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Abstract

This research was sparked off by listening to the Miles Davis recording “*What I Say*”, a twenty one minute piece from the jazz album ‘Live Evil’, which was recorded in 1970. This track features Miles Davis and his ensemble of Gary Bartz, John McLaughlin, Keith Jarrett, Michael Henderson, Jack DeJohnette and Airto Moreira. Bob Palmer, of Rolling Stone music magazine, stated that “...in an area of music where individual virtuosity is the rule rather than the exception, give-and-take between players becomes all important” (Palmer, 1972). ‘*What I Say*’ could be a metaphor for student speech. The song doesn’t have an easily determinable meaning as it is purely an instrumental, as such without lyrics, but as with the jazz genre, it carries emotional resonance for each listener. Pérez-Sobrino (2014) in her research paper “*Meaning construction in verbomusical environments: Conceptual disintegration and metonymy*” looks at how different levels of multimodal meaning are rendered into verbo-musical environments. Pérez-Sobrino (2014) focuses on a particular strategy of musical meaning (re)construction, the way in which the different patterns of conceptual disintegration that structure the multimodal expression trigger the activation of metonymic reasoning at the conceptual level, in her study through classical music. Meaning (re)construction is here understood as a two-step process: the first involves the configuration of certain cues to structure the multimodal manifestation (*product*), and the second relates to the cognitive operations triggered at the conceptual level by those multimodal cues (*process*). In the case of another musician actually playing with Miles Davis, multimodal cues may trigger cognitive operations at both the conceptual level and through the activation of metonymic reasoning. In the case of someone only listening directly

to a jazz recording, such as that of Miles Davis, cognitive operations may be triggered at the conceptual level. Atypical English language learners at college level may not find jazz music the slightest bit interesting, and when time is a premium in teaching, it is unrealistic to try to install some form of jazz music appreciation in class. In order to circumnavigate this problem, it is better for the teacher to understand such products and processes and apply these notions to actual lessons. Jazz improvisation, such as that in the recording '*What I Say*', offers a new insight into teaching English, through improvisation itself. It offers a valuable alternative to rigid lessons and is easy to plan and apply. As with musicians learning how to improvise, teachers need to see through apparent ambiguity, an integral element in the genre of jazz, and clarify processes, meanings and products; and constantly question themselves. Such awareness and focus in lesson planning and adaptability and improvisation in class will allow them to pass on their ideas to the students themselves. This research paper focuses on what students actually say, in particular with a focus on improvisation skits during drama plays in a group environment.

Keywords: English, improvisation, socio-linguistics, jazz music.

Improvisation

Just as ‘flipped teaching’ is a current educational buzzword, improvisation is the base of the idea, in that the teacher and students can reverse roles, share roles and can actually teach other. Learning becomes more active and cooperative, rather than a lecture. The theme or concept of the song ‘*What I Say*’ need not be limited to the teacher, it can stand for student empowerment and self-realization, joint learning and peer interaction, and above all creativity and improvisation of learning and learning techniques.

As in any event in history, the invention or production of something, a language learner’s utterance, this song represents all of Davis’s work up to that point. It is not stated explicitly by Davis that this is the truth, but in each and every performance, a musician plays to his knowledge and ability, his learnt knowledge and experience. This manifests itself in the language speaker, who also at any point in their language learning is able to communicate in whatever form to the best of their learnt experiences. The role of improvisation is that a musician, language speaker, or even a child has a reservoir of untapped potential that can be used to overcome a problem that they can face at any time, without prior knowledge or expectation of the problem. The randomness we face in everyday life, whether at home, at school, at work or on vacation, presents a myriad of opportunities that we must face. Often language learners are at a disadvantage when they encounter such randomness as they aren’t prepared for unexpectedness. The natural reaction can be failure in making a successful communication turn, which in turn leads to demotivation and disillusionment. This is enhanced by the culture of learning, education and mistake making in Japan. The Confucian moral code that engulfs every part of Japanese society is the biggest obstacle to English language learning. This moral code, steeped in its subservience to loyalty, honor and respect, prevents students from effective questioning and debating. This code was entrenched in the Chinese Imperial Examination System two thousand years ago, yet still permeates many parts of Japanese society. Students are tested to pass tests from elementary school to University entrance examinations. The sole focus of many classes, especially English classes are to pass the necessary final test. Students often rote learn and memorize the essential elements, ignoring the wider and deeper areas of study that would enhance their knowledge. Perhaps that’s why jazz remains a minority music genre in Japan, it’s spontaneity instantly at odds with a society based on order and place. The

free spirited world of jazz improvisation and the bending and manipulation of rules sits poorly in such a system.

Against the ingrained background, sits the musical influence of Miles Davis. Miles Dewey Davis III (May 26, 1926 – September 28, 1991) was an American jazz musician, trumpeter, bandleader, and composer. The musical apprenticeship and career of Miles Davis displays a very strong relationship between Miles Davis as a student and as a teacher, being scaffolded in his learning and also scaffolding the growth of others. Throughout his career Miles Davis recruited young musicians and helped them develop their skills and talents as musicians and confidence in performing and improvising. His management style was said to be strict and highly demanding at times, but very few other musicians or band leaders have ever influenced so many notable musicians and bands from diverse genres. Many well-known musicians rose to prominence as members of Davis's ensembles, including saxophonists John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, and Wayne Shorter; pianists Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett; guitarists John McLaughlin, and Pete Cosey; bassists Paul Chambers, and Marcus Miller; and drummers Jimmy Cobb, and Jack DeJohnette.

For most adult 'native' speakers of a language, its second nature to speak their mother tongue. However, any language speaker not using their mother tongue faces a constant dilemma about what they say, whether a structure, lexis or pronunciation issue. Hopefully, the students included in this research paper will gain some insight into the actual and real importance of every utterance they make, whether they deem it successful or not, the end result will hopefully highlight that improvisation is essential for their English language skills and usage. This may come about in an abstract way through the application of a Miles Davis piece of music, namely '*What I Say*', and how it may be of a positive influence in class and student attitudinal feelings towards class time, English and language learning. The actual music need not even be played to the students, as it doesn't have any direct link to their actual studies, in this case an English 'Drama' class. In actuality, any jazz piece that displays improvisation and creativity, basically fundamental to jazz music, would suffice. The importance of this particular piece of music is in its title and imagined meaning for myself as the teacher, to incorporate some way into my teaching philosophy or pedagogy that will indirectly influence the students through my teaching activities. As the ordained 'teacher' or 'facilitator', it is my responsibility to actually teach in the class, in this case English communication through the medium of drama. My teaching is driven by

my own personal pedagogy that hopefully constantly changes through experiences, teaching, introspection and self-awareness. As a ‘teacher’, it is our responsibility to address our pedagogies in order to better facilitate learning for our students. In concurrent research, “*There Are No Mistakes On The Bandstand (Or In The Classroom)*” (Deadman, 2015), I utilized ten presentation talks from the website TED.com, themed around the concepts of improvisation, creativity and education. This research found that one common element of these concepts is the ingrained theme of improvisation of creativity, in this case I chose to do this through the application of Miles Davis’s song ‘*What I Say*’ and applied to education through the ‘Drama’ course I teach at Nijijima Gakuen.

The lessons I take from this research, through the piece of music and its influence on my own teaching philosophy, will be passed on to the students in an indirect and unobtrusive way through lesson planning, benefitting both myself and the students as stakeholders in the course. The success or failure of this research will allow further considerations and refinements to be enacted.

In a similar study, Purser and Montuori (1994) used a recording of Miles Davis’s jazz ensemble to demonstrate how listening to one of their performances could enable business team members to simulate the conditions facilitative of dialogue. By enacting the behavioral and attitudinal qualities of jazz ensemble musicians, students learnt how to temporarily suspend their assumptions and opinions, thereby reducing defensive and self-oriented behavior in their teams.

Purser and Montuori (1994) looked at how organizational and human resource management courses incorporate team learning tasks requiring high degrees of cooperation and interdependence among students, or business team members. They observed that student learning teams are frequently used but it is common to witness dysfunctional group dynamics, which can be attributed to individual or self-orientated role behaviors. Such behaviors may include defending opinions, domination of speaking exercises, or inhibited members who fail to communicate for fear of appearing foolish. This notion can be directly applied to foreign language learners, who more often than not, especially in Japan, fear public speaking in the classroom or in the real world, due to domination of talk time by a few speakers, fear of embarrassment and appearing foolish and the classroom cultural tendency to avoid public speaking in English lessons.

For Purser and Montuori (1994) the jazz ensemble is a useful metaphor for team

learning in that it is an indigenous American art form that does not suppress individual creativity in the service of group conformity, as interestingly the authors point out, the Japanese team concept does. The Japanese team concept, whether in the classroom or boardroom, equates a good team player as one who doesn't make waves, avoids conflicts, and conforms to group norms, adhering to a corporate image. The sense of uniformity is prevalent in almost every part of Japanese daily life, from conservative, black work suits and school uniforms; to uniformity and stability called for in the language of the media and school textbooks; and the importance of the group, trumping the needs or desires of the individual. Breaking away from tradition and uniformity is not an option, as in the Japanese proverb '*Deru Kui Ha Utareru*', translated as '...the nail that sticks out gets hammered down'. The image of Japan is consensual, homogeneous, pacific, and extremely group-oriented. The ingrained nature of uniformity is a natural deterrent to the freedom associated with jazz music, but it doesn't mean that improvisation skills can be ignored or brushed off as unworkable in a Japanese classroom setting.

In his study of the effects of oral communication in English as a Second Language (ESL) through improvisations, playwriting and rehearsals, Gill (2013) states that students from Asia are brought up on a diet of teacher-controlled education, which is a characteristic trait of relational, collectivist culture that presumes respect for those viewed as superior. Gill comments that such students generally look up to the authority of the teacher for input and prompting, rather than initiate discussion themselves. Drama-based activities like improvisations, playwriting, and rehearsals can help by providing opportunities for autonomous (teacher-free) use of spontaneous spoken language in an informal environment that encourages individuality.

Particular to Japan, Stroud (2013) focuses on communicative teaching methodologies, student motivation and willingness to communicate. Stroud notes that high school classrooms in Japan, which at times can reflect many university classes, display a lack of motivation or student engagement during tasks, including a lack of focus, low level of participation and a tendency to do something other than the task at hand. Although it may be a stereotypical image of Japan, it's often the case that classes are teacher-centered, with a strong focus on language forms rather than the meaning, defined as the 'code' and 'message' by Stroud. Stroud addresses this as an issue of motivation (or lack of it), and subsequently introduces task-based learning (TBL), tailored appropriately to the students in the study. Stroud (2013) states that the

adoption of a traditional Western-style approach to learning cannot simply be carbon-copied into an Asian setting without adjustments being made, being culturally different systems. Stroud is concerned about the rise of student expectations, classroom control, discipline and exams focus. Stroud further notes that clear focus on student motivation will help to get around such problems, focusing on factors alleviating the uncomfortableness of many Japanese students being given a more autonomous, independent role, self-governing and motivation in pair and group work.

Case Study: Romeo and Juliet - Abridged and Improvised

The basis of my teaching, as shown in my current syllabus and lesson outline, is a strong focus rooted in the notion of communication, joint interaction, and mutual understanding, from a foundation in sociolinguistic theory. Traditionally in Japan, the fundamental approach to English language learning or education was grounded in the predominance of text-centered and grammar-centered practices, which did not provide a basis for the student-centered, fluency focused, and problem-solving activities, represented by people interactions in normal day-to-day conversations and activities (McCormick, R. and Murphy, 2008).

In my previous research (Deadman, 2013); I detailed the sociolinguistic theories of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and subsequently, linguist Neil Mercer. The notion of communication stems from the research of Vygotsky, who made claims about the relationship between language and thought, and between individual and society (Mercer, 2000). Vygotsky described language as having two main functions; as a communicative or cultural tool we use for sharing, and for jointly developing knowledge. Vygotsky pointed out that children, and in my opinion *second language learners*, differ in their responsiveness to guidance, instructions and opportunities for learning. They could be the same level but given ‘good instruction’ by a teacher they will differ in new skills and language learnt. By measuring the difference between the original independent capability of each learner and what they are able to achieve when given some guidance and support, education could make a more useful, dynamic assessment of these learners educational prospects and needs. This difference is each learner’s *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). Vygotsky said instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development’, drawing learners just beyond their existing capabilities to ‘stretch’ their intellect and so help them to develop (Mercer, 2000).

Mercer (2000) develops Vygotsky's idea of language as a community or cultural tool in his notions of '*community*' and *communities of practice*. Mercer details what 'communities' of members in terms of; *a shared history of information and expertise*, on which members can draw and which can be passed to new members, a collective identity of sharing knowledge, aims and experiences of doing things together, reciprocal obligations in responsibilities towards each other and access to each other's intellectual resources, and a *discourse* in that language can be reshaped as communicative demands emerge. Mercer (2000) proposed that for a teacher to teach and a learner to learn, they must use talk and joint activity to create a shared communicative space, an *Intermental Development Zone* (IDZ), on the contextual foundations of their common knowledge and aims. In this zone, which is reconstituted constantly as the dialogue continues, the 'teacher', whether an actual teacher or more capable English speaker, and learners negotiate their way through the activity in which they are involved. As with Vygotsky's original ideas of the ZPD, the concept of an IDZ still focuses attention on how a learner progresses under guidance in an activity, but in a way which is more clearly related to the variable contributions of both teacher and learner.

In this way, the 'Drama' syllabus adheres to the groundwork of Vygotsky, and Mercer, that language is a communicative or cultural tool we use for sharing, and for jointly developing knowledge, and as a psychological tool for organizing our individual thoughts, for reasoning, planning, and reviewing our actions. Under this notion, tasks must give opportunities for talk, including sharing information, joint planning, presenting of ideas to the group, joint reasoning, evaluation and decision-making. Collaboration is also learning to participate, talk cannot be separated from what is being talked about; the community of practice will have a language that reflects the domain of the practice.

This research paper is directly linked to my previous teaching and research at Niijima Gakuen. During the 2012/13 drama course I sought out greater peer interaction in all drama tasks and activities, as a source of both student empowerment for their own learning, but also to improve motivating to study, peer interaction, self-realization of English learning goals, and enabling more active learning. Following on from this, in the 2013/14 drama syllabus, there was greater emphasis on student actual play construction, utilizing ideas taught from the course, to adapt and apply to teaching materials already planned. The aim was to add instant flexibility and

improvisation to teaching plans, to cater for students own interests and ideas. In the current drama syllabus of 2014/15, the main aim of my teaching has been to push for more improvisation by the students within as many parts of each lesson as possible, culminating in improvised performances as much as possible within a scaffolded spine to each activity or lesson. Principally, students are able to take control of their own learning, but as a challenge to their abilities and confidence, they need to improvise key parts to install a sense of actual realized ability.

The Niijima Gakuen ‘Drama’ course premise is to help students continue to develop their oral communication skills. This ‘communicative’ course adheres to several communicative ideals, as outlined by Nunan and Lamb (2001, p31); including language being seen as a system for the expression of meaning, though interaction, and activities that involve real communication, and are meaningful to the learners. In addition, the course syllabus includes functions, themes, and tasks rather than the trend of ‘traditionalism’ through phonology, morphology or syntax, and therefore learners are engaged in communication, in processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction. Furthermore, the teacher facilitates communication, rather than adopting a teacher dominant method. Lastly, materials are task based and authentic, in order to promote communicative language. This course strongly enables the collective making sense of experience and solving problems. Mercer (2000) suggests that studying how we normally use language to think together may help us to understand how effective collaboration can be more reliably achieved.

This research is sourced from a six week block of the fifteen week syllabus outlined above. For this six week block, students carried out a project task on Shakespeare’s play ‘Romeo and Juliet’. For the first five lessons, students worked through a set of procedures from watching part of the 1996 film ‘Romeo and Juliet’ (IMDB, 2014), split into five segments watched on a weekly basis, to group work designed to transcribe the play into their own adapted version. In addition, students were given condensed 31-part tableaux of the play. Both sources were challenging for the students in that the film version of ‘Romeo and Juliet’ was set in the modern day world, but used the original Shakespeare script, and the 31-part tableaux condensed the play very succinctly into narrated segments that didn’t have any dialogue to realize the play. However, students were able to watch the film with Japanese subtitles; the importance of watching the film though was to set the scene, realize the tableaux and

gain an understanding of the famous but actually little well-known spine of the story.

In addition, the tableaux summarization of the Romeo and Juliet script challenges the students in their understanding of new lexical and grammatical forms that scaffold higher learning. However, the scaffold, as detailed above, is not too great that it compounds their learning, as they are aware that whatever they carry over from a source text, they need to orally perform such items as naturally as possible.

A text analysis of various publications and materials was carried out. Table 1 below outlines the statistical analysis of the vocabulary profile found in various materials utilized and background materials as a base of current student ability.

Table 1 Source material statistical analysis

<i>Column (Text Complexity)</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
	K1/K2	K1/K2 +/-	AWL	Off-List
Text 1 2012/3 Textbook	87.1%	-0.5%	0%	12.9%
Text 2 2013-15 Textbook	84.7%	+1.9%	3.1%	12.2%
Text 3 2013/14 Folktale script	88.0%	-1.4%	0.4%	12.2%
Texts 1-3 Average score	86.6%		1.2%	12.2%
Text 4 Romeo and Juliet tableaux	82.9%	+3.7%	0.5%	16.6%
Text 5 Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare script	82.7%	+3.9%	0.7%	16.6%
Text 6 Student scripts	82.4%	+4.3%	0.1%	17.5%
Text 7 Edited student scripts	88.7%	-2.1%	0.1%	11.1%
Text 8 Improvised Student scripts	89.4%	-2.8%	0.0%	10.6%

Notes:

1. For definition of word categories and texts see below.

These figures were ascertained by a lexical text analysis, from an Internet based program, *VocabProfile* (lextutor, 2014). The software takes any text and divides its words into four categories by frequency: (K1) the most frequent one thousand words of English, and (K2) the second most frequent thousand words of English, as shown in Column A. In addition, AWL or academic (Column C) and off-list (unrecognized) words (Column D), are those not found in the K1/K2 list of the two thousand most frequent words used in written English. In other words, *VocabProfile* measures the

proportions of low and high frequency vocabulary used in a written text, as outlined in my previous research (Deadman, 2013; and Deadman, 2014).

In previous research I ascertained that the typical or expected ‘Drama’ students classroom English ability reflected a K1/K2 word ratio of 86.6%, represented by an various texts utilized in the course and a simultaneous course taught by myself with some of the same students. For this academic year, I analyzed the ‘Pathways’ textbook from the simultaneous course taught by myself, and found that the average reading exercise in the text scored a K1/K2 ratio of 84.7%. However, I used the average K1/K2 scores, in terms of the level of complexity from Texts 1-3, as a base score from which to compare the students own scripts and other course materials.

A K1/K2 Comparison to ‘Average’ was deemed useful for analysis at this stage to highlight the differences between the students current or taught level of English, and the higher complexity of the Romeo and Juliet script and tableaux. This created both a ZPD and IDZ as prescribed by Vygotsky and Mercer respectively, represented by the base score, detailed above. The K1 and K2 scores were used rather than the AWL or off-list scores as the latter are heavily frequented by proper nouns, abbreviations and grammatical contractions. A simple comparison between the K1/K2 scores of the various texts and resources would allow for a greater understanding of the students current actual ability and their potential ability, defined as the realized and potential respectively.

Texts 1-3, detailed in Table 1, represent published material used in the two courses I teach at Nijima Gakuen. Text 1 is a sample text from the Passport textbook (Oxford University Press, 2014), Text 2 is a sample text from the Pathways textbook (Cengage, 2014) and Text 3 is an online narrative from the Japanese folktale ‘Red Ogre Blue Ogre, (Montages, 2011). As stated above, the base score, or the average K1/K2 score, was 86.6% over the three texts, meaning that 86.6% of the vocabulary found in the texts is representative of the top 2000 words used in English.

Texts four and five are a tableaux narrative and the original Shakespearean script of Romeo and Juliet respectively. Text 4 is a 31-part tableaux, with the characters names removed as they were over-represented in the narrative quality of the material was found to have an almost identical score as the original Shakespearean script. Text 5, found in the 1996 film version of Romeo and Juliet, is described as “Shakespeare’s famous play is updated to the hip modern suburb of Verona still retaining its original dialogue” (IMDB, 2014). As such, students could watch and listen

to the film version of the play with the original dialogue, and with Japanese subtitles to actually comprehend the play. The important lesson of watching the film in segments was to set the play, show students how the scenes were acted and allow a general comprehension of the story, not to unrealistically try to comprehend Shakespearean English. Act I (Sitseseen Ltd, 2014) of the original *Romeo and Juliet* script was analyzed for the purposes of this analysis, a sample of which is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Act I *Romeo and Juliet*

SAMPSON: Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals.
GREGORY: No, for then we should be colliers.
SAMPSON: I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.
GREGORY: Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.
SAMPSON: I strike quickly, being moved.
GREGORY: But thou art not quickly moved to strike.
SAMPSON: A dog of the house of Montague moves me.
GREGORY: To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand: therefore,
 if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.
SAMPSON: A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take
 the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

The original Shakespearean script was of similar complexity to the tableaux text with accumulated K1/K2 ratios of 82.7% and 82.9% respectively. However, this doesn't reflect the actual complexity of a Shakespearean script, in that recognizable lexis items are interspersed with unrecognizable grammatical tokens for the typical intermediate level English language learner, represented by the students in this study. Figure 1 above, *Act I of Romeo and Juliet displays a* high degree of frequent intelligible words interspersed with complex *AWL* and *off-list* words. The word play dialogue between Gregory and Samson underscores the use of the word *coals* with *colliers*, *choler*, and *collar*, all separate in meaning but joined here by the clever use of puns, requiring the reader to comprehend the humorous way of using a word or phrase so that more than one meaning is suggested. However, for the average intermediate English learner, such word play is too difficult to comprehend and the joke is lost in translation and confusion. As such, students may be able to read most of the Shakespearean script, but the frequency of off-list words severely impedes any comprehension or understanding. Modern readers of English are generally able to

understand texts written in the late phase of the Early Modern English period, such as the works of William Shakespeare, but many less advanced English readers will face a plethora of obstacles in the form of unorthodox spelling and pronoun confusion. The character ‘Gregory’ exudes “*To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand: therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn’st away*” (Siteseen, 2014).

Early Modern English makes use of this second-person personal pronouns: thou, which has fallen out of usage in contemporary English. However, the unfamiliar and even unimaginable vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation found in the texts are for most of the students in this study, identifiable comprehension issues that with the use of improvisation techniques and awareness can be successfully circumnavigated and addressed as opportunities for development and self-realization.

Examples of the *off-list* vocabulary from the students original scripts (Text 6), from which student could take examples from tableaux or original Shakespeare scripts, included the obligatory or reactionary voiced examples and their variants of *aarrggghhhhhh*, *okay*, *ugghh*, *umm* and *gulp*. In addition, more complex vocabulary such as *poison*, *apothecary*, *banished*, *deadly*, *devises*, *distraught*, *misfortune*, *potion*, *snoring*, *stabs* and *tomb* were used, taken from the tableaux and Shakespeare script, representing an uptake of knowledge gain and subsequent appropriate usage of new vocabulary.

Texts 6-8 detailed in Table 1 represent the student’s actual scripts in various stages and forms. Text 6 is the student’s raw script that they independently, from myself as the teacher or facilitator, prepared in class and completed for homework. This text is complete but with grammatical and lexis accuracy issues, but incomplete in its depth and range in that the students omitted certain parts or had very short sentences that wouldn’t allow the potential audience to fully understand the performance. As such, Text 6 was fleshed out with previous student scripts gathered and collated as on ongoing exercise by myself from previous courses run, resulting in Text 7. The benefit of this is that any parts of the present script deemed insufficient could be supplemented with peer written scripts that share a similar level of ability, scaffolding, interest and background. Each successive year, the scripts can be refined if necessary, without input by the teacher, keeping the level and language more realistic to the students actual and potential level, rather than a teacher inspired text, that may actually be too difficult for intermediary students to understand and perform. In addition, one of the underlying themes of the course is student

empowerment, rather than being lectured or directed.

Students were given a typed up copy of the Text 7 for their ‘performance’ in class, between themselves as a small scale acting activity. The activity went very well and was motivating for the students, with mutual support, interest and visible enjoyment. Subsequently, Text 8 was introduced to the students without their prior knowledge, in order to test their improvisation ability. Students were informed that this wasn’t a graded or recorded activity, just an exercise in improvisation. Random segments of the script were omitted and left blank, for which the students were directed to improvise. The important element of this was that they students weren’t able to memorize the scripts, as they had only been given the full copy, Text 7, at the start of the lesson. The students would need to rely on some parts they could remember or had actually memorized from the previous activity, their latent knowledge from when they produced their draft scripts in the previous lessons, and most importantly their ability to improvise scenes from their own English knowledge and usage ‘pool’.

Case Study Results: Examples of improvisation

Throughout the student’s semi-improvised performance, numerous examples of ad-libbing, overlapping and improvisation were present. As stated above, this performance wasn’t a test of the students’ memorization of a script, as that is not the aim of the course. Students had no actual opportunity to memorize the script, as I wanted to purely test their improvisation skills and to highlight the fact to students that they can perform off-the-cuff when needed. This is more important for student development and motivation than rote-memorizing a long script.

Figures 2-9 below shows the student written scripts submitted for the performance and the subsequent improvised performance dialogues, highlighting any changes made by the students to the original script by way of improvisation. Students were able to read their scripts, but some parts were purposefully edited by myself and removed from the script in their entirety in order to add the need for improvisation of a scene.

Figure 2 - Example 1

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Benvolio	There are plenty more fish in the sea!	-
Romeo	What is this on TV? What fray is this?	What is this on TV?
Benvolio	Umm...ahhh...well you see...	Umm...well you see...
Romeo	Oh, cousin, why did you do this?	Cousin, why did you do this?

In Example 1 above, the first ‘Benvolio’ turn was omitted but the ‘Romeo’ turn was still performed without hesitation. The student pair chose to just continue the conversation with the element that wasn’t considered necessary to understanding of the scene. When improvising at speed, students chose to omit sentences, get rid of the extra ‘baggage’ or lexis deemed unimportant or incomprehensible, highlighting the fact that for intermediate level English learners, improvisation is efficient and lead to clearer understanding when talking to students of a similar level.

Figure 3 - Example 2

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Paris	Lord Capulet, I’d like to marry Juliet.	Lord Capulet, I’d like to marry Juliet.
Lord Capulet	It’s too early!	It’s too early!
Paris	Please!!!!	I’m begging
Lord Capulet	Please come to my party tonight to see her.	Please come to my party tonight.
Paris	What time?	When is it?
Lord Capulet	At 7 o’clock, don’t forget, it’s a masquerade!	At 7 o’clock, don’t forget, it’s a ball

Example 2 is a much longer example and exemplifies small changes in an improvised text, namely lexis in the form of alternative but appropriate changes, especially difficult words such as ‘masquerade’ which was reformulated as ‘ball’, and

slight degrees of change in question formations, with ‘What’ being replaced with ‘When’, which doesn’t affect understanding and indicates students being to choose appropriate words quickly. In this way, students can also appreciate that grammar can be flexible, slight grammar mistakes or inaccuracies need not impede conversations.

Figure 4 - Example 3

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Friar Lawrence	I hope the Montague’s and Capulets can have a good relationship with this marriage. You may kiss the bride!	I celebrate your marriage
Nurse	Ah! How romantic! Juliet! Romeo! Juliet! Romeo! ahhhhhh!	It’s so sweet. Romeo and Juliet congratulations

Example 3 shows how a difficult scene to remember is condensed into more manageable narration of two characters. The ‘Friar Lawrence’ dialogue is reduced from nineteen words to just four, with the same effect for the listener, the finalization of a wedding and the subsequent celebration of it, which can be summed up as the student decided to. In addition, the ‘Nurse’ dialogue was shortened a little but kept the same meaning. In this sense, the word length or talk time reduction is necessary to maintain a conversation and to limit confusion.

Figure 5 - Example 4

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Juliet	What's that?	What's that?
Friar Lawrence	This is a special drug. You must be very careful, it is very dangerous. Drink the potion before you go to sleep. Drink all of it. You will appear dead, but you will only be in a deep sleep.	Here you are. Before you go to bed. You will look dead, but you will be deep sleep.
Juliet	All right. What then?	All right. What then?
Friar Lawrence	Your family will think you are dead. I'll give a letter to Romeo. When you wake up, go to Mantua.	I'll write to Romeo. When you wake up, go to Mantua.

Example 4 continues in the same vein as Example 3, in that long dialogues in written form may not necessarily work in a spoken form, as such many parts can be omitted without confusion for the audience or listener, in this case the audience would still be able to understand the message of the scene. With the word count reduced from 51 to 33 words over three conversation turns, the dialogue has been cut by almost 33% but hasn't lost any meaning. Although improvisation makes dialogues less expressive and more direct, they are more succinct and understandable, as shown in Examples 5 and 6 below.

Figure 6 - Example 5

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Juliet	Goodnight Romeo, and see you tomorrow...hopefully! Okay...(gulp gulp)...ahhh...that was nice. Oh, I am sleepy	Oh, I am sleepy

Figure 7 - Example 6

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Lord and lady Capulet	Juliet...Juliet...Juliet... Juliet... my baby Juliet? Our beautiful daughter! How can this be! She takes her own life! All for love! (boo hoo!)	I'm very sad. Why she kills herself?

Figure 8 - Example 7

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Romeo	Oh Juliet! Where are you Juliet?	Where are you Juliet?
Paris	Romeo...why are you here? You are banished to Mantua!	Romeo...why are you here? You are in Mantua!
Romeo	What are you doing here? This is Juliet's tomb.	What are you doing here? I'm her husband
Paris	Didn't you know? We were to be married	But we were married

Example 7 doesn't reflect a great reduction in the number of words, but shows that the students were able to use most of their original script, with a few instances of improvisation to circumnavigate the more difficult parts. The word 'banished' is an Off-list word for most students at this level, represented in how the student used a typically familiar phrase 'You are in Mantua!' Similarly, 'This is Juliet's tomb' is replaced with the more direct and aggressive 'I'm her husband', which conveys a stronger idea than that found in the students written text.

Figure 9 - Example 8

	<i>Student scripted dialogue</i>	<i>Improvised dialogue</i>
Romeo	Juliet! Why did you kill yourself?	Juliet!
Juliet	...ugh...	...ugh...
Romeo	I can't live without...gulp gulp...ugh...that's disgusting...ugh	I can't live without...you

Example 8 also shows a simplified version of the script, but still expresses the main ideas that the students wanted to portray. This represents another simplification through improvisation to suit the actual performance.

The above examples give a short insight into the effect of improvisation upon familiar or rehearsed scripts. The students were prepared for a scripted performance, but unexpectedly they were purposefully given a script with certain parts omitted. It was reiterated that this wasn't a test, or to be graded, but just an exercise in improvisation. The examples show a definite reduction in words, sentence length, lexis complexity and fluency. Even a quick word count of the examples above show that the students scripted version runs to a total of 230 words, compared to a significantly reduced word total of 130 words for the improvised version, a 43% reduction in length. However, the students were able to successfully overcome the problem of missing text and perform their play appropriately and in a positive conclusion. The initial fear of missing text was overcome with fun, laughter and actual English communication, without any resort to Japanese. As a teacher this represented a very successful task in improvisation and English communication. For the students this represented real use of their English skills and abilities and the successful completion of the task gave them some insight into their own inherent but often unrealized or untested improvisation skills. Students reacted very positively after the exercise, indicating that “...it was tough, but fun”, and “...I could do it!” Another student said, “I enjoyed making the script, but the acting was more fun”. Regarding the actual English used in comparison to the scripted English, students responded “My English talk is bad, but I think I can talk with foreigners in foreign country now”, another student stated “We didn't need the script to make the play, I think we can speak better now when we go to other country”. These exclamations

also include multiple grammatical mistakes, but their message or meaning is clear and myself as the audience was able to understand their intentions.

This exercise has been invaluable for both the students and myself as the teacher or facilitator. The scaffolding of the material, scripted English and subsequent removal of the scaffold, represented by a semi-blanked script, highlights the fact that students can successfully improvise in unplanned impromptu situations. Returning to the source of this research paper, Miles Davis's song '*What I Say*', the students have resembled a jazz ensemble, all with different parts and responsibilities, but they have rehearsed together in the form of script writing and practice rehearsal, with their notes, but were able to improvise during their performance to a successful, enjoyable, fun and appropriate level. The level of grammatical and lexical complexity difference between their scripts and their improvised script was not great, representing a good level of English maintenance, allowing for appropriate talk. As mentioned before, '*What I Say*' is a 21 minute piece of jazz music that was improvised for most of its duration in its recording, but could stand for many meanings, depending on the musicians, listener, or reviewer. The important element for myself is that it represents the musicians in free playing, but listening and responding to the other musicians very carefully and purposefully, in order to produce something representative of their ideas, intentions and talents. As Miles Davis (Davis and Troupe 1989, p272), said of his ensemble for this song, and the album it's from, "Those were all young guys and although they were learning from me, I was learning from them, too. Because to be and stay a great musician, you've got to always be open to what's new, what's happening at the moment" ? This is equally reflected in the student performance, they had to be open to each other's ideas, listen and respond to what was happening at the moment, during the improvisations, and learn from each other.

The examples of student improvisation shown above show various strategies used by the students to overcome this immediate problem or obstacles. Students continued with the dialogue when other speaker omitted or forget their lines or dialogue, or the other speaker was silent. Speakers adopted simplified vocabulary when faced with complex terms and phrases. In addition, students uttered shorter and more manageable phrases, summarizing longer written examples. This is also seen in the observations that students adopted succinctness to most utterances. Finally, students circumnavigated difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical terms, with more common and familiar phrases. It can be seen therefore that the students use each

other as scaffold or support when improvising in dialogue. If they are faced with an obstacle in the form of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, unfamiliar phrases, or a simple memory loss of the appropriate item or items, they are very capable, even at this lower intermediate level, to improvise their way through the assigned task, or dialogue.

Conclusion and implications

This research has revealed that students can effectively navigate a variety of texts, from different sources, cultural backgrounds and levels of complexity. In this way, learners experienced the syllabus and developed the necessary skills to accomplish this. As noted above, the students conducted this in the arena of group cooperation, in a shared communicative space, an Intermental Development Zone, as proposed by Mercer (2000), following the notion first proposed by Vygotsky of the learners progression from novice to expert. Invoking Miles Davis, the drummer Jack DeJohnette, stated, “The great thing about playing with Miles was that you had to be on your toes. You always had to be alert. The most important thing was to be in the moment and drop any projections or expectations that you had. You always had to be prepared for the unexpected. He kept you thinking all the time, and that was fun. You never knew what was going to happen and that made it exciting and challenging” (Tingen, 2005). In addition, bassist Michael Henderson recalled, “Musicians tend to go back to where they have been, and Miles didn’t want them in those pockets. Whenever they got in a pocket like that, he’d do anything - he’d stop the music, or look at you differently, just to get you out of the comfort zone or out of playing free. Anything not to go back there, not to do what you did before. So you had to adjust and make a thing that you didn’t understand make sense. You opened up your mind and your soul to it and you make it believable. Go with the flow and make it happen. Keep it exciting” (Tingen, 2005).

These two reminiscences should be how teachers facilitate learning in the non-jazz setting of a traditional learning classroom as much as possible. Without the unexpectedness of a jazz setting, classrooms still need to be exciting, challenging and fun. With these elements, teachers can still get students out of their comfort zones, adjust to the new settings and believe that they can make things happen, like authentic communication. The most important point is that although ideally students will seek out new ways to learn, it is more often than not the case that the change

needs to come from the designated 'teacher'. Such teachers need to seek new ways of learning to apply to their lessons. This notion and recorded examples of improvisation allows teachers to take lessons to a new conceptual level, how to actually install confidence, self-realization and motivation within existing classrooms. Buchanan (Davis and Troupe, 1989) said that it was Miles Davis's curiosity, wanting to know so much about music that was the edge. In this sense, teachers need to facilitate such curiosity, about both their English and how lessons and class time will help them in the future.

The theme of this paper is to show that teachers, in the improvised sense of the word, can gain much from evaluating their own pedagogy by following adopting more spontaneity in class, even within structured learning courses, syllabi and colleges. I believe the problem is not with the content of much learning, but the attitude of the students and teachers. Students need to be able to converse in many different and challenging environments, not only that of the safety net offered by a traditional classroom. An appreciation of jazz music may help to invigorate students into adopting and leading changes by themselves. Years of rote memorization, grammar-translation exercise and endless vocabulary tests at the expense of communicative activities, has led to classrooms that still exhibit students who are unwilling to answer questions or join in discussions or debates with their peers or the teachers. The root cause of the problem, the failures of English language teaching at the elementary and secondary level are at present ingrained and difficult to change, but at the tertiary level, on a case by case basis, teachers and departments can adopt measures to make communication more fun, interesting, useful and motivating to English language learners. Teachers must take the initiative, but students must adopt and apply it to their own learning.

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