

Treating the Classroom like the Boardroom: An Authoritarian Approach

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Abstract

This quantitative research study investigated participant actions and attitudes toward developing and maintaining a class binder, out-of-class effort, in-class responsibility requirements, special component and overall class satisfaction in an authoritarian classroom management style. Data was collected via a summative survey of three intact and streamed English communication classes (N = 80) in a women's university in western Tokyo. These data were analyzed using SPSS 22 for determination of normal score distribution and a one-way analysis of variance of group means to ascertain group (High and Low ability) sameness. Raw scores were converted into measures via Winsteps 3.18.0 for Rasch analysis and interpretation. Results suggest that participant attitudes/responses to items relating to binder / study skills program, responsibility and overall class satisfaction were positive, while attitudes/responses to out-of-class effort and special class components were mixed. Further, results suggest both general similarities and specific differences in attitudes/responses between high and low groupings.

Introduction

People are complex organisms. In teaching, this is a common refrain. If there is one consistency between people, it is that they will differ. What is good, interesting, and/or of perceived benefit for one, is not the case for at least one other student in the class. Teachers are educated to these differences and make numerous adaptations to reach as many students as possible. Even still, is it possible to satisfy the needs of all? It is not. Then, should teachers not ask students to adapt? Certainly, to some degree we all must adapt to each other. In the present, students already adapt to various contexts, for example, at their part-time jobs. In the workplace,

where people not only learn on the job, they are often mentored and attend training sessions on how to meet the responsibilities of their position. Failure to complete work tasks sufficiently and in a timely manner, being disorganized, being absent or late on a regular basis, using a mobile phone during a meeting, or sleeping during work hours would undoubtedly result in sanctions. For young people, who lack general life experience, these introductions to the ‘real world’ could and should pay dividends to them and their future. Hence, equating the classroom to the boardroom is defensible. The application of an authoritarian classroom management approach is the common thread weaving through this study uniting the various aspects that are under investigation. This paper will report on participant attitudes toward a binder / study skills program, out-of-class effort, acting responsibly in class, special class components and overall class satisfaction in an authoritarian managed language-learning context across low and high ability groupings.

Literature Review

Portfolios have seen application in a multitude of domains. Initially, artists, photographers and architects would lug cases of various dimensions to proudly display works of choice. Traditionally, and continuing to the present, portfolios are collections of works of an individual’s most prized accomplishments. In education, portfolios present a moving picture of a student’s learning path opposed to reductionist snapshots of often time-pressured assessment (Lo, 2010, p. 77; Butler, 1997, p. 29; Stiggins, 1994). Portfolio usage in the education domain has spanned four decades, initially to meet the demands of accountability of assessment. However, thirty plus years on, there are a variety of portfolio applications. Portfolios, or binders as is the case in the study to follow, can also be used to develop organization skills and would thus fall under the umbrella of study skills or strategies, which have been linked to success across domains including the development of autonomous learning (Nunes, 2004, p. 334; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). There was no research found with respect to studies attempting to measure the power of process of actually being organized through a binder program; however, indirectly, if specific strategies are investigated there is evidence suggesting that being organized and retaining class documents is a vital though sometimes implied prerequisite. Though a clear and consistent definition of what a strategy is, or what strategies are has yet to be determined (Swain, et. al., 2009, p. 5; Ellis, 2008, p. 704; Dorneyei, 2005, p. 166; Schmidt,

2002, p. 178), successful language learners do share some common attributes. As background, “In her seminal article Rubin (1975, p. 42) suggested that if we knew more about what the successful language learners did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners to enhance their success record” (Griffiths, 2008, p. 1). Others would accept this challenge such as Rebecca Oxford (1990), who developed SILL (Strategies Inventory of Language Learners) (Brown, 2001, p. 221), and O’Malley and Chamot (1990) whose taxonomies are quite similar and include cognitive and metacognitive strategies as did Pintrich (1991) and his team with their MSLQ (Motivation and Strategies Learning Questionnaire) (Dornyei, 2005, p. 168). Taking from these giants in the study of skills and strategies, and reviewing individual items in their instruments, being organized and being able to categorize, whether directly (explicitly) or indirectly (implicitly) listed is a core characteristic of successful language learners and categorized as a cognitive function (Moya & O’Malley, 1994). In closing, with respect to the use of strategies, one needs to look no further than high-stakes testing instruments such as TOEFL and TOEIC, which have literally been the focus of hundreds of preparation books used by millions of language learners around the world. Reviewing these preparation textbooks clearly illuminates the importance of the use of strategies, and at various levels: general test taking strategies, specific section or test part strategies, as well as language learning ‘tips’, that can be found in many preparation books such as in Trew, 2007; and Phillips, 2003. What is more, often included are study/learning strategy suggestions found as items in, for example, SILL and MSLQ. Getting students to actually apply strategies in their learning via strategy practice in class, and then later, independently, during out-of-class effort is another issue altogether.

Out-of-class effort is an absolute necessity for language development in EFL settings. Given that there are often few chances for students to engage a foreign language in their home country, a teacher must create opportunities or ideas for opportunities for out-of-class language encounters. Out-of-class effort to review the previous lesson, as well as to preview the upcoming lesson are minimum prerequisites for language learning instruction in an EFL context. Further, time spent on homework is a good predictor of school achievement (Cooper, 1989; Keith, et. al., 1985). In SDT (Self-Determination Theory), Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), and Ryan & Connell (1989) offered four types of motivation that can impel people to act. Of course, to act in this case means whether or not to complete homework (Figure 1). The standard fare: extrinsic and intrinsic factors are divided into action and non-

action components. Reasons for non-action to complete homework are classified as ‘Identified’ (extrinsic) and ‘Introjected’ (intrinsic). In ‘Identified’ (extrinsic) non-action for homework completion the student is aware that homework needs to be done, but has not decided to actually do anything about it at present, while in ‘Introjected’ (intrinsic) non-action the student knows that homework needs to be completed and feels internal tension such as guilt that it is not yet done. An instructor working within this framework can effect positive change by implementing a number of interventions aimed at having students put effort into out-of-class activities. Having said this, the importance of intrinsic motivation in impelling students to engage in out-of-class activities cannot be downplayed. In a study by Shafaei (n.d.), and well established in the literature of second language acquisition, intrinsic motivation far outperforms extrinsic motivation as a source of homework completion; so external factors alone have been shown as ineffective and indeed can stifle intrinsic motivation if perceived too controlling (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 59). However, if students are not already intrinsically motivated, what then? Some students will never be intrinsically motivated by a course or topic, and/or some may be over time and in combination with other factors, but in the meantime, external motivation may be all a teacher has in his or her bag of tricks. This is particularly true when the teacher-student relationship is not yet established, for example, at the beginning of the teaching semester or term. In fact, if a student is not intrinsically motivated to complete a task and does not even attempt it, then, perhaps, external

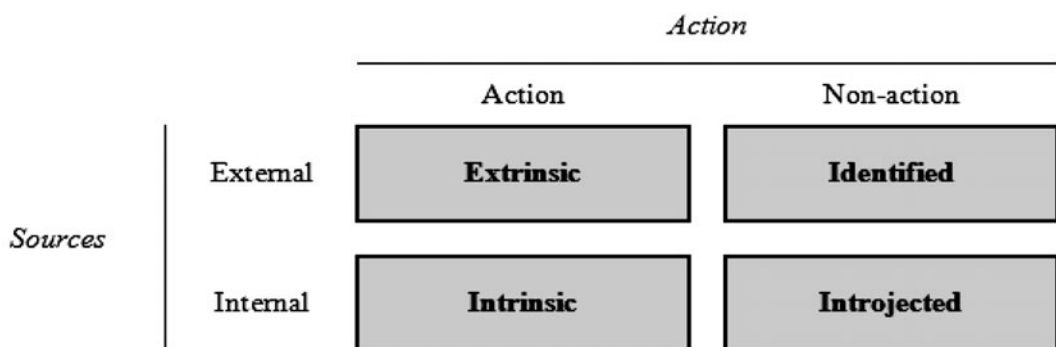


Figure 1 Four Types of Motivations. Deci and Ryan (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. *In Motivation to Complete Homework: Insights from ESL/EFL Learners in Malaysia*. Retrieved from <http://azadehshafaei.yolasite.com/resources/Motivation%20to%20Complete%20Homework-Insights%20from%20ESL-EFL%20Learners%20in%20Malaysia.pdf>

variables such as reward or penalties can initiate action and expose a student to intrinsically satisfying aspects of an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000 p. 63). Naturally, homework/out-of-class effort activities must be purposeful and interesting at least to some in the class, but, as well, the approach taken to non-completion of homework must be consistent with a teacher's classroom management plan as it is indeed connected.

Classroom management is a broad topic and can include direct and indirect forms though this study will focus on the efficacy of certain rules being explicitly stated and vigorously enforced. Unfortunately, the literature on classroom management for young adults in a post-secondary context is almost non-existent as it is almost exclusively limited to children, adolescents, at-risk and/or learning disabled students. What can be extracted from the literature is that the approach taken in a classroom with respect to its management cannot be separated from the teacher's own value sets (Scarlett, et. al., 2008, p. 7). With this in mind, Diana Baumrind's (1970) definitions of authority, based initially on parenting styles, are now widely accepted in the teaching domain and one style in particular applies to this study: the authoritarian style of control.

The authoritarian teacher attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of students in accordance with a set standard of conduct. The authoritarian teacher values respect for authority, respect for work, and respect for the preservation of order and traditional structure. In so valuing, the authoritarian teacher demands obedience and does not encourage verbal give and take.

Though seemingly old-fashioned many teachers claim the authoritative style is most effective, albeit for initially proposed for children and adolescents (Scarlett, et. al., 2004, p. 8). In closing, an authoritative classroom management style to some may imply a lifeless, or unhappy student population; however, this is a false assumption. The authoritarian classroom management approach simply does not allow for student input into the rules in place, nor in the reward/punishment system. In fact, if all the students are on-board and complying with the rules that are in-place, then the classroom can be full of praise and encouragement. This creates an extremely positive climate for all involved and should result in high levels of student satisfaction and/or happiness.

Assessing the happiness of students in specific or general terms is an attempt to assess the effectiveness of what has been implemented in a classroom: a summative

evaluation. The hosting institution or relevant department commonly attends to these tasks; however, this is not always the case. Occasionally, it will be up to the teacher of a class to design and implement such an evaluation often in the form of a class survey at the end of a teaching period. As mentioned, these evaluations are used to assess student sentiments and attitudes about overall class satisfaction as well as specific elements within that course. Summative evaluations are to be anonymous and often contain Likert scale questions or statements, referred to as items, and open-ended comment opportunities. A summative evaluation provides the benefit of allowing the teacher take a step back and assess what he or she has designed and implemented as part of the overall curriculum. Whereas, “All too often the focus of evaluation is concentrated on the smaller day-to-day issues directly related to implementing instruction” (Brown, 1995, p. 226).

From binders and out-of-class efforts, to acting responsibly in an authoritarian environment, to assessing student attitudes and feelings about specific class components and overall class satisfaction the following research questions have been posed:

RQ1: Will participants positively regard a binder / study skills program?

RQ2: Will participants engage in out-of-class efforts if encouraged by external factors?

RQ3: Will participants act responsibly in an authoritarian environment?

RQ4: Will participants positively regard special class components?

RQ5: Will participants positively regard the class in general?

Methodology

Participants

Eighty-six, 1st-year participants in a women’s university in western Tokyo participated in this study from three intact classes. Based on a university-wide placement test, students were streamed into ‘High’ or ‘Low’ class groupings. The course itself was an integrated English class with a native English-speaker instructing one class and a Japanese native instructing the other (in English) each working with a separate textbook. Participants worked through a thematically organized textbook, which focused on providing a range of language functions. The textbook also included vocabulary and grammar elements. There was a division of tasks between teachers, so unit themes were common, but class content varied, as did each teacher’s approach. There was no other information available regarding

participant language proficiency or overseas experience.

Instrumentation

A 21-item Likert scale attitude survey (Appendix A) was applied to three intact classes ($N=86$). On a 4-point scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, participants rated their level of agreement on five factors including binders/study skills, external factors as initiators of out-of-class effort, rule mandated participant responsibility, special class component and overall course satisfaction.

Procedure

The binder concept in this research project is posited as a derivative or offshoot of portfolio. Where it differed from the traditional portfolio, it was consistent with an authoritarian classroom management style: there was no participant choice of materials to be included in the binder, nor was there choice in how to organize its contents. This was entirely teacher prescribed and no tolerance provided for deviation.

At the beginning of the semester participants were informed that the class they were about to attend was to be an introduction to work life. As such, the instructor was to be referred to as ‘Boss’ and that they were required to consider the course as their job: they needed to attend every class, complete all required tasks and act appropriately during class time. Participants received course information and an accompanying handout explaining the course (Appendix B). Included in the handout was a description of the course, goals and objectives, required materials, grading schedule, an outline of topics covered, an explanation of class rules and expectations, as well as special course component information such as agenda introduction process and reading fluency/speed development. Binder models (example binders) were distributed during the first class so as to expedite participant acceptance of course requirement/binder need. In addition, participants were instructed to purchase their textbook and class binder for the ensuing class.

The binder itself (Figure 2) is a staple item in most if not all university bookstores. It is affordable and commonly priced at approximately ¥200 or \$2. Included in the ‘Required Materials’ of the course outline handout, participants were informed of the requirement to purchase an A4-sized, 40-pocket clear pocket folder.

In the second class, as it was assumed that most participants would purchase their binder, other class documents were provided including attendance sheets,

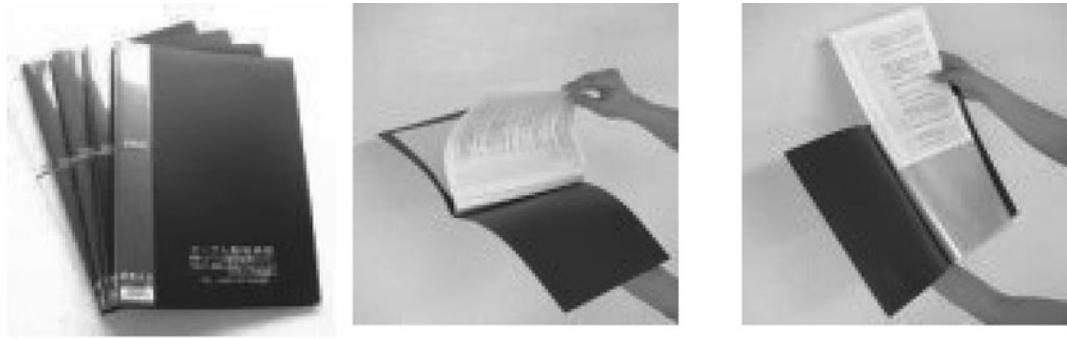


Figure 2 Clear Pocket Folder A4-size.

grade recording sheets and audio scripts for the textbook (Appendix C). Participants who did not attend the first class were binder-less as well as one or two others in each class. To encourage binder acquisition these participants were spoken to individually or collectively and informed that they would receive a homework penalty if their required materials were not on-hand for next class. At this time, participants were provided step-by-step instruction on binder construction and, working in pairs, given class time to begin binder development.

To promote binder necessity to the participants, handouts were provided each class. Four to six handouts per class use over thirty binder pockets. As such, a 40-pocket binder was required and the amount determined through course planning prior to class commencement. Other binder pockets used by the aforementioned course documents such as attendance sheets, grade summary sheets, and for example, textbook audio scripts, which were provided in Class 2, were positioned at the front of the binder. At the back of the binder, pockets were allocated to quizzes and tests. Regarding quizzes and tests, using the course outline, the correct number of binder pockets to be used was calculated by the participants and instructor prior to actual use: ten quizzes will use five pockets and three tests will use two pockets.

Participants were required to separate binder sections using labeled tabs. Tabs were labeled according to: course documents (syllabus, attendance sheets, grade summary sheets, and so on), unit numbers covered, and separate labels for quizzes and tests. Labels were written in English and tabs affixed with care to descend (like steps on stairs), so that information stored in the binder could be accessed quickly and easily (Issa, 2009, p. 11).

Class time was provided for participant-to-participant binder comparison particularly at the front-end of the course as participant comfort level, process

knowledge acquisition and commitment would undoubtedly grow. Specifically, Class 3, 4, 5, 9 and 13 were scheduled for participant-to-participant binder comparisons. Working in pairs or the occasional group of three, participants would go through their respective binders, pocket-by-pocket to ensure sameness. Missing documents were either provided by the instructor or photocopied from a classmate. Time on task was equal between groups though this is a general statement with exact times not recorded.

As mentioned, in the first class participants were informed that the binder would account for ten percent of their final grade for the course. This was broken down to six percent for process, in the form of three random binder checks during the semester, and a final binder check to assess the end product. The binder submission at the end of the course also provided quality control for participants with less than noble quiz and test score recording practices. To make the binder checks as unobtrusive as possible they occurred during warm-up activities, quizzes and tests.

Binders were an integral component of each class. Participants were responsible for recording their attendance, and as mentioned, recording their own scores for quizzes and tests. Further, regular review of class content, particularly vocabulary, was undertaken to reinforce the benefits of the binder program. What is more, participants would have to quickly access specific documents upon request for completion of class activities such as using audio scripts pre, during or post-listening activities. Finally, participants would occasionally engage in a reflective review of their quiz and test results.

Strict requirements for acting responsibly in class, and an appropriate focus on lesson material were enforced throughout the semester. At each participant's workstation, the class binder, the textbook, a pencil case, dictionary and drink were the only materials allowed. Mobile phones, agendas and bags had to be stored at the back of class or rule infraction penalties, typically one percent per offense, were levied. Further, two participants per desk and no empty desk rows were allowed. Late arriving participants were required to sit at a desk at the front of the classroom to discourage late arrival non-participation and the temptation of mobile phone use.

Each class, out-of-class work was assigned including a review of the previous lesson and preparation for the ensuing lesson. It was checked each class and points deducted from participant final grades for incidents of non-completion. In addition, a vocabulary quiz was given each class (test days not included) to promote out-of-

class work completion as well as facilitate participation levels. An extremely authoritarian approach was taken initially to make expectations clear in the eyes, ears and minds of the participants.

At the beginning of each class, the lesson agenda was introduced. According to a pre-arranged schedule, a participant would stand at the front of the class and introduce the class agenda for that day. A script was provided and participants received instructor-led practice and assistance each time, if needed (Appendix D). At the end of each class, a different participant would summarize the class proceedings with near identical language to the beginning of class introduction. Every class introduction and every class summary was to be completed by a different participant. All participants would have their turn over the duration of the course.

Participants were also required to engage in a reading fluency/speed improvement class component. Just prior to the end of each class, a 200-word reading containing words almost exclusively associated with the GSL (General Service List) was completed. These timed-readings were followed by multiple choice comprehension questions. Reading fluency/speed improvement instruction was provided (interventions) at various times throughout the course. Participants made note of their reading speeds and comprehension levels. This special course component did not receive any grade allocation though participation was mandatory.

At the end of the course a 21-item summative evaluation/class survey was administered to the participants. Data was manually input to MS Excel, re-checked for accuracy by the researcher/data entry person, and then checked again by an independent checker. These data were then imported to SPSS and converted into .sav files for analysis. Initial analysis included an investigation of normal distribution of scores, and an analysis of variance to indicate the presence of group differences. Then, from the MSEXcel file, these data (raw scores) were converted to an ASCII (.txt) text file by importing them into Winsteps 3.81.0 to create actual scalable measures. To accomplish this, the first step was to determine outliers for both items and persons, delete outliers (persons or items) from the data, and then perform Rasch analysis on the revised data set. Once complete, various statistics summaries and specific output tables were selected to determine measures of person to item agreeability. Results were analyzed and presented based on the guidelines of established resources (Linacre, 2011; Green & Salkind, 2008; Bond & Fox, 2007; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007; APA Manual, 2001).

Results

Descriptive statistics for each group: Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 indicate a normal distribution of scores based on an examination of mean and standard deviation as well as the low respective standard errors of the means (Table 1). Low values for skewness and kurtosis including their respective standard errors provide further supporting evidence of an even distribution of scores. Overlapping confidence intervals between Class 1 (high ability) and Class 2 (high ability) indicate that there is likely no difference in between group means of distributed scores. However, there is no overlap in confidence intervals between Class 2 (high ability) and Class 3 (low ability), which could indicate the possibility of statistically significant differences in group means of distributed scores and result in a rejection of the null hypothesis: no group differences.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Groups: Class 1, 2 and 3

	Class 1 (High)	Class 2 (High)	Class 3 (Low)
Mean	60.82	62.37	58.59
<i>SE</i> of the mean	1.27	.81	1.02
95% CI Lower Bound	58.19	60.72	56.50
95% CI Upper Bound	63.45	64.02	60.68
<i>SD</i>	5.93	4.80	5.49
Skewness	.19	-.58	.16
<i>SE</i> of Skewness	.49	.40	.43
Kurtosis	-.70	-.06	-.75
<i>SE</i> of Kurtosis	.95	.78	.85

Note. $N=86$.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the relationship between total survey mean scores of the three intact classes. According to the results (Table 2) the mean scores differed significantly between the groups Class 2 and Class 3, $F(2, 85) = 3.989$, $p = .05$. Levene's test of the homogeneity of variances was not significant at $p = .000$, thus there is no violation of the assumption of homogenous variances between groups. Follow up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among means and to control for Type 1 error. Because the means of the three groups were not dramatically different, equal variances were assumed and post hoc tests of Tukey and REGWQ tests were used (Green and Salkind, 2007, p. 187). The results provide statistical evidence of a difference between group means for Class 2 (High ability) and Class 3 (Low ability) leading to a rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 2 One-way ANOVA results of summative survey.

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	2	227.66	113.83	3.99**
Within Groups	83	2368.48	28.54	
Total	85	2596.14		

Note. ** $p < .05$.

The results of the one-way ANOVA determined subsequent Rasch model analyses. Accepting the results, Class 1 and 2 will be combined, in the interest of maximizing n-size, and hereafter referred to as ‘High’, while Class 3 will be analyzed separately and henceforth referred to as ‘Low’. Using Winsteps to perform Rasch analysis, a statistics summary of measured persons High and Low (Appendix E) and measured items for participants High and Low (Appendix F) is presented. For person measures, the High group (n=57) yielded reliability values of .73 and for items .96; Cronbach’s alpha $\alpha = .76$. The Low group (n = 29) produced person and item reliability values of .73, .93, respectively, and Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$. These reliability values are generally considered good, but a further analysis and ultimate deletion of misfitting items or persons would result in reliability improvements. Misfit is defined as items or persons that either over-fit (OUTFIT) the Rasch model: OUTFIT is a t standardized outlier-sensitive mean square fit statistic, more sensitive to unexpected behavior by persons on items far from the person’s measure level, while INFIT is a t standardized information-weighted mean square statistic, which is more sensitive to unexpected behavior affecting responses to items near the person’s measure level (Linacre, 2011, p. 261). One example of misfit would be if participants or persons simply registered ‘strongly agree’ for every survey item, then items will appear as a misfit; and, if items are poorly written or not understood by the responder, then they will also misfit the model due to erratic or unexpected responses to items in the survey. Typically, infit/outfit values larger than +2 or -2 are considered outliers (Bond and Fox, 2007, p. 239). Person misfit measures indicated the existence of numerous outliers. In total, after two re-modeling actions, 6 persons (2 from High; 4 from Low) were deleted from the data sets (High and Low) and person measure reliability increased to .77 and Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$ (Table 3). There were no infit or outfit outliers of the 21 survey items (Table 4).

Ability measures for items are interpreted as ease of agreement to the item. In Rasch, all participant scores are examined and compared to all items responded to

Table 3 Rasch Analysis Summary Statistics High (Class 1 & 2) and Low (Class 3) Person Measures of Summative Survey

	Class /Ability	Total Score	Item Count	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Mean	High	61.80	21	1.61	.41	1.00	.99
	Low	58.80	21	1.33	.39	.99	.99
SD	High	5.20	0	.88	.01	.42	.43
	Low	5.50	0	1.01	.01	.57	.50
Max	High	71	21	3.20	.43	1.90	2.00
	Low	70	21	3.42	.41	2.11	2.07
Min	High	50	21	-.34	.40	.22	.22
	Low	49	21	-.49	.38	.42	.41
Reliability	High	.77					
	Low	.77					
Cronbach's α	High	.79					
	Low	.79					

Table 4 Rasch Analysis Summary Statistics 21 Item Measures of Summative Survey

	Class / Ability	Total Score	Person Count	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Mean	High	161.90	55	0	.26	1.00	.99
	Low	70.00	25	0	.43	.99	.98
SD	High	21.10	0	1.30	.02	.31	.31
	Low	9.70	0	1.56	.01	.37	.37
Max	High	206	55	4.04	.32	1.57	1.57
	Low	112	25	3.43	.44	1.85	1.84
Min	High	96	55	-3.12	.42	.46	.45
	Low	49	25	-4.40	.38	.54	.53
Item reliability	High	.96					
	Low	.96					

items and all persons for both groups: High (left map) and Low (right map) with the easiest items to agree with shown at the top and then descending, in scale, to the hardest to agree with items at the bottom. Thus, the easiest item to agree with for both groups was *Item 6 – I did not use my keitai (mobile phone) during class*. What is more, this item was significantly easier to agree with relative to the next immediate and all other items. The most difficult item to agree with was *Item 19 – This class moved too fast for me*. This item is a reverse scored item in that the participants had difficulty in agreeing with Item 19, which means that the class did not move too fast for them, or in other words, the pacing was generally good. Thus, the most difficult items to agree with for both groups were items 11 – *I enjoyed*

speaking the agenda at the beginning/end of class, and 17 - I prepared and reviewed for each lesson. Items listed next to each other on a horizontal axis indicate the same or very similar agreeability measures such as in the immediate case above, and/or in the High ability group, BndGdIdea (Item 3 – Keeping a binder is a good idea for all classes I take), LSkBen (Item 4 – Learning study skills in class is a benefit to me) and RecCl (Item 21 – I would recommend this class to others). As is evident, there are similarities and specific differences between the left map (High) and right map (Low) in their respective responses to the survey items.

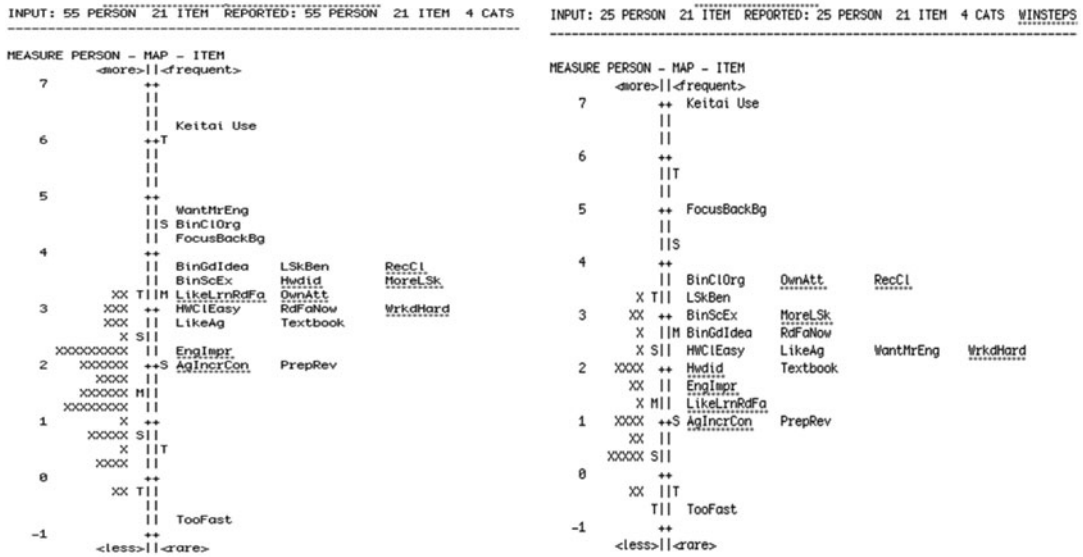


Figure 3 Item map for all items and all persons for High and Low groupings.

Raw score data codes ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree. In the following results presentation, measures with negative values represent ‘easy to agree with’ items, while positive values (values above zero) indicate that participants tend to disagree with those items. The higher the measure above zero, the larger the disagreeability, and the larger the negative value of the measure is the higher the level of agreeability (easy to agree).

Participant responses to items 1 – 5 (Appendix A) correspond to binder / study skills and are presented in Table 5. For the High ability group, measures clearly indicate positive attitudes toward these items relative to other items in the survey as all have negative value measures. Model error is small and infit and outfit statistics do not approach misfit parameters for exclusion consideration. For the Low group,

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these measures also indicate positive attitudes, as seen with the negative values, except for Item 3 though it is only very slightly difficult to agree with, or using the opposite wording, very slightly easy to disagree with relative to the other items in the survey. In fact, it is so close to zero that it would generally be considered an item where participants are in a state of neutrality though a neutral option did not exist on the Likert scale survey. A smaller n-size for the Low group adversely impacted error and fit statistics as compared to the High group.

Table 5 Ability measures for Binder / Study Skills Program attitudes.

	Class / Ability	Person Count	Total Score	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Item 1	High	55	182	-1.27	.26	.72	.72
	Low	25	78	-1.16	.39	1.31	1.29
Item 2	High	55	167	-.31	.25	.87	.87
	Low	25	72	-.27	.38	.74	.74
Item 3	High	55	172	-.62	.25	.96	.96
	Low	25	70	.02	.38	.99	.98
Item 4	High	55	169	-.43	.25	.54	.54
	Low	25	74.0	-.56	.38	.54	.53
Item 5	High	55	167	-.31	.25	1.04	1.02
	Low	25	72	-.27	.38	1.04	1.05

Ability measures for participant attitudes toward homework / out-of-class effort are presented in Table 6 and represented by survey items 15 – 18 (Appendix A). Participant responses toward items referring to homework / out of class efforts were difficult to agree with, relatively speaking, for High and Low groupings. In fact, participants are more likely to disagree than agree with these items. Model error is small though items 16 and 18 present larger infit and outfit statistics.

Table 6 Ability measures for participant homework / out of class effort.

	Class / Ability	Person Count	Total Score	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Item 15	High	55	157	.32	.25	.46	.45
	Low	25	67	.47	.39	.43	.41
Item 16	High	55	168	-.37	.25	1.30	1.29
	Low	25	64	.76	.39	1.22	1.19
Item 17	High	55	143	1.19	.25	.92	.91
	Low	25	60	1.53	.40	.96	.92
Item 18	High	55	160	.13	.25	1.33	1.33
	Low	25	68	.32	.38	1.59	1.60

Ability measures for participant responsibility (Table 7) were extremely easy for participants to agree with relative to other items in the survey for both High and Low groupings as is evidenced by the large negative values for the measures and represented by items 6 - 8 (Appendix A). Measures indicate that Low ability group compliance to these classroom rules was greater than that of the High ability group as was recognizing the benefit of staying focused on class issues. Model error measures are small though infit and outfit measures are in some cases approaching misfit, especially Item 7 for the High grouping. Infit and outfit measures suggest an examination of this item for ambiguous/unclear wording would be in order.

Table 7 Ability measures for participant responsibility during class time.

	Class / Ability	Person Count	Total Score	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Item 6	High	55	206	-3.12	.32	1.15	1.00
	Low	25	96	-4.48	.57	.97	.81
Item 7	High	55	178	-1.01	.25	1.57	1.57
	Low	25	86	-2.40	.40	.67	.70
Item 8	High	55	163	-.06	.25	1.37	1.37
	Low	25	78	-1.16	.39	1.16	1.17

Ability measures for special class components are presented in Table 8. Participant responses for High and Low groupings suggest that participants, generally speaking, are prone to disagree with items 9 – 12 (Appendix A) though the High ability grouping is close to neutrality regarding their attitudes on these items. The results appear reasonable given the small error values and good fit though Item 11 for the Low ability grouping approaches misfit.

Table 8 Ability measures for special class components.

	Class / Ability	Person Count	Total Score	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Item 9	High	55	161	.07	.25	1.24	1.25
	Low	25	61	1.37	.40	.90	.73
Item 10	High	55	157	.32	.25	1.03	1.02
	Low	25	70	.02	.38	.93	.93
Item 11	High	55	153	.57	.25	.72	.71
	Low	25	69	.17	.38	1.41	1.43
Item 12	High	55	145	1.25	.26	.65	.65
	Low	25	60	1.53	.40	.85	.70

Ability measures of overall course satisfaction are presented in Table 9 and represented by items 13, 14, and 19 - 21 (Appendix A). Participant attitudes suggest that there is a mixed view of the class though more positive than negative for the High ability class and the corollary for the Low. Results of the analysis offer unexpected measures for *Item 21 – I would recommend this class to others*, especially for the Low ability grouping with a measure of -1.16 indicating that participants are satisfied with the course. For overall course satisfaction, the model error is small, and the misfit statistics are strong with the exception of the reverse scored *Item 19 – This class moved too fast for me* approaching misfit parameters for both groupings.

Table 9 Ability measures for overall course satisfaction.

	Class / Ability	Person Count	Total Score	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Item 13	High	55	145	1.06	.25	.65	.65
	Low	25	64	.91	.39	.68	.78
Item 14	High	55	186	-1.53	.26	1.07	1.03
	Low	25	69	.17	.38	1.07	1.09
*Item 19 R	High	55	100	*4.04	.27	1.56	1.55
	Low	25	49	*3.43	.42	1.57	1.56
Item 20	High	55	153	.57	.25	.87	.88
	Low	25	65	.76	.39	.67	.65
Item 21	High	55	170	-.50	.25	.68	.68
	Low	25	78	-1.16	.39	1.14	1.15

Note. * Reverse score.

Discussion

RQ1: Will participants positively regard a binder / study skills program? The results of the data analysis would suggest they did. Given that the relative ease of agreement to items 1 – 5 in the survey, the participants adopted the binder program and concept of study skills and the benefits thereof quite readily. Examination of the raw scores focusing on the range and frequency of responses support this conclusion in robust manner (Appendix G). Using the ‘best case’ as an exemplar, for *Item 1 – Keeping a binder helped me stay organized for our class* sheds additional light on participant attitudes. For the High ability class, though potential choice could have ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 4 – strongly agree, the distribution of scores was dichotomous: either, agree or strongly agree. Thus, without exception, all participants recognized the organizing benefit of the course binder with the

following frequencies: $n = 38$ (69%) 'Agree' and $n = 17$ (31%) 'Strongly agree'. Other items in this construct though not as robust also support the value of the binder by the participants across groups.

The success of the binder program and benefits therein, however, are not accrued without cost. The binder / study skills program instituted in this course consumed regular and considerable time resources – a scarce commodity. For a 15-week course, one class per week for 90 minutes, a total of 25.50 hours of maximum instruction time is available. This amount is, in fact, an ideal value and a more conservative or realistic 16 – 17 hours of actual instruction time is available even when including test times as teaching time. Of this, binder development and maintenance can consume one hour or more of this limited time resource. Two points arise from this consideration. First, much of the time spent for binder development is front-end loaded. Hence, students who are being introduced to binders for the first time proceed via a learning curve both in acceptance of the concept and internalization of the practices. As such, when students are rotated between teachers each semester, the learning curve must once again be travelled if other teachers did not use a binder system. Therefore, a department-wide adoption of a binder program would shorten the learning curves and by extension reduce the amount of overall time required for the implementation of a binder system. The second point of consideration for a binder system is that it should not be limited to simply being an organizer. The class binder also provided a platform for discussion and reflective practice by the participants in the course. There were various built-in activities relating to vocabulary quiz and test performance reflection, as well as having participants discuss the usefulness of the class binder itself. What is more, having participants ponder and discuss whether the binder had application in any of their other classes engages them in the practice of critical thinking: in what situation or under what conditions is using a binder beneficial? In sum, what is implied is that curriculum developers would be well served by not over-loading a course with excessive language content; thereby, rendering skill development and reflective practice impossible due to syllabus prescribed time constraints. Further, by including other than language-based course goals and objectives into a syllabus or curriculum, instructors and managers of instructors could begin to provide learning skills transferrable to new and/or alternative situations, which ultimately could provide students the opportunity to develop more autonomous learning potential. In closing, by integrating a binder system into a program, department wide, students

would be more willing and more able to quickly adopt and internalize this essential practice as well enhance their learning potential in other courses.

RQ2: Will participants engage in out-of-class activities if encouraged by external factors? According to the results of the Rasch analysis, external factors of motivation did not initiate dramatic participant out-of-class effort. Based on observations and re-thinking the items presented, an error in item construction may have occurred for this construct. First, many of the participants actually did their homework regularly. Thus, these participants may have been motivated by intrinsic factors, which the summative survey did not investigate. This would mean that external factors of motivation would not impel them to act anyway. Once again, the external factors included homework checks every class supported by a system of reward or punishment. It was initially believed by the researcher that participants of low motivation needed external motivation to prompt them to act responsibly as well as inform everyone in the class that homework completion is not negotiable much like the situation would be at one's job. For participants lacking in motivation, presenting outward challenges to non-completion of homework, hopefully, would impel them to act and also hopefully have them experience some success as a result: realize some concrete benefits in doing homework and engaging in out-of-class efforts to support in-class activities. Grade allocation for homework completion, along with complementary homework checks did not affect the efforts of many of the participants with low motivation. In fact, it may have lead to increased absences. In addition, regular quizzes using homework items verbatim on the quiz also did not increase out-of-class activities as much as was expected. Next, it must be remembered that these items are measured in comparison to other items of the class survey. In viewing source data for High ability grouped participants, it was evident that many students did in fact 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' with the items for this construct and not a single participant responded 'Strongly disagree'. Moreover, participants responded that it was most difficult to agree with *Item 17 - I prepared and reviewed for every class*. This item, in retrospect, is poorly constructed and is more a reflection of study practices for exams as opposed to more localized homework completion activities. For Low ability grouped participants, a roughly similar picture is portrayed though clearly they responded that it was harder to agree with these items compared with participants in the High ability grouping. In closing, other participant profile data would have been useful in order to better understand what was happening with these items beyond general classification of

high or low ability as per stream. As well, better-written and additional items measuring this construct must be developed and investigated in order to obtain a clearer answer to this research question.

RQ3: Will participants act responsibly if tasked by class requirement? Participant responses to this component were clear: item responses were extremely easy to agree with. In fact, these items exhibit the most definitive evidence in this study. Mobile phone use during class time was essentially non-existent as well as distractions associated with large and heavy bags (not to mention being trip hazards during mixing activities). The fact that the Low ability grouping found these items easier to agree with than did the High ability group is interesting if not surprising. It is important to recall that all participants were the same year and age. Differences in ability imply proficiency, study habits, and/or motivational inequalities to name a few. With this in mind, it would stand to reason that the participants in the Low ability grouping would engage in more off-task behavior than the higher group. Therefore, an authoritarian approach to in-class responsibility appears extremely efficacious across ability. Of mention is that a confounding variable existed: the size of the classroom. The classrooms in this context were huge as well as providing numerous hooks to hang jackets and bags. It is believed by the researcher, though not measured, that the large classroom facilitated on-task participant behavior when an appropriate rule set was implemented and enforced. Strict rules in a suitable context provided the appropriate ingredients for participant compliance to class rules. Future research studies could also measure participant sentiments regarding their level of agreement with the class rules in effect after the fact.

RQ4: Will participants positively regard special class components? Results suggest that participant attitudes are mixed on special class components. As Table 8 presents, on average, these items are harder to agree with relative to other items in the survey. In reviewing the frequencies of person to item measures, there is an apparent split down the middle: about half of the participants agreed with the items and the other half did not. This is also evidenced by the fact the measures are often near zero, which represents a neutral attitude: neither, agree or disagree. Though most participants bore witness to their reading speed gains, a clear connection to the benefit of such gains to the course itself was not established. Moving to agenda introductions and summations, from observation, the more capable and more motivated participants enjoyed the opportunity to speak in front of the class and show their English ability. It was also not surprising that those of lesser ability and

motivation were not as eager. Hence, for this special component, it is likely a wise choice to have, as much as possible, lesser students make class agenda introductions or summaries later in the course to allow more observation of others before they themselves have to be engaged. Further, very brief participant-to-participant practice sessions would benefit the entire class population.

RQ5: Will participants positively regard the class in general? Rasch results indicate that the participants were satisfied with the course as per the measures having negative values with the exception of *Item 13 – I improved my English this semester*. Japanese students in general are loath to admit improvement in language ability in any context. Other notables, *Item 19 – This class moved too fast for me* was reverse scored. Hence, the measures, though not exactly, can be flipped to a negative value for the measure meaning that the item was easy for participants to agree with. Item 20 refers to the textbook used, which has positive measures for both high and low groups. This means that participant attitudes toward it were not overly supportive; however, once again, the measure indicates a near split between agree and disagree. Finally, *Item 21 – I would recommend this class to other students* was an agreeable item for both High and Low ability groupings though, somewhat surprisingly, more so for the Low group. This is a promising result to the researcher given the significant number of elements and requirements of the course under study. Though no class will be a perfect fit for all students, learning environments with clear and elevated expectations though demanding can still be well received.

Conclusion

This quantitative research paper was intended as a springboard for future and more informed research practices regarding the topic of binders, organizing skills, strategies use and student attitudes and practices thereof. The results of this study would suggest the following:

RQ1: Will participants positively regard a binder / study skills program? The evidence clearly suggests that participants in this study regarded the binder / study skills program positively.

RQ2: Will participants engage in out-of-class activities if encouraged by external factors? The evidence suggests that participant actions were mixed though the reasons for their attitudes and practices were not investigated. Approximately half of the participants agreed with survey items regarding out-of-class activities while

the other half disagreed with those same items.

RQ3: Will participants act responsibly if tasked by class requirement? Participants did indeed act responsibly and respond positively to items pertaining to rules such as mobile phone use and/or recognizing the benefit of keeping their bags at the back of class so that they may be able to focus on the lesson. However, the classroom itself, due to the size and layout may have played a more than minor role in participant actions.

RQ4: Will participants positively regard special class components? As with RQ2 participant responses, results suggested mixed feelings with a near dichotomous response pattern of agree or disagree with regards the special components tasked to them in the class.

RQ5: Will participants positively regard the class in general? According to the results, participants in both groupings responded positively to items on class satisfaction with the High group having slightly higher positive feelings about the class than did the Low group.

A limitation of this study was that an analysis or confirmation of item construct validity and dimensionality determination in the summative evaluation was not performed. Through factor analysis and principal components analysis, the construct validity of survey items is a requirement for valid measure development. Further, for future studies exploring these phenomena, multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) would yield more interesting results in that they would compare differences between High and Low ability groupings in each of the categories or factors investigated. Hence, this study should be considered as an exploratory effort to provide some guidance for future investigation.

The above notwithstanding, the results of this study provide some evidence of the benefit of treating the classroom like a boardroom. Treating the classroom like the boardroom is not a draconian statement and nor were the classes dark or lifeless. In fact, the classes were very upbeat with heavy doses of encouragement and laughter given the very high level of compliance to the in-place rules. Thus, perhaps, the authoritarian classroom management approach facilitated a positive learning environment and was manifest in participants having a favorable attitude toward the overall class.

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Appendix A

Read carefully and how much you agree with statements 1 - 21.

	Strongly agree	強くそう思う	Agree	そう思う	Disagree	そう思わない	Strongly disagree	全くそう思わない
Score	4		3		2		1	

1. Keeping a binder helped me stay organized for our class.
バインダーは授業をきちんと整理するのに役立った。
2. Keeping a binder will help me get a good score on my exam.
バインダーは試験でいい点を取るのに役立つと思う。
3. Keeping a binder is a good idea for all courses I take.
すべての授業にバインダーを使うことは良いアイデアだと思う。
4. Learning study skills in class is a benefit to me.
授業で学んだ学習方法は、役立つ。
5. I would like to learn more study skills.
学習方法についてもっと勉強したい。
6. I did not use my keitai during class.
私は授業中は携帯を使わなかった。
7. Keeping my bag at the back of class helped me focus on my work during class.
教室の後ろにかばんを置いておくことは、授業に集中するのに役立った。
8. I like keeping my own attendance record and scores.
私は自分の出欠席を記録しておきたい。
9. I liked learning how to read faster.
速読の勉強は好きだった。
10. I can read English faster now than at the beginning of the semester.
今では、学期の初めより英語を速く読めることができる。
11. I enjoyed speaking the agenda at the beginning/end of class.
授業の初め／終わりにアジェンダについて話すのは楽しかった。
12. Speaking the agenda in front of my classmates increased my confidence in speaking English.
クラスメートの前でアジェンダを話すことによって、英語を話す自信がついた。
13. I improved my English this semester.
今学期は英語が上達した。
14. I want to learn English more in the future.
将来、もっと英語を学びたい。
15. I worked hard for this class.
このクラスのために、一生懸命勉強した。
16. I did my homework for this class.
このクラスの宿題はきちんとやった。
17. I prepared and reviewed for each lesson.
毎回、授業の予習・復習をした。
18. This class is easy if I do my homework.
宿題をやれば、授業は簡単だ。
19. This class moved too fast for me.
私にとっては授業の進行は速すぎた。
20. I liked the textbook of this class.
私はこの授業の教科書は好きだった。
21. I would recommend this class to other students.
他の学生にこのクラスを薦めたい。

Appendix B

**XXX University
Faculty of XXX
XXXX 20XX**

English XXX

Instructor: XXX XXXXX

Classroom: XXX

Class day and time: XXXday (X)

Course Description:

Required Text:

Required Materials: Clear pocket folder (A4 size, 40 pockets)

Course Goals:

Course Objectives:

Class Rules:

1. Try you best!
2. Be in class before the bell rings or you are late. 3 lates = 1 absence.
3. Complete all homework or receive a -1% penalty. Do not copy a classmate's homework.
4. Do not use your keitai during class time. Put your keitai in your bag.
5. Put your bags at the back of the classroom. Binders, textbook, pencil case, dictionary, and drink only at your workstation.
6. No sleeping. After one warning, you will be marked as absent.

Homework Expectations:

Grading Criteria (Sample only):

Quizzes (2% × 10)	20%
Test (2 × 10%)	20%
Final Exam	25%
Attendance	15%
Binder	10%
Homework	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

A+ = 90% - 100%, A = 80% - 89%, B = 70% - 79%, C = 60% - 69%, F = 59% and below.

Course Outline

Class 1 [Class content itemized]	Class 2 [Class content itemized]	Class 3 [Class content itemized]	Class 4 [Class content itemized]	Class 5 [Class content itemized]
Class 6 [Class content itemized]	Class 7 [Class content itemized]	Class 8 [Class content itemized]	Class 9 [Class content itemized]	Class 10 [Class content itemized]
Class 11 [Class content itemized]	Class 12 [Class content itemized]	Class 13 [Class content itemized]	Class 14 [Class content itemized]	Class 15 [Class content itemized]

Appendix C

Name: _____

ID: _____

XXXXXXXX

Attendance Record for XXX 20XX (Excerpt only)

Present: O

Absent: X

Late: L

Week	Date	Attended	Reason for Late or Absent
1	X/XX		
2	X/XX		
3	X/XX		
15	X/XX		
Total	Attended	Absent	Late

NOTE: If you do not record your attendance you will not get credit.

Name: _____ Participant ID#: _____ Class: _____

Grade Recording Sheet (Sample only)

Quiz (2% × 10)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ /20

Tests

Test 1 Score: (% × 10) = _____
 Test 2 Score: (% × 10) = _____ /20

Final Exam Score (% × 25) _____ /25

Attendance (-1% for every absence) _____ /15

Homework (-1% for every incomplete) _____ /10

Binder (Check 1. _____/2 2. _____/2 3. _____/2 Final _____/4) _____ /10

Final Grade _____ **/100**

A+ = 90% - 100%, A = 80% - 89%, B = 70% - 79%, C = 60% - 69%, F = 59% and below.

Appendix D

Good morning/afternoon everyone. Thank you for coming today. My name is ... This is today's agenda:

First, ...

Next, ...

Then, ...

After this, ...

Finally, ...

Do you have any questions? (wait for response).

Okay, let's begin.

Appendix E

	Class /Ability	Total Score	Item Count	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Mean	High	61.80	21	1.61	.41	1.00	.99
	Low	58.60	21	.94	.39	.99	.99
SD	High	5.20	0	.88	.01	.42	.43
	Low	5.40	0	.82	.01	.52	.50
Max	High	71	21	3.20	.43	1.90	2.00
	Low	70	21	2.73	.41	2.11	2.07
Min	High	50	21	-.34	.40	.22	.22
	Low	49	21	-.50	.38	.42	.41
Reliability	High	.73					
	Low	.73					
Cronbach's α	High	.76					
	Low	.76					

Appendix F

	Class / Ability	Total Score	Person Count	Measure	Model Error	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ
Mean	High	167.70	57	0	.25	1.00	.99
	Low	80.90	29	0	.34	.99	.99
SD	High	21.10	0	1.27	.02	.32	.32
	Low	11.40	0	1.35	.05	.34	.34
Max	High	214	57	3.78	.32	1.70	1.69
	Low	112	29	2.47	.55	1.89	1.88
Min	High	103	57	3.08	.24	.44	.43
	Low	58	29	-4.17	.32	.51	.51
Item reliability	High	.96					
	Low	.96					

Appendix G

INPUT: 55 PERSON 21 ITEM REPORTED: 55 PERSON 21 ITEM 4 CATS W/INSTEPS
3.81.0

ITEM CATEGORY/OPTION/DISTRACTOR FREQUENCIES: MEASURE ORDER

ENTRY NUMBER	DATA CODE	SCORE VALUE	DATA COUNT	%	AVERAGE ABILITY	S.E. MEAN	OUTF MNSQ	PTMA CORR.	ITEM
5	1	1	1	2	-.34		.7	-.30	MoreLsk
	2	2	10	18	-.58	.14	.7	-.55	
	3	3	30	55	1.63	.13	.7	.02	
	4	4	14	25	2.45	.11	.8	.56	
16	2	2	13	24	.77	.17	.9	-.53	HvdId
	3	3	26	47	1.66	.16	1.0	.05	
	4	4	16	29	2.21	.17	1.0	-.44	
4	2	2	4	7	.76	.41	.9	-.27	LskBen
	3	3	43	78	1.50	.12	.8	-.25	
	4	4	8	15	2.65	.22	.7	-.49	
21	2	2	4	7	.60	.36	.8	-.32	RecCl
	3	3	42	76	1.58	.13	1.1	-.06	
	4	4	9	16	2.19	.24	1.0	-.29	
3	2	2	7	13	.63	.36	.9	-.43	BinGdIdea
	3	3	34	62	1.59	.13	.9	-.03	
	4	4	14	25	2.16	.19	1.0	-.37	
7	1	1	1	2	.80		1.2	-.13	FocusBackBg
	2	2	8	15	1.13	.20	1.2	-.22	
	3	3	23	42	1.21	.18	.8	-.38	
	4	4	23	42	2.21	.13	.9	.58	
1	3	3	38	69	1.41	.14	1.0	-.33	BinClOrg
	4	4	17	31	2.05	.18	1.0	-.33	