

Dictogloss Trial and Survey at Edogawa University

Jeffrey W. Hanks*

Abstract

This paper will introduce the “Dictogloss” method as an ESL teaching method and discuss the results of a survey administered to two classes of Edogawa University students after they had been through a semester of a pilot program using this method of instruction. Specifically the results will be analyzed in terms of learner motivation. The results will show that dictogloss shows promise in terms of motivation and in terms of listening, speaking and possibly vocabulary skills. They will also show that there is room for improvement, or variation, in the method.

Introduction

Dictogloss, as its name implies, is a type of dictation exercise. However, it differs from basic dictation in important ways. Dictogloss was first introduced by Ruth Wajnryb in *Grammar Dictation*, in 1990. The steps as laid out by Wajnryb are as follows.

- a) Warm up
- b) Dictation
- c) Reconstruction
- d) Analysis and correction (1990, p. 10)

For the classes referred to in this paper, “warm up” consisted of finding vocabulary that was likely to be problematic, writing it on the board, and allowing the students to find the definitions. When unknown vocabulary arose, it was written on the board so that the students could see the spelling. Usually someone would know the Japanese meaning and share that with the class. If not, the students with electronic dictionaries or dictionary apps on their smart phones could share the Japanese meaning. When it was clear that

the teacher was not going to do it for them, the classes quickly became self-sufficient in this way. For “dictation” a short passage was read by the teacher three or four times. The first time, the students were asked only to listen. On subsequent readings, the students listened and wrote key words, and finally tried to fill in the gaps. For “reconstruction”, the students worked with a group in order to recreate the passage together. Each student was expected to write the entire passage. This method was chosen rather than having a group “secretary” because some of the lower level students had difficulty writing using the English alphabet and resorted to Japanese katakana. Knowing that they were expected to write each passage in English in its entirety gave them the impetus to get much needed practice is a skill that they probably were expected to have mastered in junior high school. After recreating the passage with their group, the students were asked to read the passage aloud. One student from each group would read the passage. In this way, every student had the opportunity to read aloud in each class period. Finally, for “analysis and correction”, the students were

* 江戸川大学 情報文化学科専任講師

shown the original text via projector in order to correct any spelling errors. The topic was also discussed or expanded upon within the limitations of the students' abilities and remaining class time.

Participants

The participants were two classes of Edogawa University students. The first class was "Basic English 1", which was comprised of mostly freshman Business and Communication students. 45 students were enrolled in the class, of whom 39 regularly attended (more than 75% of the class periods). The second class was "English 1", which was comprised of freshman Management students. 58 students were enrolled in the class, of whom 51 regularly attended. Both classes contained students of widely varying English skill levels. The higher-level students had the ability to converse about a range of topics in English at a basic level. The students at the low end had difficulty reading English or writing the alphabet and could not respond to even the simplest questions, with the possible exception of "What's your name?" Both classes were comprised mostly of Japanese students, with each class having two Chinese students.

Instrument

The instrument used for this research was a survey with twelve statements requiring responses on the "Likert scale". The Likert scale is the familiar form of five responses ranging from "strongly disagree", through neutral, and on to "strongly agree". The thirteenth item on the survey was an open-ended request for comments on the students' reaction to the class or how it might be improved. The items are as follows. Using the Likert scale:

1. This was my first experience learning English in this way.
2. This class helped me to improve my English listening skills.
3. This class helped me to improve my English vocabulary.
4. This class helped me to improve my English speaking skill.
5. I preferred working with a group to working by myself.
6. Other group members helped me to understand.
7. I helped other group members to understand.
8. I could understand the story the first time the teacher read it.
9. I could understand the story after the teacher read it a few times.
10. I enjoyed this class.
11. The teacher cared about my learning.
12. If I take more English classes in the future, I will take this teacher's class.

Open-ended:

13. What would you recommend to make this class more interesting or useful for you? Anything you say is ok.

The survey was given to the students on two pages of A4 paper, in a Japanese translation (appendix 1) prepared by Professor Michiko Joichi of the Department of Business and Communication at Edogawa University. It was given to the students during the last regular session of class of the semester. In order to try to assure the students of anonymity, they were told not to write their names or student numbers on the survey, and to submit it to a designated student who then submitted them all to the teacher. The survey was given at the beginning of the class period to avoid having the students rush through it in order to go home. The Basic English class returned 37 surveys, and the English 1 class returned 45. The two classes responses did not differ with

enough significance to discuss them separately except for their responses to a few items. So, but for the exceptions of the discussion those few items, the two classes will be treated as one group of 83.

Results and Discussion

A good deal of modern second language research into motivation can be traced back to the writings of Gardner and Lambert. Two of the concepts they introduced are “integrative motivation” and “instrumental motivation”. Integrative motivation is a desire to interact with the target L2 community as well as having a positive view towards said community and its culture. Instrumental motivation is a desire to fulfill a concrete objective, such as increased income or career opportunities, through the study of the L2. In a conference marking the 50th anniversary of their

1959 publication, Gardner says. “... individuals who were integratively oriented were more successful at learning the second language than were individuals who were instrumentally oriented. This, as it turns out was the one finding that caught the interest of many researchers and educators.” (Gardner, 2009) This paper will discuss the results of the dictogloss survey with an eye toward the latter of Gardener’s concepts, integrative motivation, or integrativeness.

The first item on the survey asked if it was the students’ first experience with this type of lesson. Not surprisingly the majority of students reported not having done so. Only 16% of students marked a 1 or 2 to indicate disagreement with the statement.

The next three questions asked the students to report on their perceived improvement in their skills of listening, vocabulary, and speaking. See figures 1-3. The students

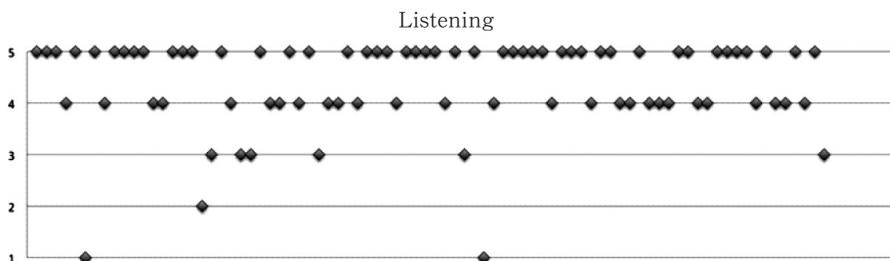


Fig. 1 This class helped me to improve my English listening skills.
(Each point is one student’s response)

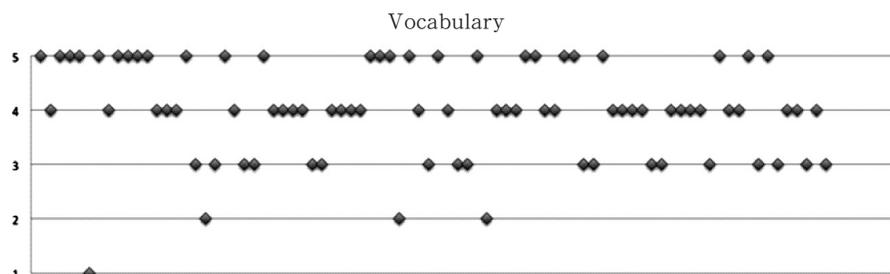


Fig. 2 This class helped me to improve my English vocabulary.
(Each point is one student’s response)

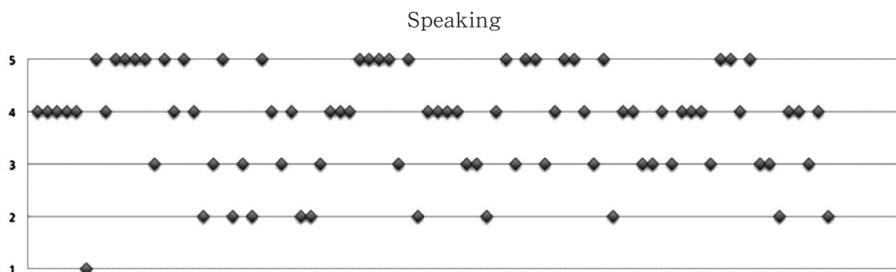


Fig. 3 This class helped me to improve my English speaking skills.
(Each point is one student's response)

reported strong agreement with the statements that their skills had improved with listening, vocabulary and speaking receiving averages of 4.5, 3.9, and 3.8 respectively. In the context of a large class with divergent skill levels, I believe that this is a notable result. Regarding success in second language learning Rod Ellis discusses one facet of Gardner's integrative motivation, the concept of "linguistic self-confidence". In describing the results of a 1986 study, Ellis summarizes "The best predictor of language proficiency proved to be self confidence (i.e. belief in one's ability to learn an L2 successfully)" (2008, p. 684)

The next three items involve group work. An important aspect of dictogloss is that it is done partially in groups. In the classes being discussed, the teacher assigned the groups randomly at the beginning of each class, asking the students to move to sit with their group. So, students neither always sat with their friends, nor did they sit work with the same group each lesson period. The groups were of three or four persons depending on the day's attendance.

Valsiljevic asserts, "...dictogloss is an effective way of combining individual and group activities. Students listen and take notes individually and then work together to reconstruct texts. The reconstruction task gives students focus and a clear objective, which is a pre-condition for successful group

work." (2010, p. 45)

As stated previously, each student was required to write the full text. In early lessons, this meant that sometimes the class waited while students who had done no writing copied from a group member. In later classes, these students had learned that they could not escape the task, and turned out to be some of the students who improved the most in my estimation. Statement 5, "I preferred working with a group to working by myself", was where the two classes differed significantly. The Business and Communications students gave this statement an average of 4.2, while the average was only 3.7 for the Management students. I was surprised by this result because many, if not a majority of the Management students are athletes who play team sports. My hunch is that either they are not used to working in a group where some members are reluctant participants, or that they are embarrassed about displaying their weakness (lack of English skill). The two groups will be treated again for item 6, "Other group members helped me to understand" and 7, "I helped other group members to understand." See figure 4.

These results reinforce the replies from the perceived improvement statements above. The number of students who report having helped others is especially encouraging. This could only serve to improve the students'

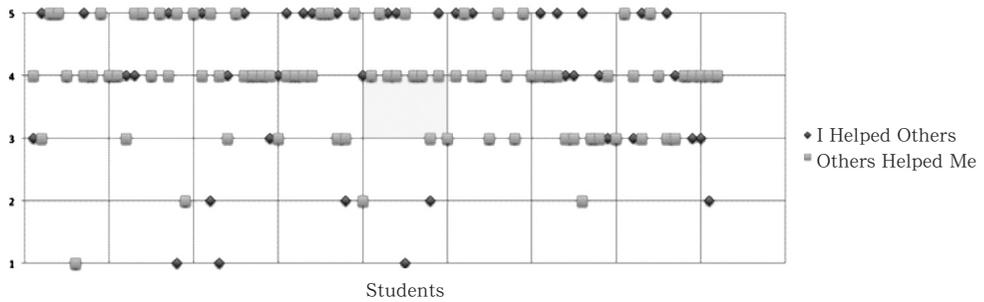


Fig. 4

linguistic self-confidence, and thereby their motivation.

If the material for the class, and the speed at which it was read were appropriate, then Item 8 “I could understand the story the first time the teacher read it”, and item 9 “I could understand the story after the teacher read it a few times” should diverge sharply. This is another area where the two classes responses were significantly different. It appears that the material was just about right for the Management class and a little too easy for the Business and Communication students. The students of the Business and Communication department started at 3.0 on the first listen and rose to 3.9 on the next. While this shows

that their comprehension was not perfect at first, and did improve, it is not ideal. If the material was in-fact too easy, then the class might have been boring for some students. Management reported an average of 2.7 and 4.1 respectively on items 8 and 9. This means that, on average, they went from not quite understanding on the first try, to understanding well after a few times. This, of course is one of the primary goals of the exercise. The difference is easy to see in figures 5 and 6.

The 10th item on the survey was designed to measure an aspect of integrative motivation that Gardner calls “intrinsic motivation”. Intrinsic motivation is a natural interest in a subject. It is involved with internal factors

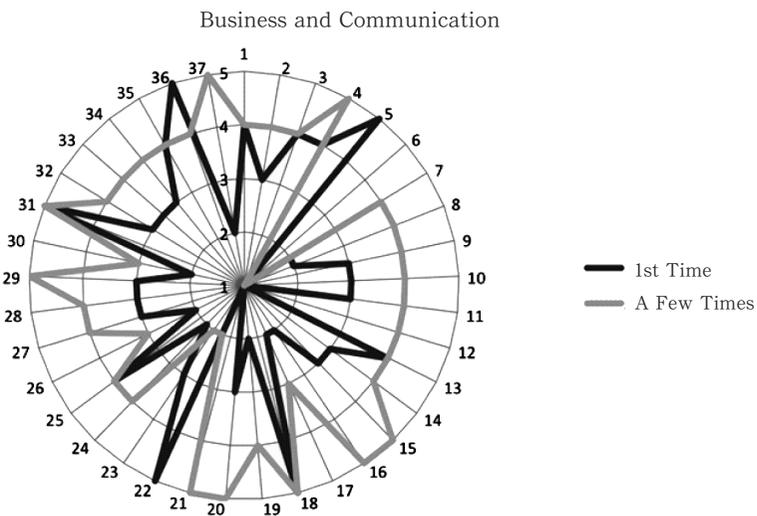


Fig. 5

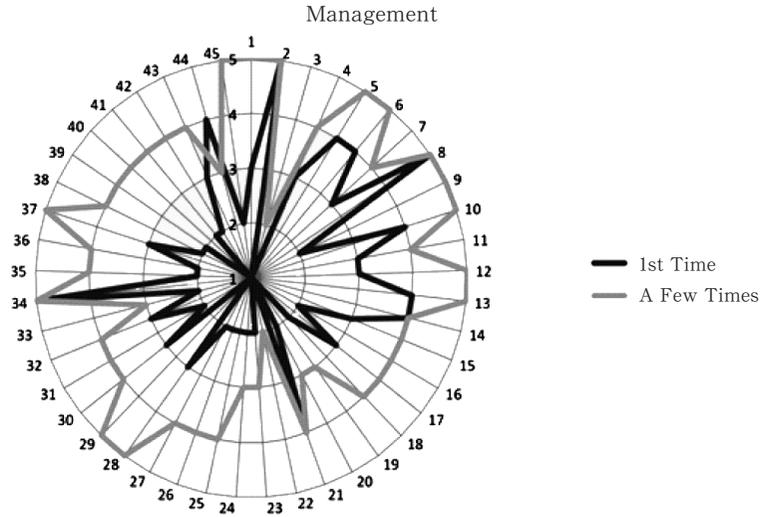


Fig. 6

that lead a learner to involvement with a subject, as opposed to externalities pressuring one in that direction. In discussing the results of an experiment in which intrinsic motivation was compared with “extrinsic motivation”, or external motivating factors, Noels states “the more internalized the reason for L2 learning, the more comfortable and persevering students claimed to be.” (2000, p. 76) While it sounds as if intrinsic motivation is something we are born with and cannot possibly be altered by a classroom experience, no one is born with a desire to learn a foreign lan-

guage. We are however, born with a desire for pleasurable experiences and doing things that we like to do. Every teacher wants students to enjoy his or her lesson. While that might be good for the teacher’s ego, it is also good for the student in terms of an enhancement of intrinsic motivation. Item 10, “I enjoyed this class” speaks directly to intrinsic motivation. See figure 7.

Items 11 and 12, the last of the Likert scale based items on the survey, go directly to integrative motivation in terms of having a desire to interact with L2 speakers, or an inter-

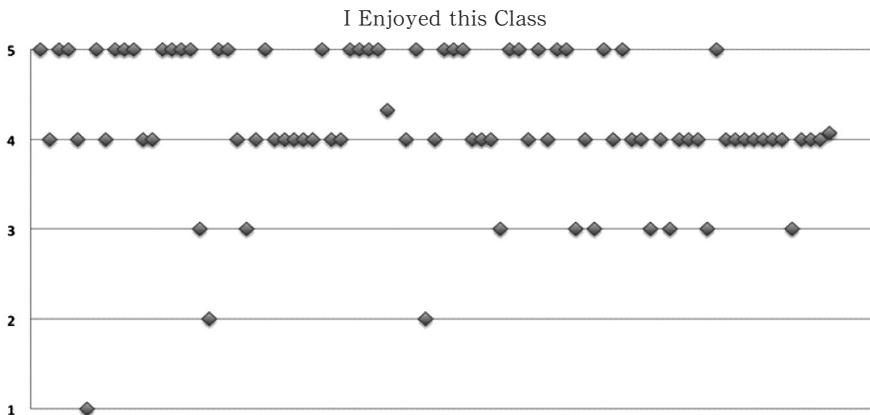


Fig. 7

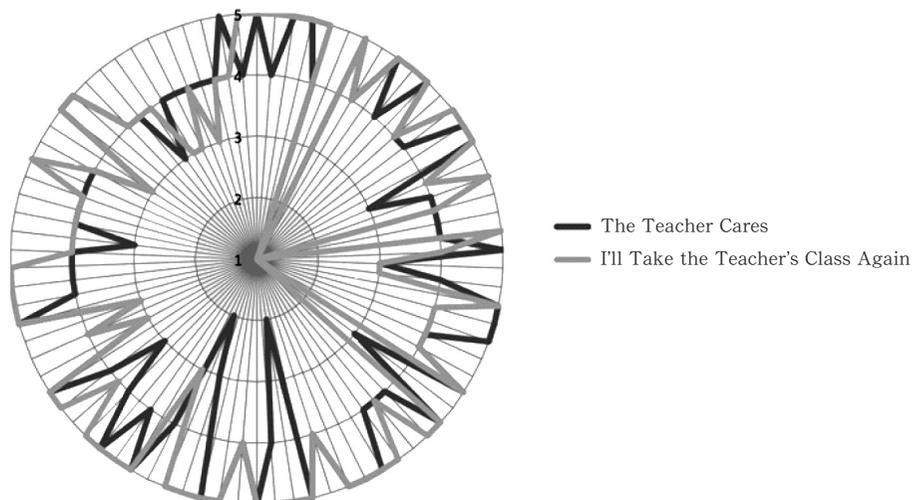


Fig. 8

est in the L2 culture. As an American and an English teacher, I am representative of the English language, but also my culture. By doing my best to generate goodwill in my students by allowing them to experience success in English, I can increase their interest in me, my language, and my culture, thereby hopefully increasing their integrative motivation. Items 12, “The teacher cared about my learning” and 13, “If I take English classes in the future, I will take this teacher’s class” ask this directly. See figure 8.

The last item on the survey, number 13, “What would you recommend to make this class more interesting or useful for you? Anything you say is ok” asks the students for their opinions. The classes exceeded my expectations by submitting a total of 26 comments, almost a third of the students made a comment. The comments range from helpfully insightful “I think my listening improved. But, I felt that the sentences were at the same level every time. It would be better if it got more difficult. Also, I think it would be better to work individually, because some group members don’t participate. Also, I’d rather do the speaking a different way. For

example, make our own sentences to speak” (translated from the Japanese), to the absurd “Daisy and Donald Duck!! Have a nice summer holiday”. The complete list of comments is in Appendix 2.

Conclusion

Dictogloss appears to be a good solution for teaching a large class of varied levels. The group work aspect is key to allowing a measure of success for students who might otherwise fail to participate. It also allows students at a higher level, who would otherwise be bored, to help others. I’ve had one more semester of these classes since this data was collected and have made some adjustments. Specifically, I have increased the difficulty level slightly for the Basic English class and introduced other activities periodically in order to avoid monotony. The students seem pleased with the lessons and remain attentive in class.

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Appendix 1

Japanese version of the survey (Translated from English by Professor Michiko Joichi) This is the version administered to the students.

この授業をよくするためのアンケートです。正直に、注意深く、回答してください。
当てはまる欄に✓を入れてください。

1	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	このような授業のやり方は初めてである。				
2	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	この授業はリスニング力を伸ばすのに役立つ。				
3	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	この授業は語彙力を伸ばすのに役立つ。				
4	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	この授業はスピーキング力を伸ばすのに役立つ。				
5	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	一人よりグループで課題に取り組むほうが好きだ。				
6	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	グループのメンバーに協力してもらって理解できた。				
7	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	グループのメンバーが理解できるように協力した。				

8	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	聞いた内容を一度で理解できた。				
9	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	数回聞いて内容を理解できた。				
10	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	この授業は楽しかった。				
11	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	先生は理解度を測りながら授業を進めてくれた。				
12	まったく当てはまらない	あまり当てはまらない	どちらでもない	当てはまる	よく当てはまる
	英語の授業は、今後も先生の授業を履修したい。				
13	この授業をよりよくするためのコメント（どんなことでも）を書いてください。				

Appendix 2

List of student comments (uncorrected)

Original Comment (English or Japanese)	English Translation of Japanese Comments
1度を読む英文をもう少し多くしたら良いかもしれない	It would be better if you read more at one time.
最初の頃は英語だけの授業で不安だったけど、だんだん楽しいと感じました。	In the beginning I worried about having English class. But, I enjoyed it.
とても楽しい授業でした。ありがとうございます。	It was very fun. Thank you.
英語を聞き取れる人、聞き取れない人同士で協力をうまくできるようなチーム作りができると良いと思います。	It is good that we could have groups of people with low level and high level. We could help each other.
授業態度、またはこの授業のシステムともにとても良かったと思う。	This lesson system is very good.
先生もうちょっとがんばってください。Hanks Big LOVE (Wajnryb, 1990)	Teacher, please do your best. Hanks Big Love.
もう少しゆっくりいってほしい。後は最高。	Please speak more slowly. Other things were great.
実際話すスピードも遅かったりその都度あっているスピードなのでとてもよかったです。	You speak the right speed, so it was good.
とても楽しく勉強できました。ありがとうございました。	I had a good time studying. Thank you.
とても楽しかったです。ありがとうございました。	It was fun. Thank you very much.
英語の聞き取りや、ライティングの勉強になりました。	It was good for writing and listening.
グループ内で協力をもっとできるようにして欲しいです。	I want to be able to do more cooperation with the group.
リスニング力は着いたと思います。ただ、文章のレベルが同じように感じたので、すこしづつ難しい文章にしていった方が良いと思います。また、グループだけでなく個人作業を少し増やした方が人に頼らず自分でやる力がつくのではないかと思います。スピーキング力は別のやり方（自分で文章を作って発表させあたり等）のほうがいいのかと思います。	I think my listening improved. But, I felt that the sentences were at the same level every time. It would be better if it got more difficult. Also, I think it would be better to work individually, because some group members don't participate. Also, I'd rather do the speaking a different way. For example, make our own sentences to speak.
授業はとても楽しかったです。なので、このままで大丈夫だと思います。	Our lesson was very fun. This way is ok.
リスニングが始まるタイミングが少し分かりづらかった。	It was a little difficult to understand at first.
とても楽しかったです。一度で聞き取れない人がいるかもしれないので、生徒の反応を見て何回か話したりした方が良いと思いました。	It was very fun. Some people can't understand the first time, so you should say it a few more times and watch the students' faces.
英文の内容もとても楽しくて取り組みやすかったので、とても良かったです。	English sentences are very fun and it was interesting.
I wanted to have a conversation	

Daisy and Donald Duck!! Have a nice summer holiday.	
Nothing. See you again.	
This class was slow. I know some students need the time to understand. But also some students (I think 70% students) enough time to understand. Thank you 6 months.	
生徒のレベルに差があるせいでつまらないと授業をとるのをやめてしまった人もいる。授業の最後にその日に先生が読んだ英文をプリントして欲しい。ちゃんと字体でも確認したかった。	There are different levels of students, so some students quit. Also, I would like a copy of the text at the end of the lesson.
I enjoyed this fun. Thank you very much.	
Thank you.	
Thank you very much!!	
I enjoy the class.	
You should do in different forms, rather than the same basic course content each time. But I enjoyed the class.	
festival	