

A Teacher's Perspective on Collaborative Teacher/Student Note-taking during English Language Classes

Jon PREVATT*¹

(Accepted May 21, 2024)

Key words: EFL, note-taking, reflective practice, translanguaging

Abstract

This article will discuss the author's reflections on the practice of introducing and incorporating note-taking in large low-level English classes at a Japanese university. The teacher initiated a practice of note-taking in a self-designed *booklet* (hereafter notebook) to "take notes" during his lessons (i.e., "while teaching") as a means of dealing with the abundant language learning affordances that naturally arose in both the L1 (Japanese) and the target language (English) in a context where the learners and teacher lacked proficiency in each other's first languages (L1 and L2). The teacher also provided and introduced notebooks to students and demonstrated note-taking as a practice to document and make visible the language learning affordances which occurred in English lessons that were grounded in a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach.

1. Introduction

In an earlier paper on note-taking, the author discussed the relationship between his novel approach to note-taking, translanguaging, and affordance theory and the implications for second language acquisition (SLA)¹⁾. The current paper aims to discuss reflections and observations based on the practitioner's approach to note-taking during his lessons in the context of large low-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The author's research method is grounded in practitioner research (PR) and stems from observations on note-taking in his practice that are based on the practitioner's own self-inquiry, a review of the contents of his language notebooks from his classes, and the analysis of a recorded interview with a colleague on the pedagogical implications the teacher's note-taking approach had on his classroom practice. The teacher's low proficiency in the student's L1 in the context of large low-level Japanese university EFL classes coupled with the beliefs that "learning is a social and dialogic process, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than 'transmitted' or 'imported' from teacher/coursebook to learner" and fostering a supportive learning environment where the teacher's role is to "optimize language learning affordances, by, for example directing attention to features of emergent language"²⁾ aligns well with PR. "Practitioner research usually has a focus on the real problems that individuals face. Practitioner researchers have the opportunity to promote research that is joined up and break the academic, fragmented approach to knowledge"³⁾. Furthermore, the practice of the teacher's note-taking suggests a systematic approach to reflective practice that aligns with Schon's description of reflection in an educational context, that is to say the teacher's

*¹ Department of Medical Secretarial Arts, Faculty of Health and Welfare Services Administration
Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare, 288 Matsushima, Kurashiki, 701-0193, Japan
E-Mail: prevatt@mw.kawasaki-m.ac.jp

"reflection-*on*-action (in the previous lesson) as part of the pre-lesson planning is then followed by reflection-*in*-action during the lesson. This will then lead back to reflection-*on*-action immediately after the class"⁴⁾. The practice of taking notes *during* the lessons and then reviewing notebooks between lessons enhanced recall of those lessons and served as a systematic approach to reflection.

The teacher's choice to adopt notebooks and note-taking as a strategy for language learning in a classroom context resulted from his reflection on the issue of the students' and teacher's low language proficiency in their respective L1s, a desire to explicitly recognize students' previous language learning experiences, and the need to attend to learning affordances that resulted from communicative activities designed to improve the students' TL. To that end, the teacher provided each student with a note-book, which became a resource not only for individual student notes but also as a resource for collaborating and co-constructing knowledge in both the target language (TL) and their L1 (Japanese). The students' responses in support of their teacher's solicitations for help in Japanese (the students' L1) afforded students the opportunity to use the TL in their replies as well as listen to the teacher's responses in the TL. The teacher also observed students discussing and negotiating the appropriate L1 response for the teacher, suggesting that the interactions with a teacher who lacked proficiency in their L1 raised awareness to not only the TL, but possibly their L1 as well. In embracing the bilingual reality present in the classroom, a translanguaging approach to practice afforded students and teacher the ability and freedom to access all of the languages in their individual repertoires (Japanese, English, L2, L3, ...) for the expressed purpose of improving oral communication skills in English, or Japanese in the case of the teacher. This linguistic freedom was demonstrated by the teacher who drew attention to a system of actively and noticeably "taking notes" in his notebook *during* the lesson when language learning opportunities (affordances) occurred as a result of speaking, noticing, or observing *language* in either English or Japanese. Having a notebook readily available as a resource served as a tool to demonstrate and reinforce the scaffolded learning that naturally occurs between students, and between students and teacher in a social learning environment. The notebooks afforded the possibility to make scaffolded learning visible and tangible, as when the teacher solicited Japanese language assistance from students when there was a need for the teacher to understand Japanese (e.g., students are speaking about a topic and using Japanese or a mix of the L1 and L2, etc.) or the teacher's need to speak Japanese (e.g., to confirm information in a bilingual textbook or simply respond in Japanese, etc.). In making notes of *new language* (e.g., the student's L1 or the TL) the teacher is at once demonstrating the practice of note-taking, raising awareness of the TL and L1 by modelling the practice of note-taking, and recognizing students as authorities in at least one language, their L1.

Previously the author drew connections between theoretical issues like *scaffolding* and *rapport* and SLA that were afforded by his practice of collaborating with students while note-taking¹⁾. Scaffolding⁵⁾ has long been associated with language teaching and second language acquisition and the notebooks and note-taking served as a bridge between moments of co-constructed learning and focused attention on language and learning. "Scaffolded learning is not a one-off event, but is embedded in repeated, semi-ritualised, co-authored language-mediated activities, typical of many classrooms ... any definition of scaffolding needs to highlight the fact that this kind of interaction is a site for learning opportunities, and is not simply a way of modelling, supporting, or practicing interaction"⁶⁾. While scaffolding in language learning was served by the practice of note-taking, the note-taking practice itself was served by the process of scaffolding in the sense that by attending to language affordances through note-taking, there is "the relinquishing of the teacher's role as the learner appropriates the targeted skill"⁶⁾ which aligns well with Bruner's original notion that scaffolding involves taking agency and control over that which needed to be scaffolded (e.g., the TL). Furthermore, the concepts of affordance theory in SLA and more recently translanguaging both are served and supported by note-taking that transpires in collaborative learning environments found in social-constructivist models of learning that prioritize dialogue. SLA literature and teacher training materials frequently mention the importance of *rapport* between the students and teacher as it relates to language acquisition. Teachers may go to great lengths to design activities to build rapport with students, especially at the *beginning of*

the semester, however, a systematic practice of collaborative note-taking inherently lends itself to rapport building during every class *throughout the semester* through authentic interactions in a cooperative learning environment. "The construction of social relationships permeates every single moment of teaching, and participants in the classroom constantly and actively orient to these relationships" and "from a language learning perspective, moments of rapport building in instruction provide valuable opportunities for the learners' participation in the target language"⁷⁾. This paper details reflections of my note-taking practice while teaching 14 large low-level English classes over 2 semesters. In the following section I will review the note-taking practice described in an earlier paper and then identify some of benefits and challenges of note-taking in this context.

2. Note-taking procedure and use

Previously I described a systematic approach to creating, using, and maintaining notebooks in my EFL classes as a resource for language learning and building rapport with students¹⁾. Notebooks were distributed to students on the first day of a 15-week semester to serve as a resource for recording notes, ideas, drawings, comments, and questions about the lesson. Discovering a systematic approach to creating the notebooks and implementing the note-taking practice in a manner that was sustainable, effective, and user-friendly were procedural and practical concerns. In the following section, I will discuss four steps related to the implementation and use of the note-books in my courses; 1) creating the notebooks, 2) distributing, collecting, and organizing the notebooks, 3) using the notebooks, and finally 4) reviewing and commenting in the students' notebooks.

2.1 Creating the notebooks

Prior to the start of a course, the teacher created notebooks for each student by stacking 3 sheets of A3 size paper, which are folded in half horizontally to form an 8-page A4 size notebook (Figure 1). The notebook has a cover page which is blank, except for a heading with space for the students to write their names (in English and Japanese), student number, and a space to record an identifying number for each student based on the student's position on the official roster. Within the notebook, each double-sided page is divided in half,

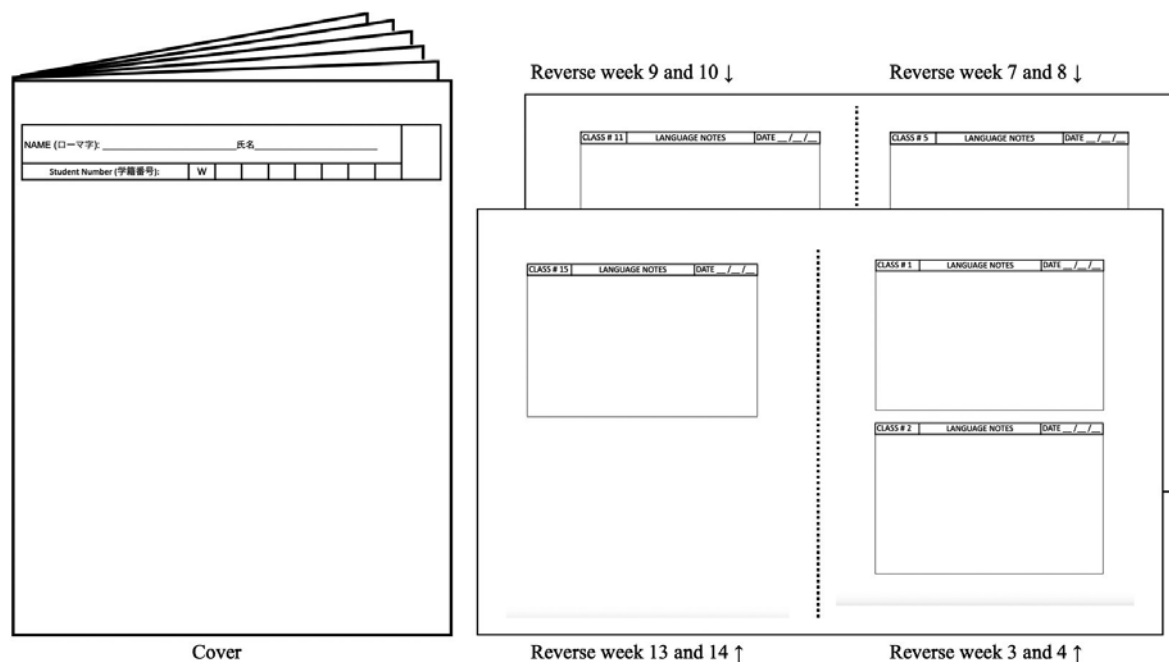


Figure 1 A3 paper (3 sheets) folded to create a notebook with blank spaces for each lesson

creating 2 blank spaces (top and bottom) divided by headers for the date and lesson number (e.g., Week 3).

The notebooks are all identical in size and their uniformity makes the task of organizing and managing the notebooks easier over the course of the semester. The students *and* teacher receive identical notebooks which is a visual and tangible reminder that from the first moments of a course the students and teacher will both participate in language learning and furthermore, the presence of the teacher's notebook, which is purposefully kept centrally and conveniently located in the classroom, is an indication that the student's themselves and their contributions to learning will be valued and respected. The teacher's note-taking during the lesson also serves to indicate that the notes taken in class differ from traditional academic note-taking. Next, I will describe some of the procedural factors that I practiced and adapted over time in order to manage the notebooks and initiate their use.

2.2 Distributing, collecting, and organizing notebooks

At the beginning of the first lesson, the notebooks are distributed and introduced by the teacher. The teacher will be afforded many opportunities to demonstrate the practice of note-taking from the first lesson in the context of large low-level oral communication English classes as many students may naturally be confused, nervous, or misunderstand instructions and explanations delivered by a Native-English speaking teacher (NEST), especially if those initial interactions are *only* in the TL. A sampling of possible language affordances in English and Japanese that typically occur during a first lesson include;

What is your *student number* / 学籍番号?

What *department* are you in? / 学科

Please *pass the notebooks forward* / ノートを前に渡してください.

Please *make a circle* / 円を作る.

Please *line up* / 並ぶ.

What is your *hometown* / 出身?

A practice that encourages translanguaging accommodates varying interpretations, understandings, and responses in the L1 and L2 and is an accurate reflection of authentic language in use in a low-level context. Furthermore, in dealing with language derived from meaningful teacher-student interaction, the act of negotiating meaning can afford the teacher and learners the freedom to misunderstand and then act on those misunderstandings collaboratively. For example, some students may not understand or be sure about the English word "hometown", likewise the NEST may not understand or be able to differentiate between Japanese words used by students on the topic of "hometowns" (e.g., *jimoto* 地元, *urusato* 古里, *shussin* 出身, *goshushin* 御出身, etc.) but allowing and encouraging use of the L1 and L2 by everyone in the classroom provides the teacher with an opportunity to focus the students' attention on the TL or extend the discussion based on the students' contributions (e.g., Why is the word "hometown" sometimes misunderstood in this context?, What words or questions are used in your L1?, When are certain words used and others not?, etc.). This example represents just one of the numerous affordances these authentic exchanges represent to learn the TL, and notebooks are ideally suited and situated to record information that comes up during such exchanges in class. At the end of the first lesson, the teacher collects the notebooks, on which the students have recorded their names and student numbers. The teacher then writes an identifying number on the students' notebooks which corresponds to the student's position on the official roster. In subsequent lessons, this identifying number makes the task of numerically organizing the notebooks easier and students can easily locate their notebooks when they enter the classroom at the beginning of each lesson. After the lesson, the task of collecting and then organizing the notebooks in ascending order is made easier by the numbering system and often students assist the teacher with these tasks, perhaps another indicator of the notebooks presenting an opportunity for rapport building. This process of distributing, collecting, and organizing notebooks is repeated in each lesson and for each course the teacher teaches. Next, I will describe the use of the notebooks which differentiates my practice of contemporaneous and collaborative note-taking from traditional academic note-taking described in an earlier paper¹⁾.

2.3 Using the notebooks; note-taking in practice

In this section I will describe the teacher's process and practice of note-taking during lessons. Due to the interactive and collaborative nature of the language interactions in the classroom, notes are meant to record language that comes up during the lesson and results from dialogue and spoken interactions. These interactions can be led by the teacher or by the students and can occur between paired students, students in groups, or with the whole class. The teacher's notebook can also be carried with the teacher while teaching or when moving about the classroom checking in on groups or pairs. Speaking activities, whether designed by the teacher or taken from the textbook, often result in language that is unplanned or spontaneous, inherent in the improvised nature of spoken language and represents one of the challenges in speaking a second language. The teacher can also anticipate or plan for language learning affordances based on experience with certain topics or content (e.g., a unit on the topic of *Travel* from the textbook). Low-proficiency students may struggle with proficiency in speaking in the L2 and the teacher can anticipate or prepare for those affordances and encourage note-taking when they occur, the practice of which can serve to remind a student that the challenge of learning and speaking in an L2 is an experience shared by others as well. Moreover, the teacher's own practice of note-taking serves to remind the student's that the teacher is also a student and shares the students' feelings of frustration and accomplishment when speaking and learning a language. Importantly, the teacher's efforts to learn some of the students' L1, afforded by a translanguaging approach, is accomplished primarily through the use of English, the students' TL. This is a result of the teacher's ability and responsibility to scaffold the learners in the TL, as well as the inability of the teacher to understand or communicate proficiently in the student's L1 which affords students an opportunity and incentive to use the TL. Through self-inquiry and review of the teacher's notebooks from his courses, the teacher has identified some specific moments while teaching when the teacher was prompted to take-notes of language in use (affordances) in either the L1 or L2. The teacher's choice to take notes or not was dependent upon the situation and not all affordances can be acted upon because of practical or time limitations. However, learning affordances that were noticed and could not be acted upon during the lesson could be noted after the fact or introduced in the next lesson, representing another benefit to having a notebook available for each specific course. The following represent four situations when the teacher was prompted to take notes by what the teacher perceived as affordances for learning.

2.3.1 The students' use of Japanese was not understood by the teacher

Often in pair or group speaking activities, students will naturally resort to speaking in Japanese with each other. Students may also attempt to communicate with the teacher in Japanese, showing engagement in a topic by trying to respond to a question or even teach the teacher their L1. The teacher also observed when students were unable to communicate with the teacher in their L1, students would instinctively seek support or "collaboration from more capable peers"⁸, or would attempt to repair the miscommunication by using the TL themselves. A student or students might also try to use the TL to summarize or translate what had been said in Japanese. Both of these situations afforded the teacher (and students) the opportunity to make a note of the L1 and L2 in these interactions. The teacher's notes (Figure 2) were taken while interacting with students while teaching a lesson on the topic of travel. The teacher's notes represent his attempts to attend to the students' TL needs by recording language in either Japanese or English that was overheard or directed at the teacher during pair/group work or whole class speaking activities. It is worth mentioning that the teacher's inability to accurately spell or write in Japanese afforded the teacher the opportunity to ask for clarification and repetition thus giving students the frequent opportunity to use the TL when addressing the teacher's attempts to understand their L1. Furthermore, the teacher could model a practice of reflecting on his language notes by referring to them in the following lesson to demonstrate his effort in learning the students' L1. The notes in the students' L1 on the topic of travel also served to inform the teacher about what language was meaningful and useful to the students.

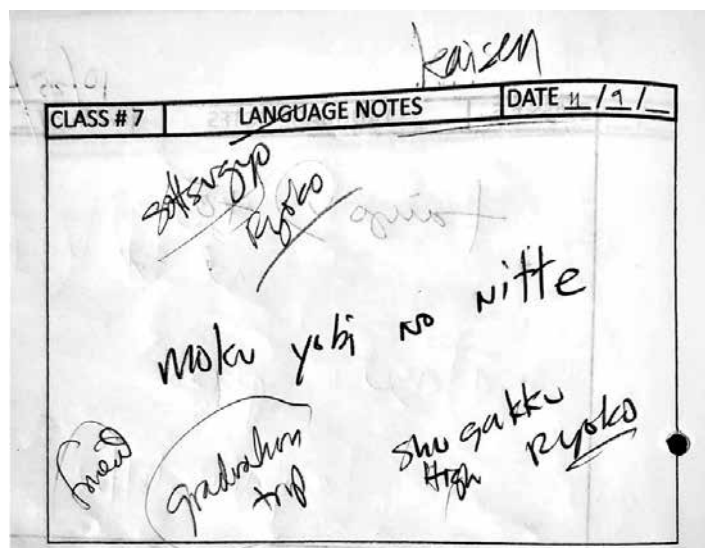


Figure 2 Teacher's notes taken while teaching a unit on travel

The unit on travel in the course textbook^{†1)} included related vocabulary, expressions, questions, listening activities, and conversation strategies designed to improve listening and speaking skills in English. While the travel unit included a focus on travel related vocabulary (e.g., immigration, customs, duty-free store, reservation, etc.) the teacher was able to listen and write down vocabulary spoken by his students that was not suggested or included in the textbook (e.g., *Sotsugyo ryoko* / そつぎょうりょこう (卒業旅行) graduation trip, *Shūgaku ryokō* / しゅうがくりょこう (修学旅行) school trip). It is beyond the scope of this paper but a survey of vocabulary in EFL coursebooks which include units on travel (or holiday related themes) aimed at low-level Japanese adult learners would be of interest especially as and if that vocabulary addresses or relates to the local language needs and concerns of those learners. By extension, the same process could be applied to other common themes or topics (e.g., food). The teachers' translanguaging approach and practice of note-taking while interacting with students on the topic of travel "meant basing learning on themes that were elicited in consultation with the learners themselves, and replacing the imported texts with the learners' own texts"²⁾. Moreover, the students' ability to use the L1 afforded the students the opportunity use language that was more meaningful and related to their lived experiences and afforded the teacher the opportunity to ask the students about the words and expressions in Japanese that could then be used as a focus in the TL. Translanguaging and the teacher's use of note-taking afforded the learners and teacher the opportunity to problematize the textbook and focus on language that was meaningful, relevant, and student-generated (e.g., *Shūgaku ryokō* / しゅうがくりょこう (修学旅行) school trip). The teacher's ability to manage and attend to students' efforts in the TL and L1 could also lead to improved rapport with students and salient information or language that resulted from the group/pair work that could be later shared with the whole class. Attending to the students' L1 contributions during the lesson, especially when the teacher was unable to understand the students' L1, afforded the teacher an opportunity to serve the students' TL needs.

2.3.2 The teacher's use of English is not understood by the students

Since the teacher conducts classes primarily in English, there will naturally be situations where some students do not understand what is being said. The teacher can make note of language and information in the TL that is new or not understood by students (e.g., the name of the university in English, their academic department, classroom directions or instructions in English, etc.) in his notebook while teaching. Furthermore, the teacher can focus on the students' ability to say and hear English that the teacher believes is essential for individual students or the class as a whole and the notebooks serve to capture

those features of the TL. Based on the practitioner's experience, course requirements, needs assessment, and language learning goals the teacher is responsible for gauging what language, both planned and spontaneous, is important for learners to become aware of or learn. For example, students planning on working with patients in healthcare related fields would be required to learn vocabulary related to patient care in the TL (e.g., fever, cough, health insurance card, etc.), which may or may not be covered in the textbook. Additionally, speaking and listening at low levels affords the opportunity for the teacher to raise students' awareness about TL pronunciation by first asking the students for clarification and repetition about pronunciation of their L1, Japanese, and then making that process tangible by writing down the desired language in his notebook. For example, the teacher may ask and write down a student's academic department in Japanese (e.g., 臨床栄養学科 > *Rinshō eiyō gakka* > りんしょう えいよう がっか) and then introduce and give students the same support in the TL (e.g., Department of Clinical Nutrition > Department of Cli-ni-cal Nu-tri-tion). The language needs of the students and the dynamic nature of active speaking and listening classes make note-taking by the teacher and students a useful practice in capturing emergent language as well as dealing with especially difficult aspects of SLA like pronunciation.

2.3.3 *The teacher did not know or forgot how to say something in Japanese*

Sometimes while teaching the TL, the teacher may want or need to know how to say what he has just expressed in English in the students' L1. Reasons for the teacher's use of the students' L1 might include; speaking Japanese may serve a language need of the teacher (e.g., words related to university life; registrar's office / 教務課, credit / 単位, etc.), the teacher may notice that students are unsure of what he has asked or said in the TL (e.g., just in case / 念のため), or as an opportunity to build rapport (e.g., the topic of movies can include their titles in Japanese and English; *The Boy and the Heron*^{†2)} / 君たちはどう生きるか / How Do You Live?). The teacher can ask students or the whole class for their suggestions about how to say something in Japanese. In the case that there is no immediate resolution or suggestion forthcoming, the teacher can make a note of the question in his notebook, or ask students to write their suggestions to the teacher's query in their notebooks, as the teacher will be reviewing them before the next lesson. Often it is the case that a student will provide the Japanese expression/word or make a suggestion in their notebook that leads to the teacher learning the desired expression or word in Japanese which upon reflection may afford the teacher the opportunity to draw attention to the corresponding TL. Additionally, students may be reluctant to risk speaking out loud in front of the whole class in either the L1 or the TL. Notebooks offer a safe space to participate for those students who are not ready to risk making mistakes in front of others.

2.3.4 *Information written in Japanese*

The teacher can solicit help from the students with information written in Japanese. (e.g., Japanese in an English textbook, course related information distributed by the university, mobile applications (apps) and online resources used by students are usually in Japanese, etc.). Students and the teacher working between languages (translanguaging) may come to a mutual understanding or agreement in both the L1 and TL of how to best express any language that is especially confusing or difficult to translate. The teacher and students can utilize machine translation, available on most devices or the teacher's computer which also affords them the opportunity collaborate and use the TL to identify the most appropriate translation. In those cases, the collaborative nature of co-constructed knowledge is greatly enhanced by the ability to translanguage and by note-taking to preserve the information which can be reviewed when necessary or on a weekly basis as the notes will serve as *recall* or remind the teacher.

2.4 *Reviewing and commenting in the students' notebooks*

Each 90-minute lesson met once weekly over the course of a 15-week semester and the teacher's practice of reviewing the students' notes and notebooks served as a form of reflective practice by allowing the teacher to revisit the lessons through the comments, notes, and ideas that students wrote in their

notebooks. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity to attend to individual student's needs and address their concerns or questions by responding in writing directly in their notebook. The presence of the notebook afforded the students the opportunity to put comments or concerns in writing, in Japanese or English, creating another opportunity for connection and demonstrating a sense of professionalism by the teacher which contributes to rapport⁹. While the goal of the lessons prioritized speaking and listening, writing and responding to comments and questions extended dialogue with students beyond the classroom walls and between the chimes of the weekly lessons. Writing in the notebooks also served as additional input in the L2 via the teacher's response, and output from the student in the TL if the student chose to write in English. With regard to procedure, after the notebooks were collected at the end of the lesson, the teacher can immediately and efficiently complete the task of attendance taking as absent students will not have collected their notebooks at the beginning of the lesson. Those students who did attend return their notebooks to the teacher, which can be compared to a roster that is distributed at the beginning of class. The notebooks make attendance taking unnecessary but can be used in conjunction with a roster distributed in the class. In my experience with large low-level classes, students seem to prefer being secure in the knowledge that their attendance has been definitively recorded (i.e., on the roster). After the notebooks have been collected at the end of the lesson, the teacher can quickly skim through the notebooks and glance at the students' notes or comments taken during the lesson. The purpose of this initial cursory check is to determine if there are any time sensitive issues, questions, or concerns that a student may have that need immediate attention, follow-up, or feedback (e.g., problematic pair or group dynamics, a student with a health concern, etc.). If a student has expressed a concern in writing, the teacher can follow-up with the student between weekly lessons and implement any necessary changes (e.g., adjust student groupings). The notebooks afford the opportunity to attend to students' needs in a timely manner that help the teacher manage the class effectively and efficiently which supports good rapport. If there are no immediate concerns, the teacher can attend to the task of reviewing or responding to individual students' questions or comments at any point prior to the next lesson. Students that ask questions or make comments in their notebooks that require a response or comment are attended to prior to the next lesson. In these cases, the students are able to read an answer or comment from the teacher during the next lesson when they receive their notebook. Reviewing, commenting, and responding to students on a weekly basis may appear to be a time-consuming task especially considering the large class size and the number of student notebooks, but in practice I have found that the time spent reading, reviewing, and responding to students has in turn helped me reflect on the lessons and served to inspire and inform my plans and the content for the next lesson. The process of reviewing students' notes and their comments, questions, and content can also reveal areas the teacher might consider addressing or reviewing in subsequent lessons, thus saving time and contributing to lesson planning and responding to the changing and emergent language needs of the student or the whole class. The notebook review process is another tangible example of a resource that serves both the learners and teacher on multiple levels. For example, as a tool for reflection on individual learning, a tool to build rapport and connection, and for the teacher, a means to reflect on practice. In order to better understand my experience of creating, using, and implementing a note-taking practice in my courses, I participated in an interview with a colleague about my experience as a means of practitioner research. In the next section I will describe some of the benefits and challenges that were realized through the reflective process of self-inquiry and analysis of the recorded interview.

3. Practitioner's reflections on note-taking

3.1 Benefits

In my context students generally assume that the English teacher has some proficiency in their L1 (Japanese). Despite not knowing the level of the teacher's proficiency in Japanese, the students will naturally attempt to engage the teacher in either Japanese or English. The act of demonstrating the note-taking process, showing a willingness to make mistakes in language learning, asking for repetition, asking

for clarification (in English), and elevating the status of the students to teacher/learners are processes made visible by utilizing a notebook. Becoming aware of my reliance on student support of my language learning (Japanese) was greatly enhanced by my practice of note-taking and by inviting students to participate in my learning process. I noticed that my learning of Japanese was improved by note-taking and the act of revisiting my notes and sharing with the class what had been learned in the previous class reinforced that learning and served as an opportunity to directly reveal the co-constructed and collaborative nature of the process. Furthermore, the practice of attending to the students' L1 allowed the teacher to reflect on his practice and his approach to teaching the TL on a weekly basis. Essentially, the teacher and students both take part in the practice of note-taking which helps develop rapport and suggests that language learning is a mutual activity that blurs traditional boundaries between student and teacher and explicitly disrupts the notion that language learning is a passive activity and promotes the notion that "the classroom is not a class in the traditional sense, but a meeting place where knowledge is sought and not where it is transmitted"¹⁰. The notebook is a physical, visible tool through which the traditional, teacher led power dynamic is called into question. If language learning is viewed as a social activity where knowledge is co-constructed dialogically, the relationships and roles of the participants will naturally become more equal and increase the possibility of learning by taking advantage of the affordances that are co-created.

Students are able to ask questions or ask for clarification, make comments, and connect with the teacher in the space of the notebook. Large language classes may be intimidating to some students, inhibiting them from speaking up or speaking out loud in class in either their L1 or the TL. The notebook provides a space for students to make comments or address the content of the lesson. By engaging with the teacher in this manner, quiet or shy students can demonstrate their attention and engagement through notes.

The dynamic nature of oral communication classes (i.e., speaking and listening) poses a challenge for low-level students' language learning because what is *spoken* may not be *heard* and cannot be *seen* or *read*. The very nature of conversation driven language classes, where dialogue and discourse are central to co-constructed learning, a notebook serves both as a tool to record particularly salient moments/language, and the note-taking serves as a reminder that language learning is an active process that requires tending to gaps in one's knowledge. The note-books afford the teacher and learner a space to focus on form as well as on planned and unplanned language learning affordances. As the notebooks are collected at the end of each lesson, the teacher could plan for students to record information (a planned affordance) with a writing prompt during the lesson (e.g., list 3 foods you like and 3 foods you dislike) or the teacher could use his notes (and the blackboard or whiteboard) to reiterate a point or draw attention to useful language that has come up during the lesson (spontaneous affordances). The notebooks provide a ready-made convenient space to record that information.

Notebooks can also be viewed as a tool that unifies the classroom as all members of the class, including the teacher, practice note-taking in a note-book over the course of the semester. As opposed to the textbook, the individuals in the classroom have authorship over their notebooks as the content is ultimately created by the individual students. The notebooks also become part of the classroom ritual through collecting, reviewing, contributing, and returning the notebooks each lesson therefore lending themselves to the shared nature of the collaborative work in each lesson. Reviewing the notebooks is reflective and demonstrates a sense of professionalism by attending to student needs. In addition to providing a focus on form and language, note-taking also served as a tool for reflection and helped build rapport.

3.2 Challenges and concerns

There were also challenges and concerns experienced during my note-taking practice and approach which I will describe in this section. While I feel the benefits outweigh the concerns, there are observations that can be viewed as potentially problematic or have potential for further development when incorporating the practice of collaborative note-taking by the students and teacher. A primary concern is that students may be unsure or feel their contributions or the quality of their notes will influence their grade for the

course and that concern about their grade might unintentionally trivialize the practice of note-taking. Even by informing students that their decision to take notes or not will have no influence on their grade, some students may not understand as the notebooks are collected and reviewed by the teacher every week so there may be some understandable uncertainty about the purpose of the practice. Likewise, the notes, both quality and quantity, could unduly influence the teacher's opinion about a student's participation or engagement thereby unintentionally influencing the teacher's grading of students. While the teacher can review student notes for questions or comments, or ask the students to record information in the notebook as part of the lesson (e.g., the teacher could have students complete a survey in their notebooks instead of the textbook), students that do not take or are unable to take notes could be viewed as lacking effort or not participating. Furthermore, students that simply write notes perfunctorily in an effort to please the teacher or appear engaged could be unfairly rewarded by the teacher. As the course prioritizes speaking and listening, evaluating a student's written notes could be considered problematic as writing is not being evaluated. This may be unfair to students that are engaged in speaking and listening but struggle to write in English or unfairly give credit to students who are able or inclined to make notes. Additionally, students that engage the teacher directly with questions or comments in writing in the notebooks are more likely to be remembered positively by the teacher which could influence the students' grades. The practice of taking notes (i.e., writing) may in itself be an inherent challenge for some students. The practitioner is aware that many students may be more accustomed to interacting digitally with content or recording information on a device or computer. While the physical notebooks and novel note-taking practice may diminish those students' concerns, recent technological trends have meant that students have more experience with digital technology, using devices or computers to support learning, therefore the analog practice of handwriting notes may be more challenging. Some students may struggle with writing in the TL, despite having the option to write in their L1, or due to low-proficiency in listening or lacking motivation do not see the benefit or need of note-taking, especially in the TL. There may as well be an expectation that only bringing a textbook is sufficient for an oral communication class.

Regarding the design of the notebooks, the current design provided ample space for students to make notes, a half page (A4 size paper) per lesson but based on my review of students' notes the amount of space could be reduced allowing for a more streamlined version on the notebook with fewer pages. During later weeks in the semester the teacher is required to turn to the lesson's corresponding page to review the notes which can be time consuming considering the number of notebooks per class. This is especially true if students use their notebooks to keep or store any handouts that are distributed during the semester. The notebook could be viewed as a resource to take notes and organize class materials, but in practice it required time of the teacher to sort through the notebooks which were sometimes filled with a semester's worth of handouts. Decreasing the number of pages may make the process of reviewing more efficient for the teacher while preserving the ability to take notes and effectively use the notebooks.

With regard to the procedure, students collecting their notebooks at the beginning of class helped save administrative time (i.e., taking attendance in large classes) as absent student's notebooks will remain uncollected at the beginning of the lesson. However, some students will collect another classmate's notebook or even a group of notebooks if the students plan to sit in the same part of the classroom. This presents a problem in classes where students are free to choose their own seats and choose to sit near each other. Those students may collect notebooks of students who are absent or late creating the potential for inaccuracies in attendance taking. Assigning seats or asking students to retrieve only their notebook could help eliminate this problem. The design of the notebook is something that can and should be modified regularly to meet the challenges and needs of the students and teacher, and the act of reflecting on the design (or redesign) and use of the notebooks is a tangible example of reflective practice in action.

4. Conclusion

The author's practice of note-taking and use of notebooks while teaching large low-level English classes in

a Japanese university context was in response to his need and desire to teach the TL and engage students while acknowledging the dynamic created by low proficiency in each other's first languages. Rather than view this linguistic dynamic as an impediment to teaching the TL (English), the teacher embraced a translanguaging approach to practice that acknowledged the students' L1 and previous language learning experiences that afforded the teacher opportunities to focus on emergent language and communicate openly and freely with students. The teacher's note-taking practice served to transform a formal classroom context, where students may feel pressured to conform or revert behaviorally to a classroom environment that rewards adherence to a passive student, teacher-led approach where knowledge is transmitted from a knowledgeable teacher to less knowledgeable students, to a learning environment (i.e., classroom) that strives for meaningful interaction, collaboration, and dialogue. Through note-taking and introducing the practice to his students the teacher was able to draw attention to spoken language either in the TL or L1, and when there was miscommunication or misunderstanding regard those instances as valuable learning opportunities. Speaking and listening classes that are designed to be interactive where knowledge is not transmitted but collectively co-created can be well served by note-taking. My notes taken over the course of an academic year, a review of student notebooks, and an analysis of an interview of my practice served as reflective practice through which I discovered that being open to the students' L1 served the overall goal of teaching the TL and gave me the opportunity to learn about my students and their L1, and develop my teaching practice through the relationships forged during that process. Future consideration will be given to research on the students' perspective of note-taking and translanguaging.

Notes

- † 1) The course textbook is "Nice Talking with You 1" published by Cambridge University Press. It is designed for false beginners to improve oral communication skills and practical conversation strategies in English.
- † 2) The Boy and the Heron (君たちはどう生きるか) is a Japanese film produced by Studio Ghibli in 2023.

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