

On Several Problems of English Usage Observed among a Group of "Global Leaders Program" Students at a Tokyo University

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Abstract

This paper focuses on three broad types of problematic English usage, as evidenced in a collection of student writing done for various "Global Leaders Program" projects at a metropolitan Japanese university. The usage patterns identified here were found to occur *persistently* and possibly reveal a set of tacit linguistic and cognitive tendencies on the part of Japanese speakers of English, which may be of interest in TEFL contexts. The types of expressions examined are: 1. The awkward use of certain verbs (such as "*explain*", "*tell*", "*learn*" and "*show*") when referring to the giving or receiving of information of a *complex* type, 2. The conspicuous (over-)use of "*deep*" and "*deeply*" in contexts regarding knowledge, learning and understanding, and 3. A variety of frequently occurring prepositional phrases using "*of*", with a special focus on phrases featuring the nouns "*situation*" and "*condition*". The paper will give estimates of the relative frequency of these problematic phrases, along with numerous actual examples, and at the same time seek probable explanations as to why they occur, while occasionally providing obvious native English alternatives, in the hope of being of possible assistance to English instructors in devising comprehensive lessons and educational strategies to address the above and related problems. The article will conclude with the author's thoughts on the role of English education as part of the said Global Leaders Program.

1. Introduction

The language data used for this paper comes from a number of essays and presentation scripts, written by a group of Hitotsubashi University students participating in the Global Leaders Program at the Faculty of Economics (which is sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education). The program was officially launched in April of 2013 and is still ongoing; its main goal is to provide participants with increased global

exposure, mainly through a larger share in their academic records of classes taken in English, short-term overseas research trips and study abroad stints of up to a year. Every year, a “Global Leaders Class” of about fifteen students is put together via a process of formal selection including an interview. These students are required to eventually obtain at least 60 percent of their Faculty credits from courses taught in English, in order to receive a “Global Leaders Program Certificate” upon graduation.

The above-mentioned short-term overseas research trip project is the main source of our sample of students’ writing. Their field trips in Europe and Asia (two separate groups every year) always feature a discussion meeting with fellow university students from the respective host country (Germany, France, Bulgaria, Vietnam and China so far). For this, they are required to prepare presentations on selected topics and, after returning, reports on their company visits and overall activities abroad, as well as other general things they have learned through interacting with foreign students or doing research on their target countries. Presentation scripts, personal reflections, research reports and other related essays by the students therefore make up the bulk of our data. Included are also a few of their study plans abroad in order to boost the sample size, which consists of 109 individual pieces of writing, adding up to a total of 66, 418 words¹ and written by 34 different Japanese students (with one participating in the project twice—as a freshman and as a sophomore). Most of the students with writing featured in our linguistic sample, 26 in number, were in their second year at the time of participation, with an additional 2 first-year students, 4 third-year students and 3 fourth-year students also included.

This paper will focus on a few types of problematic English usage as evidenced in the data, which were found to occur persistently and in some cases reveal deeper linguistic and cognitive tendencies that perhaps go beyond just making more or less straightforward grammatical mistakes (of which there were plenty, to be sure). These have been grouped in three main empirical categories here: 1. The awkward use of certain verbs (such as *explain*, *tell*, *learn* and *show*) when referring to the giving or receiving of information of a complex type, 2. The persistent (over-)use of *deep* and *deeply* in contexts regarding knowledge, learning and understanding, and 3. A variety of frequently occurring prepositional phrases using *of*, with a special focus on phrases featuring the nouns *situation* and *condition*. The discussion below will give estimates

¹As counted by Microsoft Word 2007.

of the relative frequency of these problematic types of usage, along with numerous actual examples, and at the same time seek to identify probable explanations as to why they occur, while occasionally providing obvious native English alternatives in the hope of being of assistance to English instructors in devising comprehensive lessons and educational strategies to address the above and related problems.

The concluding section will, instead of restating the major findings of this paper (given in sections 3, 4 and 5), which have also been summed up briefly in this introduction, provide some further thoughts on the role of English education as part of the Global Leaders Program and the way it is viewed at Hitotsubashi, both by the students and some of the faculty, along with the students’ self-assessment of their own language skills compared to their overseas peers.

2. A Note on Methodology

The research approach adopted here may be said to be corpus-driven. The author was responsible for working with the above and other participants in the GLP international field studies project (non-Japanese students’ materials have been excluded from our sample) on their PowerPoint presentations and presentation scripts, as well as for correcting their subsequent essays and reports. Our data consists of the collection of students’ writing in its unedited form and a corresponding collection of the same texts as they were finally published, i.e. after being edited by the author. In the tables below, **UNED** will refer to the former and **EDIT** to the latter collection of texts. They consist of 66, 418 and 69, 835 words respectively.

Both collections were processed to produce all sequential N-grams (for $N \leq 8$) to be found in the texts, after which the N-gram frequencies were counted and appear here in values normalized to 100, 000 words, in order to make comparisons with other/future studies easier. Should such a comparison be attempted, however, one has to bear in mind the relatively small size of the original sample and the resulting extrapolation in the normalized values. The original frequencies, i.e. per the original number of words, can be found by simply reversing the normalization formula and rounding off to the nearest whole number, or simply—for quick reference purposes—obtained by dividing the frequencies listed here by 1.5, and again rounding to the nearest whole number.

The operational definition of an **N-gram** in this study is simply a sequence of N

words, where the maximum value for N is 8 (although the examples cited below usually consist of one, two or three words). N-gram data appears in the following form throughout the paper:

N-gram	UNED	EDIT
<i>phrase 1</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>
<i>phrase2</i>	<i>p</i>	
<i>phrase3</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>r</i>

where *x*, *y*, *p*, *q* and *r* reflect the normalized frequencies (i.e., as per 100,000 words) and blank cells represent *zero* occurrences. If a phrase of the type “*word1 word2*” appears in a table together with an N-gram of the type “*word1 word2 word3*”, assume that the frequency value for the longer phrase is a subset of that of the shorter one. Almost all of the cited juxtapositions of frequencies here reflect cases for which the difference between **UNED** and **EDIT** was estimated to be statistically significant according to the *chi-square* test (see, for example, Leech & Fallon 1992, p.161, for a brief discussion of this).

For the general advantages of this kind of comparative phrasal analysis based on N-gram data and some more technical details about it, see Martchev (2008) and Martchev (2009).

In terms of the methodology of production of our primary data, an important problem is to what extent should the original student essays have been corrected to start with. In our case, the rule of thumb was to correct the most obvious and most offending grammatical mistakes, smooth out hard to comprehend passages and sentences, and bring the texts up to a familiarity of expression that would allow a native English speaker to read through without undue difficulties, while in no way pretending to feature full native-like expression throughout. This is, of course, a very subjective evaluation; for the actual texts in their edited form, see Martchev et al. (2013) and Martchev et al. (2014). In spite of this problem of *degree-of-correction*, however, the **UNED** and **EDIT** corpora proved to be different enough to highlight multiple problems and trends in the students’ writing.

Finally, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were consulted, on occasion, for relevant examples of actual native-speaker usage (cf. References). Source information is provided along with the citations.

3. *Try and Explain*

Our students sure had a lot of “explaining” to do once they found themselves facing another team of eager young hopefuls, frothing at the bit, cross-metaphorically, for intelligent discussion with people from half way around the world, but the following group of N-grams which exhibit consistently large differences between UNED and EDIT suggested problems in the usage of the verb *explain*:

N-gram	UNED	EDIT
<i>explain</i>	28.6	11.4
<i>explain about</i>	4.5	
<i>explained</i>	19.5	4.3
<i>I explained</i>	9	1.4
<i>I will explain</i>	13.5	2.8
<i>I will explain about</i>	4.5	

Here is one group of actual examples using *explain about* ~:

*Hello , My name is SK. I will **explain about** the cities.*

*I will **explain about** the example.*

*Second, I will **explain about** German 20 cent coins.*

*I **explain about** some advantages that Germany has as a member of the EU .*

*Japanese, Dutch and Germans working there **explain about** their corporate activities and kindly answered to our questions.*

The influence of the Japanese “～について説明する”, resulting in an overuse of *explain about sth.*, is to be expected and indeed language teaching resources will often advise against using this phrasal pattern (see this website², for example). However, the combination does sometimes occur in natural English, as in:

*FPU 431 Somehow I felt I could not, or did not want to, **explain about** Miss Havisham and her strange house. (BNC)*

*K4P 2627 This can mean meeting the Press on a Monday or Tuesday night to **explain about** the performance, answer any questions and arrange interviews. (BNC)*

*I could hear my mother trying to **explain about** the Martians to Milt. (COCA, Source: Michigan Quarterly Review)*

*He says he learned a lot of things this way, things too complicated to **explain about** here now. (COCA, Source: The Antioch Review)*

²「Explain about」はやめてーっ！ http://school.jorudan.co.jp/eigolike/pc/columns/columns_032.php

The problem, then, is not so much one of entirely avoiding *explain about sth.*, as knowing when it might be possible to use it. If anything, this expression would actually feel more natural in at least some of the awkward-sounding sentences encountered in our data:

*This chapter **explains** the three ongoing policies in China.* [They were only briefly introduced]

*Before I talk about that more deeply, I think I have to **explain** the Euro crisis in 2010.* [Again, what followed was actually just a brief introduction of the subject that restated common knowledge]

*Firstly, I will **explain** you today's situation of gender equality in Japan and France.*

*Mr. Ito Michio, who was very friendly, had a lecture for us there. He **explained** a lot of things.*

*I **will explain** two beautiful castles in Denmark.*

No wonder that the sentence “That explains a lot” often sounds jocular or somewhat euphemistic in native-speaker English, but more importantly, the above sample suggests a need to make Japanese students aware of the divergent aspects of the concepts “explain” and its Japanese counterpart, “説明する”. *Explaining how or why something happens* is a pattern which sounds very natural in English. When it comes to *explaining something*, however, the English phrase tends to presuppose a degree of exhaustiveness, or elegance of explication which is obviously difficult or impossible to achieve, much less in only a few words and when talking about *complex issues*. Hence the frequent use of *try to explain* and *help explain* in such cases in English. Going back to one of the above-cited examples, a subject such as the problems surrounding gender equality in two countries cannot possibly be covered in a few sentences and so be “explained”. When scientists dream of coming up with an “equation that *explains* the universe”, they obviously mean a simple enough mathematical formula out of which all other laws of physics can be derived. No wonder this has not been achieved yet... Compare the following examples from the British National Corpus:

J52 313 *The biologist **tries to explain** the workings, and the coming into existence, of complex things, in terms of simpler things.*

CTX 2013 *The manual is well written and **explains how** the device works, but it doesn't explain how to use it with, say, WordPerfect.* (BNC)

K59 4723 *Perhaps he might be interested to know that, for reasons **too complicated to explain** here, he is known to his comrades in the People's Party as 'Lowenbrau'.* (BNC)

CET 1446 *The influx of energy would **help explain** the microwave background radiation.* (BNC)

EA9 129 ***Explain** the **basic** principles of good hotel organisation.* (BNC)

B1W 1871 ***Explain** the **main** features of project finance.* (BNC)

To take the last pair of these examples, it would be strange if someone claimed they were going to explain project finance or good hotel organization in a brief presentation. This kind of thing may of course happen in advertising contexts or when the speaker/writer claims to have some sort of very elegant, clever or counter-intuitive explanation.

A somewhat similar problem has to do with the verb *tell*, as we show below. Overall, the N-gram data show a significant discrepancy in the frequency of usage of expressions involving *tell* between the unedited and edited text versions:

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
<i>tell</i>	25.6	7.1
<i>tell you</i>	12	1.4
<i>tell you the</i>	6	
<i>I'll tell</i>	4.5	
<i>I'll tell you</i>	4.5	

For beginner-level and intermediate students in Japan, the main difficulty usually comes from the partial and complex overlapping in the semantic maps of the Japanese “教える” and “言う” with the English *teach*, *say* and *tell*. Our corpus reveals that the problem is actually deeper than that:

And next, I'll tell you the challenge of ASEAN for trade.

This chart tells you the inflow of FDI over the years.

In this chapter, I would like to tell you my three proposals.

Firstly, we tell you the introduction, which is about the historical background on how Germany has been a leading nation in the EU.

In discussion I have to tell what I really want to tell in an easy but technical way, these style of class will be a nice practice for my future career.

Then, secondly we tell you the disadvantages of Germany's being in the EU and thirdly the advantages of it.

Then I'll tell you the history of environmental pollution in Japan.

In many cases, part of the difficulty clearly has to do with the relevant set of sundry habitual expressions typical of English speech, which are yet to be internalized by the students, but sometimes the problem again lies in how *complex* the thing to *be told* is. It is one thing to *tell* someone *the time*, or *the answer*, and quite another to *give* them *the history* of a particular phenomenon or *the challenges* it presents. Similarly, part of

the reason why *telling* the advantages of something usually sounds “off” is because it is difficult to imagine a short finite list of benefits arising out of a geopolitical situation, with native speakers often using phrases like *speak about some of the advantages*, *identify the main advantages*, etc. in similar cases.

Here are some more relevant and odd-sounding examples using other verbs, such as *show* and *learn* :

*Third, I will **show** you the problems of bioethics, such as clone problems, surrogate birth and euthanasia.*

*I think one of the most controversial topics in china is air pollution, so firstly let me **show** you the introduction of air pollution. [A whole paper might be written on just this example]*

*Therefore, I thought this trip would be also a good opportunity for me to **learn** the actual situation in these two countries.*

*Observing this situation, I felt that this program which included a field research in Bulgaria and Germany would give me a good chance to **learn** the EU.*

*Secondly, I intended to **learn** the Danish economic condition and development.*

*During our stay in Sofia, however, we **learned** many aspects of Bulgarian culture.*

*The reason why I choose Germany is that I want to **learn** the politics and economy in Europe.*

Expressions using *learn* can usually easily be remedied by adding *about* when the object is sufficiently complex. The data clearly demonstrates this:

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
<i>learn</i>	112.9	110.2
<i>learned</i>	73.7	74.4
<i>learn about</i>	9	32.9
<i>learned about</i>	7.5	8.5
<i>learn more about</i>	1.5	15.7

While the overall frequency of occurrence of *learn(ed)* is practically the same for the two corpora, *learn(ed) about* shows a large discrepancy, while *learn more about* was almost nonexistent in **UNED**, even though using it seemed like a good idea on a number of occasions, as in:

UNED: *Pop culture will be one of the reasons to start to **study** Japan.*

EDIT: *Pop culture can often become an important reason for a person's decision to study Japanese and **learn more about** our country. [Rephrasing partly depending on context here].*

Which should complete the *about*-circle in this particular section.

4. *Deep Thought*

Upon considering the following group of N-grams,

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
<i>deep</i>	9	4.3
<i>deeply</i>	24	5.7
<i>more deeply</i>	10.5	

it became clear that the students were routinely overusing *deep* and especially its adverbial derivative *deeply*. A look at the following examples will help demonstrate the nature of the problem:

*First of all, I wanted to know the EU **more deeply**.*

*I was looking forward to learning **deeply** about the EU and understand the real situation of two different European countries through this program.*

*If there is another opportunity, I want to stay in Europe for a longer time and know about the EU **more deeply**.*

*The reason why this experience became a valuable one was their lectures of businesses there was very exciting for me who wanted to work abroad in the future and made me think **deeply** of my career.*

*Personally, I would like to study **deeply** about utilizing microeconomics in public policy.*

*However, I could understand euro system **more deeply** by staying there in such time.*

*However, what impressed me **more deeply** was Chinese people’s strong passion for economic growth.*

*We were **deeply** impressed that we could have this strong alumni connection even far away from Japan.*

*I noticed that my knowledge has not reached the level yet, so that I have decided to acquire a lot of knowledge **more deeply** than before.*

*I **deeply** sympathized with these ideas and in this point of view I made a decision.*

*I want to learn such fields **more deeply** by taking classes in German, and join a seminar in German.*

*I want to focus on the fact that the growth model of China **deeply** depends on export and capital investment.*

*Especially in Japan and Europe, this tendency is **deeply** based.*

*Before I talk about that **more deeply**, I think I have to explain the Euro crisis in 2010.*

*And in addition to that I study Principles of Management to compare business and theory of economics and to get wider and **deeper** ability to think economically.*

*What make me consider **the deepest** was policy of welfare state Denmark.*

*It would be a great advantage for me to be able to those unfamiliar classes and **deepen** my curiosity.*

The picture one gets from the data is that, while in native-speaker English *deeply* will sometimes be used in similar contexts, for our Japanese students it is simply the default word to go to when talking about knowledge, studying, or understanding, and also when using some other phrases whose Japanese equivalents habitually feature the corresponding “深い” and “深く”. The very prolific usage of these words in Japanese compared to English for the said context is thus highlighted at the same time.

Deep understanding is a common phrase in English and the British National Corpus contains 25 instances of it, such as:

FNW 3635 *It takes genius to go from playful thoughts about beetles to a **deep understanding** of the Universe.* (BNC)

CFV 335 *Dr Solomon has disassembled a very large number of viruses, and has a **deep understanding** of what a virus can and cannot do.* (BNC)

ADP 1812 *It is a piece that shows Strauss’s **deep understanding** of nature, and, again, it shows him as the great master of the musical epilogue.* (BNC)

ED2 480 *A **deep understanding** of mechanical matters is paramount.* (BNC)

KA6 104 *A **deep understanding** of the historical and cultural background is very well shown.* (BNC)

The noun phrase *deep learning* is to be found an additional 3 times, while querying BNC for *understand/learn deeply* predictably returns no results. On the other hand, a query on the Japanese equivalent “深く知” (with the ending cut off to include all possible verb forms) in KOTONOHA—the Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese (consisting of 100 million words³), produces 42 actual examples. Even more interestingly, the noun phrase “深い知識” (*deep knowledge*) exhibits a much lower frequency, 18, which is in stark contrast with the situation in English.

Meanwhile, it has to be said that COCA does contain 8 instances of *deeply understand* and 2 of *understand deeply*, and they come from well-known publications too:

*For sellers to understand how they should price, they should **deeply understand** their market and competition — what’s on the market now, not just what’s sold.* (COCA, source: USA Today)

*The companies to watch, Mr. Lucovsky wrote, have “embraced the network, **deeply understand** the concept of ‘software as a service’ and know how to deliver incredible value to their customers efficiently and quickly.”* (COCA, source: NY Times)

³ Methodological difficulties arise of course when dealing with the problem of what should be a word in Japanese. The same goes for English, however, only in better-disguised and subtler form, and so we beg to be forgiven for comparing the two corpora at face value for practical purposes.

Upon seeing this, with the more recent time period that COCA covers (1990-2012, as opposed to 1980-1993 for BNC) and the worldwide influence of American English, we might even be tempted to speculate that global English may in fact evolve to accept a more Japanese-like usage of *deeply*. However, given the 182 times that the more traditional noun phrase *deep understanding* appears in the same corpus, this kind of usage still appears to be a rare commodity. Incidentally, *deep knowledge* is to be found 25 times in BNC (i.e. at the same rate as *deep understanding*) and 99 times in COCA, which are frequencies that can be considered not too dissimilar given the difference in scale (100 million words versus 450 million words respectively).

Another enlightening example from our mini-corpus would be:

*I felt a kind of **depth** by looking [at] Germany and Denmark in 3 ways. That was a really precious experience to take part in [the] survey trip.*

This, combined with the previous examples we have seen, further suggests that in the Japanese speaker’s mind, the notion of “*deep-ness*”, conveys a psychologically satisfying image of understanding and intellectual curiosity, while remaining conveniently vague. Knowledge is, therefore, most often to be *deepened*, rather than *furthered*, *broadened* or *expanded* as English speakers would often have it. The question, “*I aspire to **deepen** my knowledge and understanding of economics. Should I rephrase it? If yes, how?*”, posted on Yahoo! Answers⁴, elicited a variety of interesting responses (with our emphasis), such as:

*I think it’s okay or I aspire to **expand** my knowledge and understanding of economics.*

You should not say that. Not only does it sound awkward, but it is a generic and not very believable statement.

*I wouldn’t say deepen. It sounds like it’s almost not a word. Instead, I’d replace it with “**increase**” “**expand**” or “**mature**”. I’d also say the “*theory of economics*” not just *economics*. It’s more precise.*

Yes, you can say that. But yes, it does sound awkward.

*Hmm.. sounds fine to me.. you can always use “I am aspiring to *deepen* my knowledge and understanding of economics”. that would work as well.*

*“I am **inspired to deepen** my knowledge and understanding of economics” I hope that works!*

⁴ <https://answers.yahoo.com> Question Title: “Can I say that? or does it sound awkward?”; Question ID = 20091124215618AATb2xt

Attitudes to the phrase thus vary and it would be difficult to give learners a quick fix or a set of easy-to-follow rules in English-teaching contexts. It may be best to expose Japanese students to a variety of actual sentences produced by native speakers, highlight their own second-language-speaker affinity to using *deep* and related derivatives, and encourage them to add variety to their expression with other, more typical, English phrases.

5. The State Art: *Of*

The versatility of the noun-connecting Japanese particle “ の ” means that students should be made specifically aware of the variety of English noun phrase equivalents that do not typically require the preposition *of*. Problems with usage of this kind are spread among a variety of contexts and coming up with a set of clear rules to teach to students does not appear feasible. Therefore, identifying some of the most common problematic cases in student writing will no doubt be useful in producing at least a shortlist of expression types for the intermediate English speaker to avoid. Our data highlights a few such often-encountered cases where the discrepancies between **UNED** and **EDIT** were most conspicuous:

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
<i>of</i>	3343.9	3038.5
<i>cities of</i>	4.5	
<i>class of</i>	10.5	
<i>classes of</i>	13.5	2.8
<i>condition of</i>	7.5	1.4
<i>education of</i>	7.5	1.4
<i>reason of</i>	9	
<i>situation of</i>	22.5	7.1
<i>skill of</i>	7.5	
<i>students of</i>	18	2.8

Here also is a sample from the students’ writing where *of* was deemed problematic, for various reasons:

*We made these presentations to the **students of** Sofia University.*

*On the 2nd day, we interacted with **students of** Ruhr University Bochum.*

*Above all, when we discussed with the **students of** Renmin University, I felt almost overwhelmed by their broad knowledge and logical argument.*

*I explore the present **situation of** public transportation in Sofia by looking at the EU official reports together with our firsthand observation and impression.*

*I have realized that I did not have much knowledge about the actual **situation of** the EU.*

*I was looking forward to learning deeply about the EU and understand the real **situation of** two different European countries through this program.*

*It is said that Denmark ranks top in studies into the overall happiness of nations. The more I learned about Denmark, the more I understood the **reason of** this ranking.*

*If the **reason of** strict regulation over information in China lies in farmers, it is necessary to improve the education level of farmers in order to get the regulation relaxed.*

*I'm going to take the **class of** Managerial Economics in order to study how companies make their decisions from the viewpoint of economics.*

*Then I'm planning to study the problem of TPP or function of NAFTA from the perspectives of the U.S. in the **class of** The International Economy.*

*I have prepared very well by taking as many English-opened **classes of** Hitotsubashi University as possible.*

*The collaboration of skilled labors that knows the real **condition of** agricultures and young generation that can obtain new knowledge and convey it can make this project function well.*

*Thirdly, I point out that **education of** manners on traffic should be more encouraged.*

*After getting M.A. I'd like to work for Bank of Japan or some financial institutions to do business practice like researching, and after that I'd like to be involved in **education of** university.*

*Second, global leaders have a sufficient **skill of** speaking of English.*

*For example, elderly people who have acquired a **skill of** PC make a blog about achievement of their creative activities.*

*This means that the quality of education in big **cities of** Germany, especially in Dusseldorf, is very high.*

The first three examples are interesting in themselves, because both *students from ~* and *students of ~* (where the following word is a university or some other type of educational institution) are to be encountered in native-speaker English. Here are a few examples from the British National Corpus:

students from ~

B7M 656 Students from Imperial College help out with Nuffield-based general science at Stockwell Manor School. (BNC)

BPC 84 Twenty leading British designers together with students from the Royal College of Art have been asked to draw upon the Collection and create dresses which reflect both the flamboyance and strict regulation which characterised Court dress. (BNC)

B3C 475 About 1000 students from the University are to be found annually gaining mainstream industrial and clinical experience in both paid and unpaid placements. (BNC)

FNU 675 Twenty students from the University are coming in as extras. (BNC)

F9U 1521 Minton, assisted by students from various London art schools, supervised the decorations. (BNC)

HKS 1990 *In the first signs of protest since the events of June, students from the Beijing Aeronautical Institute held a demonstration in violation of martial law on Dec. 9, criticizing China's economic performance and media censorship.* (BNC)

CAK 1450 *In April two students from this school stood back to let an elderly disabled woman enter the Post Office before them.* (BNC)

CCH 318 *Three students from Aquinas College, Stockport, completed a 60-mile sponsored walk from Canterbury to London in aid of CRISIS, to raise money for the homeless.* (BNC)

students of ~

CCG 153 *, and became the first lay students of Ushaw College, the Northern Catholic seminary, to train for ministry.* (BNC)

HJO 13487 *These are mainly academic staff and some research students of UK universities and polytechnics, but practitioners in government, international institutions, and business and finance are well represented, as are overseas academics.* (BNC)

HLL 1485 *students of Belgrade University went on strike on June 14, supported in their demands by the teaching staff.* (BNC)

HHV 21790 *Is my hon. Friend aware that some of the finest technical education in Europe is given to the 7,000 students of the Derbyshire college of higher education?* (BNC)

ANJ 147 *The first performance took place on 12 March 1767 as part of the traditional annual performance by the students of the Gymnasium.* (BNC)

BOY 2103 *His Fifteen Discourses on the history of painting were delivered to students of the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790.* (BNC)

FSY 1422 *The students of Queen Mary and Westfield College, which is next to the Royal London Hospital, undertake at Queen Mary and Westfield College the innovative phase I of the curriculum which she describes.* (BNC)

HHX 18690 *At the beginning of the transitional period, there is no students' association established for the students of the college.* (BNC)

In our case, groups of a dozen or so students went to a European or Asian country to hold a discussion meeting with similar groups of university students there. The participants invariably wrote in their essays that they had met, and held a discussion with, *students of* this or that university, while the author's intuition usually had to have *students from*. While both expressions are in use, as the BNC examples show, we can see even from the small sample above that *students of* is more likely to be used when referring to all the students from a particular institution, and may also be felt to be slightly more formal. Where we have smaller college representations, *from* will be the more likely choice. Indeed, a Google search (with restricted domain names, so as to exclude non-native speaker domains like *.jp* as much as possible—as crude as this measure is), showed a nearly complete preference for *from* when part of the prepositional phrase *with students of / from*:

Search String	Results ⁵
<i>with students from Oxford site:.uk</i>	2,880
<i>with students of Oxford site:.uk</i>	4
<i>with students from Cambridge site:.uk</i>	1,730
<i>with students of Cambridge site:.uk</i>	6
<i>with students from Harvard site:.org</i>	13,900
<i>with students of Harvard site:.org</i>	3
<i>with students from Harvard site:.com</i>	17,500
<i>with students of Harvard site:.com</i>	16

Next, as far as *reason+preposition+noun* phrases, the students did also use *reason for*, but the occurrence rate was only slightly higher than that of *reason of*:

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
<i>reason(s) of</i>	12	
<i>reason(s) for</i>	15	32.9

We are talking, of course, about cases where the noun following the phrase would reflect the result of the reasons spoken about. English does have a couple of stable collocations that feature the pattern in question, such as *by reason of* ~ and *for reasons of* ~, but here the following noun would be the reason itself; we found no such cases in our students’ writing.

Coming to a new subset of the above phrases, *situation/condition of* would correspond to the Japanese “～の状況”, which was used by the students in its literal translation in English without much apparent hesitation. Here are the relevant phrasal frequencies, followed by actual examples:

⁵ For small search results values, a glitch in displaying Google’s results was revealed. The number on the first page of results was hugely inflated, and something more like the real value only appeared by clicking on the second and subsequent pages.

N-GRAM	UNED	EDIT
situation	69.2	71.6
<i>situation in</i>	4.5	18.6
<i>situation of</i>	22.5	7.1
<i>situation that</i>	4.5	
condition	22.5	4.3
<i>condition in</i>	3	
<i>conditions in</i>		4.3
<i>condition of</i>	7.5	1.4

*I have realized that I did not have much knowledge about the actual **situation of** the EU.*

*In the **situation of** CU (Custom Union), other countries have to take the same tariff to Country A and Country B. In the **situation of** FTA (Free Trade Agreement), other countries can take different tariff to Country A and Country B.*

*I was looking forward to learning deeply about the EU and understand the real **situation of** two different European countries through this program.*

*First of all, do you know the energy **situation of** your own country?*

*And next I'll talk about today's **situation of** Chinese air pollution.*

*The **situation of** Japan in the past is similar to that of China now.*

*This situation is very similar to the past **situation of** France.*

*Let's move on the next part, today's **situation of** Chinese air pollution.*

*Firstly, I will explain you today's **situation of** gender equality in Japan and France.*

*For this reason the **situation of** women cannot be improved in France.*

*I explore the present **situation of** public transportation in Sofia by looking at the EU official reports.*

*Another interesting difference I noticed was the **condition of** the transportation in Sofia.*

*Automobile emissions and gases from industrial plant mainly make the **condition of** air bad.*

*The collaboration of skilled labors that knows the real **condition of** agricultures and young generation...*

*Why did China have the highest academic achievement in the world?—the actual **condition of** super elite education in the disparate society.*

And two further examples not featuring the preposition *of*:

*Isn't it better to have different policies since every country is **different in situation**, cultures, and everything?*

*European countries are more sensitive to their **working situations**.*

Not all cases will sound bad to a native speaker's ear, while some of them might even be misunderstood out of context (e.g. *situation* also meaning *location*), but since this too is obviously an automatic default pattern that Japanese students use, they will

clearly benefit from learning a variety of natural expressions for these contexts, such as the *situation in a country, under conditions of* (e.g. a free trade agreement), *the air condition, transportation conditions, working conditions*, etc., or in some cases from becoming more aware of the lack of any absolute need for always including *situation/condition* in the first place (as in *Let’s move on to the next part: air pollution in China today.*)!

Interestingly, the noun *state* in the sense of “condition” was used only a couple of times throughout UNED, as in:

*In the beginning of this report, I used the word “developing” to explain **the state of China**⁶.*

*The history and the **state of elite education in China.***

This noun lends itself much more easily to phrases of the *state of ~* pattern, and is clearly part of the same broad semantic domain as *condition* and *situation*; stable collocations using this noun (such as *the state of the world, the state of development, the state of the economy, the state of her health, the state of the system, the state of the environment, the state of the yen*, etc.) should certainly be included in a comprehensive lesson addressing the various ways used to express “～の状況” in English.

6. Concluding: Thoughts on the Global Leaders Program and English Language Education as Part of It

Hitotsubashi University is primarily a business and social sciences university and, when it comes to big-sounding program names such as the “Global Leaders” Program (GLP), it inevitably finds itself having to do something of a balancing act between emphasizing the importance of students having a strong foundation in their major fields (like commerce and economics) and helping with their acquisition of advanced English language skills. Judging from the author’s experience, in performing this balancing act, the language side of things can often be downplayed at the expense of “professional knowledge” and “sound reasoning”. Sometimes at the program’s orientation sessions, students will voice their doubts about whether they can get the most out of the program or a particular project, due to a “lack of confidence” in their English speaking abilities. They are often told not to worry: motivation to learn about foreign countries and sound reasoning are the most important things; the language

⁶ In this example, we might give the student the benefit of the doubt: perhaps they meant the country of China; knowing his students, though, the author is not thus inclined.

will come to them later. The following quote from a prominent Hitotsubashi professor will perhaps exemplify this line of thinking well enough:

“The necessity of fostering global leaders is widely accepted, but there is no agreement as to what being a “global leader” is, exactly, or how to help a person become one. Sometimes the term is simply associated with no more than the ability to speak English.

Needless to say, language skills are important and an essential foundation for communicating with the world. Intercultural competence has similarly been long recognized as important, while in employee performance evaluation more attention is now being paid to the need for “cultural intelligence”, which aids people in understanding and integrating into foreign cultures and complements the more traditionally employed general cognitive and emotional intelligence measures.

For us here at Hitotsubashi, however, true global leadership is based on more than just language skills or cultural intelligence. We put great emphasis on cultivating profound analytical abilities in the social sciences, which allow for insightful observation and easier accommodation of other cultures, as well as for the logical capacity to engage in rational discourse in any language.”⁷

While finding ourselves strongly tempted to point out here that logic is necessarily a language-dependent process, and clearly failing to resist that temptation, we do not nonetheless fundamentally disagree with the above opinion. Still, an important point must be made in the context of GLP.

Japan already has its share of highly-skilled professionals in most areas of science and scholarship. This tradition should certainly continue, but what Japanese professionals lack the most is usually an ability to converse in English with the rest of the world at a level greater than just “we are working hard to understand each other”. If a leader should possess any qualities at all, she should be able to inspire and motivate, and clothe her vision in language that touches and moves, or at least convinces. If we take the view that language is just “form”, simply to be filled with intelligent thoughts, we might find ourselves disappointed that even after a lot of “intelligent thinking”, we still cannot exert a persuasive influence on our conversational or business partners because what we are saying doesn’t *sound* inspiring, or very often is at best semi-unintelligible to an international audience. Content cannot *meaningfully* exist without form, without a narrative, without a convincing viewpoint, especially if you’re expected to “lead” people. Communication theorist Marshall McLuhan may be accused of exaggerating, but there is certainly much truth to the statement: “The medium is the message”. Just like you cannot perform a beautiful piece of music using Morse code (even though one could encode⁸ the notation for it, or even the digital sequence for rendering it into audio sound by a computer), so you cannot say things like

⁷ Translation by the author. For the Japanese original, cf. the bilingual pamphlet listed under References.

⁸ Actually, when we say *encode*, we at least presuppose a minimum amount of accuracy thereof; clearly not so in the following example!

Though the mass of the Bulgaria economy growth bigger, regardless of the age or sex, the number of Bulgarians who want to work abroad or who work abroad now is very large. Then, I doubt that the whole profit of Bulgaria is not distributed equally to citizens to some degree. (source: UNED)

and expect to be understood. Even more importantly, while good students at a top-level Japanese university presumably already have an above-average capacity for logical thinking, language is not something that “comes to you” as you go along. The *fuzzy* logic and abundance of exceptions to the rules that govern any natural human language means that a dedicated and sustained effort must be made to become an advanced speaker of it; just remembering a small set of “logical” grammar rules will only help a little - the set is just too big, the tool apparatus too vast. And college is perhaps the last period in a person’s life when they will really have the time for such a huge effort.

Considering all this, for globally-oriented programs such as the one described in this study, students’ language skills should ideally be held to the same lofty status of importance as their analytical and professional abilities, especially when we are dealing with the social sciences, and especially if we are trying to foster anything approaching “global leaders”. English and thought expression in it is where Japan seems to always lag behind, not insight or innovativeness..., as the GLP students clearly had multiple opportunities to realize—the hard way [emphasis added]:

*I was in charge of the presentation about higher education with Chinese students at Renming University. In that conference, what I was most surprised at was their ability itself. They speak **English more fluently** than us and their presentation was so **logical** that it was easy to understand even though they major International economics. In fact, we have to say that it was greater than ours.*

*The purpose of my study in the University of Munich is, 1. to find the reason for German’s good times in terms of economics, 2. to master the enough command of languages and logic to **be on equal terms with foreign students in discussion** with them.*

*Above all, when we discussed with the students of Renmin University, I felt almost **overwhelmed** by their broad knowledge and logical argument.*

*In Sofia, Japanese-major university students warmly welcomed us. To our joy, some of them **spoke excellent Japanese**.*

*When we discussed with Bulgarian students, I realized that **we Japanese were not good at expressing our own opinions**.*

*One of them [i.e. the students at Ruhr University Bochum] could speak five languages. **I cannot speak even English very well**, so I will study hard in order to catch up with them.*

*I could also spend good time discussing and forming a friendship with Bulgarian students of Sophia University. I was surprised that they fluently spoke Japanese. This made me think that **I should study English much harder.***

*I am going to study in the Netherlands for eight months in the academic year 2014. As **I am not confident with English**, I needed to brush up my English skills. From this point of view, this program seemed to me a good opportunity to improve my English by actively using it.*

*[The Bulgarian students'] ability to speak English is also great. In our discussion we talked many topics. For instance, we exchanged our views about why young people either in Japan or in Bulgaria did not vote and what made Japanese language attractive to them. They used English to express their own ideas, even though it was not their native language. I had **an acute feeling that I should be able to speak at least English well** to articulate what I really want to say.*

*Of course, I will not go abroad to learn a language. However, I want to learn **English as a tool**. [Needless to say, given this attitude, this student had a harder time communicating in English than her peers]*

(selected quotes from UNED)

In oral accounts of their experiences abroad, our students would also frequently remark that they were “圧倒された”, or “overwhelmed” by their Chinese and European peers’ English and debating skills. Not once has a student said they felt they were behind in terms of capacity for logical reasoning or general knowledge. This, in the author’s view, effectively “underwhelms” the *logic and expertise first, and language maybe later* stance. Even if one is not convinced that “the medium is the message”, most people would have to agree that there is no effective message without the right medium and that, in an Information Age abounding with messages, the *how* will matter more than ever.

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