

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This study is an investigation of the impact of multimodal scaffolding teaching through in-class drama workshop tasks among a group of first-year English education major students studying English in an EFL oral communication class at a national university in Japan. Students' role-play dialogues were video-recorded and transcribed to identify oral communication challenges so as to make informed interventions in a series of drama workshops that were again video-recorded and transcribed after the intervention to assess progress made in addressing the original communication problems. Questionnaires and interviews at the start and end of the study were used to measure students' enthusiasm and analyse their self-assessment. The findings indicate that scaffolding drama workshops in which students create role-play dialogues engages them in the subject, facilitates their learning, and brings out multimodal features that are necessary for effective oral communication.

1 Introduction

This study evaluates the effect of role-creating and role-playing on student interaction and oral communication improvement through the assessment of the efficacy of "multimodality" and "scaffolding". Multimodality is "the phenomenon in texts and communicative events whereby a variety of semiotic modes are integrated into a unified whole" (Van Leeuwen & Kress 2001: 107). Scaffolding, first described by Wood et al. (1976) involves tailored guidance by an educator in which a variety of teaching techniques are used to assist novices toward better understanding and greater independence in the learning process.

This study uses a freshman class of 10 EFL learners, majoring in English education at a national university in Japan. The students are enrolled in a year-long (30 weeks) English conversation course held once a week for 90 minutes. The aim of the course is to develop English oral communication skills through pair and group activities on daily-life topics. The coursebook is supplemented with language learning activities, such as slideshow presentations, drama

activities and videos of students' activities for self-reflection and self/peer evaluation.

2 Review of current challenges in Japanese EFL

According to the "English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization" from the Ministry of Education of Japan (MEXT 2013), the goal of foreign language teaching in Japan is designed to help students understand English, develop the skills to use the language, build ability to communicate in the language, and to foster interest towards other languages and cultures for the purpose of cross-cultural understanding. However, the approach to teaching English in Japan as an "academic subject," without equal zeal toward promoting communication skills in formal school settings is rather detrimental to the perceptions that students hold towards English (Butler & Iino 2005; Nishino & Watanabe 2008; Hino 2017) and counterproductive in respect to the above stated goal by MEXT. Consequently, it is common to find Japanese learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) manifesting difficulty in sustaining daily conversation in English. According to Tsuboya-Newell (2017), the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index ranked the English level of Japanese 35th out of 72 countries. Tsuboya-Newell further maintains that, although English is mandatory in junior high and high schools in Japan, Japanese still find it difficult to sustain daily conversation in English blaming it on the way English is taught in schools and on some aspects of Japanese culture. These are summarised as follows:

First, English is studied in Japan as a foreign language, and classes are in almost all cases monolingual and homogeneous. Consequently, students tend to use their L1 amongst themselves and persuading students to use only English can be a tough task for teachers. Moreover, students are not exposed to spoken English outside the classroom because multilingual contexts are limited in Japan.

Second, junior high and high school English teaching in Japan continues to be the grammar-translation type by native Japanese teachers of English in order to prepare Japanese students for university entrance examinations that prioritize reading and writing skills over communicative English skills (Mizuno, 2003; Hosoki, 2011). Tsuboya-Newell (2017: 1) adds that junior high school and high school English teaching in Japan focuses on "accuracy and avoiding grammatical mistakes and students spend a great deal of time copying out what was written on the blackboard and memorizing it in preparation for tests". Therefore, the classroom is teacher-centered with few opportunities for classroom interaction.

The Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET 1987) was introduced by placing native speakers of English from many countries into Japanese school classrooms as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). According to the JET program's homepage, participants who apply to move to Japan from overseas on the JET program are not required to have any teaching experience or TESOL

certificate as part of their qualifications. Although the purpose of the JET program is to help Japanese teachers of English incorporate communicative activities into English lessons and to increase mutual understanding between Japan and other nations, "the grammar-translation approach still prevails in Japanese classrooms and many students after finishing high school, tend to come away with a very strong grasp of English grammar but very little actual communicative skill" (ibid. 213).

In this study, scaffolding and multimodality are used to help Japanese learners overcome cultural tendencies to speak in EFL oral communication classes and provide communicative opportunities by establishing fun and creative situations like drama role-play tasks so that students can use English in a meaningful way as they interact with peers in small groups.

Drama in foreign language teaching has its beginnings in the 19th Century (Schewe, 2007 as cited in Giebert 2014: 1). With increasing prevalence of the Communicative Approach since the late 1970s, drama-based pedagogy has become recognized by some teachers as integral to foreign language teaching although approaches vary. Drama-based language instruction has been defined by Holden (1981: 1) as "any activity which asks the student to portray a) himself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation" – a definition which can be applied to most formats of drama in language teaching and includes role-play as a form of drama (Giebert 2014:1).

3 Method

This study draws from qualitative and quantitative research methods and uses questionnaires, interviews and video recordings to gain an understanding of the existing language learning challenges that students face.

3.1 Questionnaires and Interviews

The teacher had each student complete a questionnaire and had students volunteer to be interviewed in groups of 5 to investigate any prior experiences students have had with drama approaches to language learning, scaffolding, and multimodal methods. At the end of the study, the same students completed survey questions and were again interviewed in groups to assess the progress made. Feedback from students triangulated the study providing an emic perspective to add to the etic view of the analysis. Triangulation, according to Angouri (2010: 34), refers to the "convergence of findings and corroboration" of research results and is therefore important in that the different data sets collected from interviews and questionnaire assured the validity of the study as they all led to similar results when analysed and hence allowed for 'confident interpretation' (ibid.).

3.2 Video recordings

The study used students' pre-intervention (Table 3) and post-intervention role play performance (see Appendix) video recordings to analyse non-verbal communication modes apart from spoken words that added meaning to students' oral communication, helping them reach the goal of clearer communication and being better understood by their interlocutors.

3.3 Research Questions and hypothesis

The following questions direct this research:

- Does a multimodal approach to teaching enhance student interaction and oral communication?
- Could role-play tasks promote scaffolding to support oral communication?
- How do the techniques of scaffolding and multimodality impact students' investment and attitude for learning?

The underlying hypothesis of this study is that, in contrast to static role-play dialogues found in some Japanese university English oral communication textbooks, multimodal scaffolding teaching involving role creating and playing through in-class drama workshops would effectively improve students' oral communication skills.

3.4 Ethical issues

Ethical issues involving the protection of students' dignity and publication of the information in the research were strictly observed, based on the British Association of Applied Linguistics "Recommendations for good practice in Applied Linguistics student projects" (2000). Following the recommendations, students were not required to devote extra time to the study. Interviews, questionnaires, writing of role-plays, recording and rehearsal took place during regular class hours, or as regular homework.

Another ethical issue was respecting the students' decision not to participate, thus, complying with Kitchener's (1984) idea of autonomy involving securing optimal freedom of choice, action and consequence for students, supporting self-determination, and not resisting or interfering with decisions. Hence consent was gained from students to have their spoken opinions included in the study, and any refusals were to be complied with. If students chose not to participate in the study, they would be given a separate guided-learning activity from the coursebook instead and would be treated with all fairness throughout the study.

Prior to the study, an information sheet was distributed to the students outlining the study's aims and goals, the participation desired from students, the duration of the study, and how their identities would be kept confidential.

Students were guaranteed anonymity when consent was given and destruction of the data if consent was withheld. The identities, names, and age of the students were kept confidential. Students were asked for their permission to video-record their work and understood that their recorded videos would be used for research purposes only. It was made clear to students that videos would not be uploaded to any social network media.

All information provided to students was double-checked for veracity and completeness and did not in any way anticipate the results of the study. Approval was gained to carry out this study from the head of English department of the university including written consent granting permission. It was also made clear that the final copy of the study would be made available in an accessible form to students, and students would have the right to comment on it.

4 Implementation

On the first day of class, the study was explained to students and consent to participate was obtained. On the second and third days a lesson on *self-introduction* and *talking about family* was taught. The lesson content featured useful vocabulary words, questions, and conversation strategies appropriate in *self-introductory and talking about family* settings. The lesson content, from the coursebook (Kenny 2006: 11), included the following language points:

Lesson 1: Self-Introduction

- Vocabulary and phrases: commute, suburban, by myself, neighbourhood, be interested in, born, favourite, rural, urban, area.
- Questions: What's your name? Where are you from? Where do you live now? How long does it take you to get here? How do you come to school? What's your hometown like? What do you usually do during your commute? Do you live with your family or by yourself?
- Conversation strategies: Starting a conversation> How are you doing? How is it going? Responses: Great! Good! Pretty good! Ok! Not bad! Alright! Not so good! – Letting your partner talk> How about you? – Asking to repeat> Pardon me? Excuse me? – Ending a conversation> Nice talking with you. Response: You too.

Lesson 2: Talking about family

- Vocabulary and phrases: an only child, be different from, bossy, get along well, relatives, selfish, spoiled, strict, talkative, typical, bald.
- Questions: How many people are there in your family? What's your mother like? What does your father look like? Who do you get along well with in your family? Who do you look like in your family? What famous person does your mother look like? Who fights the most in your family? What's your father's best point?

- Conversation Strategies: Getting time to think> Mmmm... Let me see, Mmmm... Let me think, that's a good question, that's a difficult question.

In the 4th class, students memorized a *self-introduction* static role-play dialogue from the coursebook and presented it in the 5th class. This was video recorded and analysed. During the 6th and 7th classes students created original role-plays on the topic of '*self-introduction and talking about family*'. The teacher moved between groups as facilitator to ensure the role-plays were coherent and appropriate for a self-introductory and talking about family situations, that the students were using target vocabulary words, questions, and conversation strategies taught. In the 8th class, each group performed its role-play dialogues to the other students and the performances were recorded. Some scaffolding techniques that were employed were (1) questions leading to the cause and effect development of roles, story coherence, and defining characters; and (2) pre-teaching brainstorming related vocabulary, 3) making storyboards showing the sequence of events; (4) retelling stories in own words; and (5) writing a summary report of stories.

For the analysis, one role-play performance pre-intervention and one post intervention were chosen by *Amidakuji*, a Japanese fair and fun lottery system for allocating decisions and responsibilities among peers. The role-play performance videos were transcribed and annotated to quantify and classify students' use of visual, aural, spatial and gesture modes.

5 Findings and Discussion

The data provided by the sample of 10 students through interviews, questionnaires and multimodal discourse analysis of students' video recorded role-play performances suggest the correlation between the construct of this study and the methods employed are significant to gauge the efficacy of the outcome.

Students' responses and data from the different data sets were collected to show evidence of the validity of multimodal scaffolding teaching and to respond to the research questions that guide this study. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) of pre-intervention interviews with the two focus groups identified the themes of perceived teacher-centred pedagogy and student taciturnity prevalent in the students' views of language learning in junior high and high school. In this study, these views are considered representative of views from the wider Japanese L2 learner context. In the transcripts, students' privacy was protected by using an alphanumeric system (S1 means Student 1 and T means Teacher).

5.1 Interview transcripts: Thematic analysis

Teacher centred pedagogy was indicated by students' preference of reading and writing skill to speaking skill in language learning as highlighted in the following excerpt:

Excerpt from interview pre-intervention with focus group A — T: Do you prefer speaking, listening, reading or writing English?

S5: Listening.

T: Why?

S5: Why? It's easiest for me.

S2: Listening is not tired for me.

T: Why reading?

S3: I have practiced very hard **s**ince when I was 4 years old.

S1: I am accustomed to read English text in Junior high school and high school.

S4: I practiced reading to enter university in high school, so I prefer it.

As indicated in the above transcript, reading and writing classes forming the basis of English instruction in Japanese junior high and high school seem to be reflected as student-preferred English skill. This potentially correlates with students' poor oral communication skill by the time they enter university. The same patterns were observed with the interviewees in focus group B as follows:

Excerpt from interview pre-intervention with focus group B — T: Do you prefer speaking, listening, reading or writing English?

S1: Reading.

T: Why?

S1: Because I don't like others.

S2: I like writing**.**

T: Why?

S2: Because I don't have to be haste.

S4: I like writing because I am not good at listening and speaking.

Students' lack of interest in listening and speaking or their claim of not being good at listening and speaking may be attributable to a lack of attention paid to these skills in junior high and high school and, thus, affecting their oral communication skill.

The theme of student taciturnity characterized by shyness and hesitance towards speaking in a large class is reflected in the following excerpt of 2 focus group interviews pre-intervention:

Excerpt from interview pre-intervention with focus group A — T: Do you find it easy speaking in a loud voice or using gestures, gaze, and body movement when speaking English?

S2: Maybe with my friend I can do that but not in front of many students or teacher.

T: Why?

S2: Because I am. . . eh. . . shy.

S4: Yes. . . And I don't know how to speak the word in English, so yes...um? <laughter> So I don't like to speak English in many students.

Excerpt from interview pre-intervention with focus group B — T: Do you like discussing and sharing your ideas in small groups?

S1: I like small groups because I like talk with friends in small class, but I am not good at speaking in front of a lot of people.

Post-intervention student views indicated that multimodal scaffolding methods were effective in addressing students' perceived communication challenges. These were captured in students' own words with the focus group interview transcript post intervention.

Excerpt from interview post intervention with focus group A — T: Do you think role plays are effective in having the teacher support your learning?

S3: Yes. Last week we make a script Sam give... gave... give me some advice.

S1: Yes, I think... ehh... through the role play I can speak English ehhh yeah <laughter> more easily than before.

S5: I could learn more phrases... different ways of say something so in the future if I have chance to make role play, I will use the phrases.

T: Were you worried about making mistakes during the role creating sessions in your small groups?

S2: No.

T: Why not?

S3: Because all is... because I know all... I know everyone... so maybe I mistake... mmm... have a mistake but everyone doesn't say something about it.

Excerpt from interview post intervention with focus group B — T: Do you think role plays are effective in having the teacher support your learning?

S1: Yes.

S2: Thanks to teacher's help we can make role play.

T: Have you got any comments?

S1: Yes... ahhh... creating a role play is difficult for me but when I played here, I enjoyed, and audience was laugh and fun so totally I like role play.

S2: Before playing role play, I don't like speaking but now I like speaking a little.

S5: I like role playing because I talked a lot with my friends.

Talking with friends, talking in small groups, and having teacher support the creation of role-play dialogues as elicited from the above focus group interviews helps to provide answers to the research question of how role-play tasks promote scaffolding to support learning of oral communication. Although data of the focus group, as analysed above, does not exclusively prove the effectiveness of the researcher's intervention as the students could have chosen to say what they wanted the interviewer (their teacher) to hear (not actually what they think or do), focus group interviews still reflect tendencies and remain a useful research tool in designing research studies (Edley & Litosseliti 2010).

5.2 Questionnaire responses: Quantitative analysis

Questionnaire surveys carried out at the start and end of study gauged students' enthusiasm and self-assessment with the following question items (responses were marked on a 5-point scale indicating usefulness: 1 = never, 2 = a little, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always):

In my junior high school and high school days, our English teachers encouraged us to incorporate gestures, posture, body movement, facial expressions and right voice tone when speaking English in class.

In my English classes in junior high and high schools, focus was on reading and writing.

I preferred practicing oral communication in my junior high and high school English classes than reading and writing.

I practiced English in small groups in English classes in my junior high and high school.

In my junior high and high school English classes, I practiced English through games, songs or drama.

There were short role-play dialogues in my junior high and high school English coursebooks.

We studied, memorized and performed the role-plays found in our junior high and high school English textbook in our classes.

In our junior high and high school English classes, we created our own role-play dialogues in class with our friends and performed in front of the class.

My English teachers in junior high and high school mostly lectured and translated when teaching me English.

I could interact and collaborate with my friends to practice English in my junior high and high school English classes.

The results were as follows:

Question	1 = never	2 = a little	3 = sometimes	4 = often	5 = always
1	10	50	20	0	20
2	0	0	10	40	50
3	20	40	20	10	10
4	30	20	30	20	0
5	0	30	50	10	10
6	40	20	30	0	10
7	30	60	10	0	0
8	80	20	0	0	0
9	10	30	50	10	0
10	0	30	30	30	10

Table 1: Results of questionnaire pre-intervention, responses by percentage

Certain patterns can be discerned where ≤60% responses cluster at "never/a little" in Q1, Q3, Q6, Q7. These question items tap perceived amount of oral communication encouragement. There is low student preference for oral communication lessons (Q3), which suggests a relationship between secondary education practice and communication preference. Nevertheless, student taciturnity (Q4) appear to cohere with textbook-based instruction (Q2).

Below are the questionnaire results from the end of the drama role-play workshop activity inquiring into perceived students' performance and oral communication improvement to answer research questions concerning effect of multimodal teaching (responses were marked on a 5-point scale indicating frequency: 1 = not useful at all, 2 = not very useful, 3 = somewhat useful, 4 = useful, 5 = very useful):

What is *your* overall impression of the role-play activities you participated in?

How useful were the role-play activities in maximizing your speaking?

How useful was it to interact and collaborate with classmates through role-play activities?

What was it like creating your own role-play dialogues as opposed to memorizing and performing the role-play dialogues found in your English textbook?

What was it like discussing your ideas in small groups?

What was it like performing in front of your friends?

How useful is it to speak with gestures, facial expressions and gaze when practicing your role-play?

What was it like to combine gestures, facial expressions, gaze, body movement and speaking?

How useful was the language you developed in role-play activities to the language you need out of class?

How useful is role-play in language learning?

Table 2: Results of questionnaire post-intervention, responses by percentage

In contrast to pre-intervention responses, post-intervention responses display less even distribution clustering ≤60% in "4 = Useful" and "5 = Very Useful", with ≤70% in Q1-Q9. Therefore, analysis may require examining similar higher percentages. Q1, Q3, and Q4 had 80% clustering, displaying similar response patterns for interaction and role-playing. Q2, Q5, Q7, and Q8 at 90% suggest perceived compatibility between role-play speaking enhancement (Q2), small group discussion (Q5), and body language training (Q7, Q8). Interestingly, 100% of Q9 responses recognized usefulness of "out of class practices" in the language class and so supporting Norton and Kramsch's (2000) argument that the language teacher needs to integrate the experiences of language learners into the school language program and take into account their varying investments in the language under study: "Unless learners believe that their investments in the target language are an integral and important part of the

Question	1 = Not useful at all	2 = Not very useful	3 = Somewhat useful	4 = Useful	5 = Very useful
1	0	0	20	60	20
2	0	0	10	60	30
3	0	0	20	20	60
4	0	0	20	40	40
5	0	0	10	30	60
6	0	0	30	40	30
7	0	0	10	40	50
8	0	10	0	30	60
9	0	0	0	80	20
10	0	0	40	10	50

language curriculum, they may resist the teacher's pedagogy or possibly even remove themselves from the class entirely" (Norton & Kramsch 2000: 141).

Lower percentage responses included Q6 performance usefulness (70%) and Q10 overall usefulness in language learning (60%). This last response is notable since it reveals doubts about overall pedagogical value, despite unanimity concerning "real" out-of-class usefulness. This suggests a perceptual disconnection between learning and applicability. In this small sample size (n =10), correlations between responses have limited value. However, since this is an exploratory study, some results are worth noting between pre- and post-intervention responses as directions for further inquiry. For example, there is a very strong inverse correlation between Q4 pre- and Q8 post-, meaning that the degree of perceived lack of small group practice experience in junior high and high school associated closely with degrees of perceived usefulness of combining gestures, facial expressions, gaze, body movement, and speaking. A plausible interpretation could be that first-time small group work increases focus on non-verbal communication. One stronger inverse correlation is Q7 pre- and Q5 post- with perceived lack of English textbook role-play experience associating highly with perceived usefulness of discussing ideas in small groups. Students possibly took time amongst themselves to analyse the meaning of the role-play interactions. Both correlation results suggest that small group work leaves a stronger impression.

Overall, this limited quantitative analysis suggests that students generally have little experience of small-group work and role-playing. This result confirms personal observations and information gleaned from informal conversations with students and teachers about English study in Japan. Results must be understood to come from a small sample size; however, since primary and secondary education curriculum is strongly standardized in Japan, larger

samples may yield similar results.

An analysis of these results suggests that working in small groups to practice speaking was effective as students were provided with the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another in a less intimidating environment. Such an environment gave students the confidence they needed to ask questions and express their ideas. Also, in small groups the teacher could identify what students needed to say and helped them to say it correctly. Such assistance is characteristic of scaffolding, so students can attain higher levels of understanding (Wood et al. 1976). When learning occurs in a space where students create and perform a piece of work with teacher support, as in this activity of creating and performing role-plays, the classroom becomes a place where students explore, have fun, and/or play and learn. The drama role-play workshop activities provided students with the opportunity to use the target language and learn for fun and enjoyment.

5.3 Role play video recordings: Pre and post intervention

Pre-intervention role-play performance videos showed static speech rendition, little or no interactive talk, and very few multimodal features. Therefore, the function of such role-play conversations to achieve effective oral communication seems questionable. Although the pre-intervention role-plays featured vocabulary words, conversation strategies and questions reflecting the topics studied in class, the students were passive and less interactive. Analysing the pre-intervention role-play performances from a multimodal standpoint, it is argued that students' limited use of gestures, gaze, posture and movement rendered their interaction less genuine; however, scaffolding during classroom drama role-play activities resulted in better quality interaction. Pre-intervention role play dialogue is typical of role plays in EFL coursebooks. In such role play dialogues, students already know what their partners are going to say, and so the exercise ends up being a mere rote exchange of words. The lack of visual prompts and oral clues renders the exchange uncommunicative, since it lacks an 'information gap' which is essential for "genuine communication" (Dougill 1987). The following role-play (Table 3) is a dialogue based on the first lesson of the coursebook (Kenny 2006: 10f) on *introductions*:

Table 3: Example of role play dialogue from the coursebook

Static and dry role-play dialogues, as in the above example, have been criticized by many scholars for their ineffectiveness of improving oral communication. Legutke and Thomas state:

In spite of trendy jargon in textbooks and teacher's manual, very little is actually communicated in the L2 classroom. The way it is structured does not seem to simulate the wish of learners to say something, nor does it tap what they might want to say. (Legutke & Thomas 1991: 8)

Rather than working with such static role-plays, a better approach would be to have students create and play roles.

In the post-intervention role-play performances, the students simulated

A. How is it going?	B. Pretty good. Thanks. How about you?
A. Great.	B. My name is Cathy. I am from the US. I like snowboarding, driving and listening to music. How about you?
A. My name is Claudia. I am from Canada. I like listening to music and surfing the internet.	B. Pardon me?
A. I like listening to music and surfing the internet.	B. Oh I see. I have to go now. Nice talking with you.
A. You too.	B. See you.

real-life scenarios; furthermore, while they were practicing and preparing for possible English language situations, the teacher scaffolded the interactions to help the students manage tension, ambiguities, and information gaps. Students could fine-tune their body orientation, gaze direction, physical movements, and facial expressions to achieve greater communication effects.

Based on the conventions of Flewitt (2007) and Cameron (2001), the transcription process analysed features of speech, such as intonation, pauses, gestures, movements, gaze, sounds and facial expressions. Non-verbal components of student exchanges viewed as relevant to the analysis were described in brackets (before or after an utterance). Non-word utterances such as 'mmm', 'ehh', 'uh-hum' were used when they functioned to communicate surprise, agreement, or interruptions. Words spoken with a lot of emphasis were represented in italics as highlighted in the following grid:

Table 4: Multimodal grid of post-intervention role-play (see appendix for full transcript)

In the excerpt of the conversation, S1 used hand gestures to show focus on the hair colour change given that they had not seen each other for a long time. She moved her hand to indicate the hair, which was the object of attention, and used the head gesture of nodding before completing her response "Yes, it really suits you" for reinforcement. By running her hand through her hair as she speaks, she communicates how much she likes her hair and how well she appreciates her friend's compliment.

In another excerpt, S1 and S2 make use of gaze to add meaning. They look intently and with great interest at the picture in which S3 is showing to S2: When S1 learns that S3's friend is 30 years old, she bursts into laughter as a way of saying the wide age difference can be problematic (she is 18) and to show her preference for a younger person.

S3 uses body movements and leans forward to show the pictures to S1 and S2 while they supplement their verbal expression of '*He is so cool*', said in a rising tone, with gaze direction towards the phone, and touching the phone to show interest and to add more meaning.

S3 made a comment about '*a pet lion*' rendered in a rising tone to emphasize

Student	Body movement	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression	Intonation
S 1	(stands, walks to front of class)	(flipping through her notes) (looks at picture intently) (maintains gaze on S2's hair)	(pointing to S1's hair) (nods) (runs her fingers through her hair)	mmm (non-word utterance - thinking) (laughter)	
S 2				wow! (shows surprise)	
S 3	(reaches out to his phone from his pocket) (leans towards S1& S2)	(looking through his,contact list for friend's number)		mmm (non-word utterance-thinking)	*He has a pet lion?*
S1 & S2					*He is so cool* *Dubai?*

power and wealth, rather than using a more common phrase such as 'he is so rich' and to draw the attention of S1 more to the guy S3 is recommending. S1's facial expressions convincingly communicate surprise, together with her comment "wow". On learning that the guy lives in Dubai, S1 and S2 repeat "*Dubai*?" in unison with a rising tone accompanied by facial expressions to underline surprise and interest.

The multimodal representations in these students' post-intervention role-plays illustrate how diverse modes are fundamental to everyday communication. This highlights the usefulness of video recording for providing feedback to students; had only the audio been recorded and transcribed, students would not have been able to understand multimodal intricacies of how their interactions unfolded and why the communication flowed so effectively. The video recording, on the other hand, was a medium for students to get a sense of the subtleties of non-verbal communication.

6 Limitations

This study has a number of features that impacted the interpretation of the findings, constrained generalizations, and influenced application to practice. Subsequent research into this topic is therefore desirable.

Firstly, the small sample of 10 students was a shortcoming, because it was too small to offer any strong statistical evidence. The small sample made

it difficult to convincingly demonstrate how the results of the questionnaires and interviews collected were representative of the Japanese English language learning context as a whole. However, a class size of 10-20 is a typical class size for a Japanese oral communication university class, so the findings will be relevant to those in the field, bearing in mind the limitations outlined, and understanding that the findings are not representative of all learners.

Furthermore, the data on students' self-reported evaluation could not be independently verified. Thus, these self-reported data could be seen as one-sided or subjective that could negatively affect the results of study. This was mitigated somewhat by the analysis of the video recordings of the two role-plays, which allowed for close assessment of pre- and post-intervention English communication ability.

7 Conclusion

This study has reported on a multimodal scaffolding teaching approach through in-class drama role-play workshops in a Japanese university oral communication class of first-year English majors. The hypothesis of the study was that, unlike the static role-play dialogues typical of Japanese university English oral communication textbooks, scaffolding and multimodal pedagogy involving role creating and playing through in-class drama workshops would effectively improve student's oral communication skills. The findings of this study suggest that students' improvement in their oral communication skills was indeed perceptible.

While further research is needed, this study offers insight into the efficacy of multimodal scaffolding through drama role-play workshops in a Japanese university oral communication context. Analysis of pre- and post-intervention video recordings, questionnaire surveys, and group interviews showed a marked improvement and increase in self-reported English communication abilities. In their post-intervention role-play performances, in which the students simulated real-life scenarios rather than rote repeating of static dialogues, they were deeply involved and showed a greater sense of investment in language study. Their enthusiasm can be attributed to the fact that they could apply some of their out of school literacy practices to the creation of role plays.

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Appendix: drama role-play dialogue post intervention

S1. (seated in class. Flipping through her notes as if studying. Sound of school chime. Gets up and walk in front of the class) Oh Ayaka, long time no see. How is it going

S2. (seated) I am great. How about you?

S1. (takes her seat next to S2) The class was boring

S2. That's true

S1. By the way, you change your hair colour (pointing to S1's hair)

S2. Yes

S1. Probably when I saw you last time your hair was gold

S2. Yes. Does this colour suit me?

S1. (nodding) yes it really suits you

S2. Thank you. I like it (running her hands through her hair) Do you dye your hair too

S1. Ummmm (thoughtful)

S2. I think purple looks good on you

S1. Purple

S2. Purple?

S1. Purple

S2. I like purple, but my part time job's rule doesn't allow me to dye my hair

S1. Ahhh your part time job's rule. . . Ohh that's too bad

S3. (enters the classroom) hello Haruka why don't we go to eat lunch

S1. Is he your friend?

S2. No, he is my boyfriend

S1. Wow!! Your boyfriend? I didn't know that. Wow!! Congratulations (broad smile). My name is Ayaka, nice to meet you.

S3. My name is Yuma. Nice to meet you too. Umm Ayaka, have you ever met me before?

S1. Ummm let me see (thoughtful) really?

S3. Oh, I met you at sports class last week

S1. Sports class? Ah yeah, we played tennis together

S3. Yes, so your. . . is your hobby is playing tennis, isn't it?

S1. Yes, I like playing tennis

S2. I think she is a very good tennis player

S3. Really

S2. Yes

S1. Thank you

SS (laughter)

S1. So where do you live?

S3. I live in Omotesando by myself

S1. Mmmm

S3. Yes

S2. Where do your family live?

S3. My family? My family lives in Dubai

S1 and S2. Dubai?

S3. Yes, actually my father is working

S1 and S2. Working?
S3. Yes
S2. Why don't you take his place?
S3. Uhhh in the future I want to
S1. Wait wait wait. Do you live in Omotesando?
S3. Yes.
S1. It is famous for that there are a lot of good looking guys
S3. Yes yes
S1. (laughter)
S3. My friends are also handsome like me
S1. Really
S2. Ayaka doesn't have a boyfriend now so please introduce someone to her
S3. Really? So Ayaka what's your type? How tall is your ideal boyfriend?
S1. Uhhh let me see Mmmm I like over 170cm (raising her hand to that length) the best
S3. I see
S2. Over?
S1. Yes Over (nodding) (laughing)
S3. I see. So, you like tall boy?
S3. Yes. Mmmm What does your ideal boy look like?
S1. Mmmm that's a difficult question. My ideal boy is like (makenyu) He is so cool
S3. I think so too
S2. Yes, he is cool
S3. He is so cool (Takes out his smart phone and checks a number of pictures) Just a moment Mmmmm. How about this boy (Shows to S1)?
S1 and S2 (Looking at the pictures) ohh he is so cool
S1. How old is he?
S3. He is about 30 years old
S1. 30 years old? (laughter) He is too old for me. Show me another boy please(laughter)
S3. (Checking other pictures on her phone) How about this one
S1 and S2. (Looking)
S1. Ahhh He is so cool. What is his name.
S3. His name is Sakenyu
S1 and S2. Sakenyu? (laughter)
S3. Yes. He is also rich, and he has a pet. The pet is lion
S1. Lion?
S2. Wow (surprised) This is surprising to me. Ayaka you will never have a chance like this again.
S1. Yes, I think so
S2. You should manage to meet Ayaka and makinyu. . . no no no Sakenyu (laughter)
S3. Yes. But wait a moment. Let me call sakenyu to ask him to eat lunch together

S1. Really? Thank you
S2. (To S1) I am hungry
S3. (phone ringer)
S1. What do you want to eat for lunch?
S2. I want to eat chicken, ice-cream
S3. (clears his voice)
S1. Ice-cream. . . ummm I can't I am dieting
S2. Dieting is too hard
S1. Yes, too hard
S3. Hello. . . hello I am Yuma
Voice: Yuma, maybe you have a wrong number
S3. Sorry, I have a wrong number (checks his phone for the right number)
S1 and S2 (murmuring)
S3. (calling) Hi Saken shall we eat lunch together. . . oh Ok. Thank you. See you later
Hey Ayaka. Good news. He will come soon
S1. Really. Thank you
S2. Oh, let's go to the dining court together. Good luck Ayaka
S3. Good luck
S1. Thanks
SS. Stand put chairs back