Increasing Motivation for Studying New Foreign Languages Using ICT : Introduction to Modern Greek

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New Foreign Languages Using ICT

Introduction to Modern Greek

Georgios Georgiou*, Yasushi Tsubota*, Masatake Dantsuji*

Abstract

It is generally believed that motivation plays a significant role in foreign language learning; students who feel motivated to learn a foreign language are more likely to become successful learners. In Japan, where foreign language education has been primarily teacher-centered for years, students rarely get the opportunity to practice speaking or listening in class, and usually fare poorly at those skills. To provide an opportunity to increase motivation toward foreign languages, a Greek postgraduate student created teaching materials in PowerPoint and HTML to introduce the Greek language to a class of undergraduate students at Kyoto University. The students were asked to introduce themselves and then record their self-introductions using iPod nano® mobile digital devices distributed to them. This paper reports on the class content as well as the results of the questionnaire conducted at the end of the class.

Keywords: motivation, teaching materials, foreign language education, class activity, Greek, pair work

It is widely accepted that a significant parameter in foreign language learning is the students' attitude towards learning itself. Research has shown that students who consider the process of learning a foreign language as a positive and rewarding experience are likely to make better learners. In Japan, where foreign language education has been primarily teacher-centered for years, students have traditionally fared poorly at speaking and listening, and yet they rarely get the opportunity to engage in speaking or listening activities in class. Taking into account the fact that the societal context provides almost no opportunity for students to practice a foreign language outside class either, it becomes apparent that it is rather unlikely that students will be motivated to study foreign languages, much less practice them. In light of that, we presented a speaking activity in a class of undergraduate students at Kyoto University with the use of HTML materials in order to introduce

*Academic Center for Computing and Media Studies, Kyoto University

Modern Greek; the students were asked to make their own self-introductions and then record them on video using iPod nano® digital devices.[2] The intent was to take advantage of the unique opportunity of the presence of a native Greek speaker to present the Greek language to the students in a way that would help them assume a positive attitude towards the new language, while getting a sense of accomplishment right from the start to help increase intrinsic motivation. This activity introduced a combination of three elements: first, a native speaker involved throughout the process from the preparation to the presentation, to the evaluation. Also, the use of ICT technology with the creation of multimedia materials for all students to use in order to help them practice on their own, and finally the recording activity to help the students enjoy the speaking activity, doing away with anxiety and fear of performing in front of the entire class, which is a prevalent factor in Japanese classes; due to their nature the Japanese do not like to be singled out and prefer to be as inconspicuous as possible. Finally, this speaking activity enabled the teachers to evaluate every single one of the students' attempts in the video recordings, thus providing more appropriate student-specific feedback in the following class. This paper reports on the class content as well as the results of the questionnaire conducted at the end of the session.

Japan and Foreign Language Education

In Japan foreign language education has traditionally focused on English. Japanese students start learning English in junior high school—although recently English education has extended to the two senior years in primary school as well mainly in the form of songs and games. However, even after all these years of English education, Japanese learners are not good at speaking or listening in English. As far as other languages are concerned, the situation is even worse, since students only take up a second foreign language—if at all—at University; even so, however, they still seem to lack speaking and listening abilities in the foreign languages they learn.

The societal context in Japan provides almost no opportunity for them to develop their speaking or listening skills in a foreign language outside the classroom; almost all foreign films are dubbed on TV and at the movie theaters and contact with foreign people is rare; also, there is limited access to foreign language printed materials, and as a consequence, students have little incentive to even develop an interest in a foreign language. Moreover, the time spent in classrooms is rather limited as well, and cannot be considered adequate for the purpose of learning, much less for practicing a foreign language. On top of that, the classroom environment is probably the only place for the learners to practice what they learn.

Opportunities to study Modern Greek in particular are even harder to come by. Very few

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Universities in Japan offer such a course, while those private schools that do teach Greek are very few and far between mainly located in the major Japanese cities; in addition to that, the opportunities a Japanese student might have to come into contact with foreigners, especially people who speak Greek, are rather limited. What is more, resources on less commonly taught languages in the country are quite limited as well for those who wish to study them, mostly restricted to self-study approaches in the form of guide books with useful phrases and tips on cultural differences in the event one wishes to visit the respective countries. Although the internet has helped to compensate for some of the shortcomings, those resources often do not follow a specific syllabus, and therefore are not always pedagogically appropriate; in addition, they seem to be limited in scope, which can only make for a supplementary source at best.

Greek is one of the richest languages in the world with the longest documented history of any Indo-European language, spanning 34 centuries of written records.[3] Since antiquity the Greek people have travelled far and wide taking the language and culture to the four corners of the world. Because of that, Greek literature was so influential that many other languages borrowed extensively from it. Also, the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek provided a footing for a great number of loan words to be imported right from the original text into the English language (Pei, 1965), a practice that continued during the Renaissance when scholars placed an emphasis on the study of the classics, considered one of the cornerstones of the humanities to-dates. Moreover, most modern sciences have been established on terms of Greek origin or Latinized Greek (Kent, 1963). Moreover, approximately 75 percent of those words come from Latin and Greek (Kent, 1963, p. 6).

All these points provide strong connections between Greek and other foreign languages that are currently taught in Japan, especially English, considering it is the only foreign language taught in high schools across the country. Modern Greek, however, is not taught in Japan, and consequently, people who might be interested in learning the language do not have access to many opportunities or resources; what is more, people qualified to teach the language in Japan are almost non-existent, which makes it even more frustrating for those interested in taking up Greek to pursue their interest. Also, because of this lack of resources not many people are informed about the Greek language and culture, and therefore do not know whether they would be interested in learning the language or not. Against all these adversities, the only way to assist both those who are interested and are trying to make progress with whatever little means they have at their disposal as well as those who have not been given the opportunity to know more about the language is to motivate them; the former, to keep them going, and the latter, to help them develop an interest that will make them want to study. In fact, the role of motivation in foreign language learning is even more significant in the case of less commonly taught languages, given all those adverse conditions surrounding the learning process, which work

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3) "Greek language". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

against the learners' attempts to keep themselves motivated.

Motivation

In educational psychology "to be motivated is to be moved to do something" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the research literature it is generally accepted that motivation is one of the most important parameters towards successfully learning a foreign language. Not surprisingly, the last 40 years have seen a considerable amount of research on the role of motivation in the foreign language learning process. Interest in foreign language motivation can be traced back to Gardner and Lambert, whose significant work in 1959 "powerfully brought motivational issues to the attention of the L2 field" [4] by grounding motivation research in a social psychological framework. Since then, several models of L2 language learning motivation have been proposed, among which, Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model is generally regarded as the most influential one.

Aside from learners, motivation is crucial for language teachers as well, as it plays a significant role in driving language-learning progress (Dörnyei, 2001; Ellis, 1994). In fact, it is so important that teachers often try to create the circumstances for the students to get motivated by preparing classroom tasks that are interesting and engaging, or by using authentic materials to stimulate the students' further interest in the language as well as the people who speak it.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) divided language learning motivation into two types; *integrative* motivation, which is defined by the learners' desire to integrate themselves into the target culture, and *instrumental* motivation, which refers to an individual's desire to learn a language for a specific purpose, for instance employment purposes. Later on, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed their own classification of language learning motivation into *intrinsic*, the desire to engage in activities because of their inherently enjoyable or interesting nature, thus seeking an internal reward, and *extrinsic* motivation, or the desire to engage in activities that lead to a reward from outside of oneself, such as good final grades at school. It should be noted, however, that it is quite difficult to divide learning motivation into two distinct types, as there will be some areas where these types will overlap.

Besides these theories from educational psychology, there is also a large body of research on anxiety in language learning (Bailey, 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Anxiety is an extremely crucial cognitive factor for all types of learners and "a most studied motivational aptitude" (Snow & Swanson, 1992, p. 600). Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994), for example, found that anxiety and self-confidence can be significant contributing factors determining attitude and motivation towards learning a second language.

4）　Oxford & Shearin

Studying Greek

Studying a highly inflected language, such as Greek, that is, a language that uses a system of various case endings to mark grammatical changes, could potentially aid the learners' understanding of the grammar and syntax in their own language. Studying the way another language functions, inadvertently leads to comparisons, which often lead learners to revisit and reflect on their knowledge about their own language and how it functions, and consolidate that knowledge. Therefore, learning another language can help learners learn a little bit more about their own languages, too.

More importantly, learning a new language provides a new way of looking at the world and understanding one's own culture by means of comparison. The ways one language expresses certain ideas, concepts or even its pragmatic or social aspects, can be quite different from another language. Learning about these differences can give the learner a new perspective on social behavior as well. At the same time, it helps foster a more positive attitude towards other cultures in the process, as it helps people understand and appreciate each other's standpoints making them better citizens of the world.

For Japanese students in particular it can provide a better knowledge of English vocabulary as well. Given that a great number of commonly used words—even more so in the sciences—derive from Greek, understanding the original meaning or the substituent parts in compound words for instance, can help to assimilate the actual meaning of that particular word more so than the common practice of merely memorizing it as the equivalent of an existing word within one's own native language and hence one's own viewpoint. It also helps learners to get a better grasp of other languages as well, as previously acquired knowledge can most certainly be applied to other languages as well, thus making learning a much easier and smoother process.

In this respect, the study of Greek, which linguistically is so closely related to several of the most commonly taught languages around the world to date, such as English, French or Spanish, can provide a point of reference for the learner, who can employ common or similar strategies for the study of any of these languages to help improve competence in the others. This is a significant point in a world where mobility between nations is more frequent and essential than ever before making language learning more of a necessity than a choice. In this context, language learning no longer concerns only educators and parents; rather it has taken a place on the political agenda emphasizing the value of knowledge learnt in one language being employable in the learning process of a new language, such as in the case of the Council of Europe's plurilingualism.

Class Preparation

Having studied Latin as well as Modern and Ancient Greek intensively in high school as an entrance requirement for University, the native speaker found the opportunity to introduce a speaking activity in

Greek to a class of 37 Japanese undergraduate students at Kyoto University a challenging but also very exciting task. The intent was to take advantage of this unique opportunity for the Japanese students to study Greek with a native speaker. To do that we decided to target the students' intrinsic motivation by introducing some tasks that could give them the incentive to want to continue studying the Greek language. Aside from linguistic knowledge, we also decided to give the class a glimpse at the culture as well and attract their interest in it as another factor that could motivate them further. In the context of introducing this speaking activity in Greek at Kyoto University we created HTML materials and PowerPoint slides to introduce the Modern Greek language, to help the students practice before recording their self-introductions, and ultimately, to help increase their intrinsic motivation through an enjoyable activity.

There were certain limitations we had to take into account, however. First of all, time constraints; since this was to be a single class the expectations could not be high by definition, and all tasks had to fit into a single class. Also, considering the students had not taken any classes in Greek before, and also the differences between the two languages—Japanese and Greek—the choice of content had to be carefully selected, if we were to achieve the goal of motivating the class.

a. Cultural Aspects

The foreign languages usually taught at Japanese Universities are mainly English, Chinese, German and French. Modern Greek is not offered, and therefore this task presented a challenge as well as a very rare opportunity for Japanese students to learn about the language. As part of the lecture we decided to include some cultural aspects in our introduction for two reasons.

First of all, culture plays a significant role in language learning and research has shown that it affects various levels of the language itself—semantic, pragmatic, discourse (McKay, 2003).[5] It has often been suggested that learning a new language entails learning a new culture as well, and, although it was just a single lecture, we considered it important enough to introduce some aspects of the Greek culture to the students as well.

As far as the pragmatic dimension is concerned, it is quite easy to see the significance culture has on language and how it often shapes it. A very simple example would be the different ways that various cultures—and consequently languages—employ to respond to compliments. In most countries in the western world, for instance, when receiving a compliment one usually accepts it graciously by saying "thank you". However, in Japan, such a response is not very common and would not normally be considered the most appropriate one; upon receiving a compliment one is expected to kindly reject it and not accept it. Therefore, knowing what is culturally acceptable in a given situation is undoubtedly part of learning that particular language and acquiring linguistic competence.

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5) The Cultural Basis of Teaching English as an International Language.

Finally, another reason we added cultural data to the lecture was to provide some information other than plain theory in order to give the students short breaks; considering the lecture included all new information to them which they would have to use a few minutes later to create their own self-introductions, we tried not to overwhelm them. In this way, we provided the instruction but also included interesting information in between hoping this approach would help them develop an interest in the Greek language and culture in the end.

Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). The forms of a given language and the ways in which that language is used reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is used. Although culture is taught implicitly through the linguistic structures that students learn, Peterson (2003) and Ciccarelli (1996) also mention the use of proverbs in class as a good way to generate a discussion on how the proverbs are different from or similar to proverbs in the students' native language and how such differences might underscore a historical and cultural background (Ciccarelli, 1996). Peterson (2003) also proposes the use of proverbs as a way to "analyze the stereotypes about and misperceptions of the culture, as well as a way for students to explore the values that are often represented in the proverbs of their native culture".

b. Introduction to the Country and Culture

In order to help the students better relate to the new information, a Japanese teacher established a connection between Greece and Japan at the beginning of the class by introducing several ways in which Greece has influenced Japanese culture over the years, mainly through the Silk Road. More specifically, the teacher presented examples such as the so-called *archaic smile* as seen in the seated Maitreya in meditation at the Koryuji Temple in Japan; it dates back to the second quarter of the 6th century BC when this convention was used in Ancient Greece to suggest a state of well-being. Another point presented was *entasis*, a convex curve applied to the surface of columns for aesthetic purposes as in the case of Horyuji Temple for instance, influenced by the Classical period Greek column designs, and finally, the arabesque, a complex, ornate design of geometric figures commonly used nowadays in handkerchief and *furoshiki* [6] patterns in Japan.

The class continued with the introduction to Greece while pointing out a few major milestones in the history of the country spanning from the ancient times through its presence in the contemporary world. The information briefly covered areas such as philosophy, sciences, as well as music, religion and sports among others, showing its contribution to the world.

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6) A type of traditional Japanese wrapping cloth typically used to transport goods such as gifts etc.

c. Introduction to the Greek Language

Following that, we gave the students a brief introduction to the language itself covering aspects such as grammar, syntax and phonology among others. Since the activity was carried out in a class of Japanese students, we made various comparisons to the students' native language in order to help establish the differences and similarities between the two linguistic systems (Fig. 1).

Then, followed the introduction to the Greek alphabet, starting with the word "alphabet" itself, since it is used in the Japanese language as well (*arufabetto*) to refer to this particular type of writing systems. Then, we explained that it is a compound word made up from *alpha* and *beta*, the first two letters of the Greek alphabet. We also presented all 24 letters in a table with their pronunciation using the International Phonetic Alphabet (hereafter, IPA), thus providing a basic introduction to the pronunciation system as it is in Modern Greek. Since there are quite a few letters in the alphabet, we tried to alleviate the pressure by invoking the students' background knowledge on several of them; the Greek student presented the letters of the alphabet that the students were sure to have already encountered in their Science and Mathematics classes (e.g. *α, β, θ, Σ, ω*), since a considerable number of Greek letters are used extensively in mathematics and science.
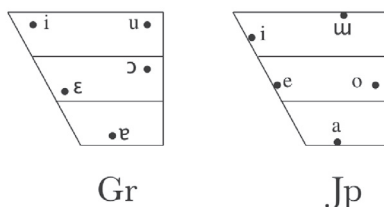
Vowels in Japanese & Greek

Gr   Jp

Fig. 1.: Comparison: Japanese and Greek vowels

d. Introduction to Basic Grammar and Syntax

The Greek student prepared a basic self-introduction with the use of PowerPoint slides pointing out the similarities and differences between Greek and Japanese in terms of grammar, pronunciation and syntax. Several points were covered: First of all, in terms of grammar, Greek is a highly inflective language, whereas Japanese is an agglutinative language. It has seven vowels unlike Japanese, which has five, and it uses gender, case and number for nouns and adjectives. Although there are seven distinct letters in the alphabet representing vowels, the vowel sounds themselves are only five. That is because Greek has three vowels representing the sound /i/ and two representing the sound /o/. While in Classical Greek the different vowels did in fact have different sounds, in Modern Greek the sounds have converged.

Verb Conjugation（動詞の活用）

εγώ	(I)	τρέχ - **ω**
εσύ	(you)	τρέχ - **εις**
αυτός,-ή, -ό	(he, she, it)	τρέχ - **ει**
εμείς	(we)	τρέχ - **ουμε**
εσείς	(you)	τρέχ - **ετε**
αυτοί,-ές,-ά	(they)	τρέχ - **ουν**

Fig. 2.: Conjugation of the verb εἰμαι (to be).

We also presented the conjugation of the auxiliary verb *εἰμαι* (to be) (Fig. 2) along with some typical examples of noun/adjective declension types followed by the two articles, definite (*o, η, το*) and indefinite (*ένας, μία, ένα*). At the end, we added some tongue twisters and common proverbs to make the lecture a little more enjoyable and give students a short break.

e. Creation of Self-introduction Videos in Greek

The Greek student presented a self-introduction video with subtitles he had prepared to show in class as an example of what the students would be asked to do later, while going over each phrase and explaining the process. Then, he distributed the template and the HTML teaching materials we had prepared. We gave the students time to go over them, and then guided them to complete the self-introduction sentences in the template with their own choices.

On the template the Greek student prepared a rather simple self-introduction for the class with its translation in Japanese, as well as a second version of that same text where several parts were left blank; finally, he included a list of words with their translations at the end for the class. The students were asked to select any words from the list to fill in the blanks in the text, personalize it, and eventually make their own self-introductions in the Greek language. In order to facilitate the process we populated the list with vocabulary items specific to the students in that particular class, which were taken from a similar activity we had conducted in English a few weeks before. This also saved us some time from having to translate all the individual student-specific vocabulary items in class, and at the same time gave us the opportunity to include them in the HTML materials so that the students could have more time to practice.

The HTML materials included audio pronunciation of the original self-introduction, audio pronunciation of single sentences, and of each individual word provided in the list in order to give the students the opportunity to practice their individual self-introductions at their own pace.

After finalizing their own texts the students were asked to record their self-introductions using the iPod nano® digital devices. The recorded videos were collected at the end of the class and were

subsequently evaluated by the Greek student. The students were provided with feedback in the following class.

Class Evaluation

Evaluation came from both the video content the students recorded and a questionnaire we distributed towards the end of the class. Although all 37 students submitted their self-introduction recordings, only 33 handed in their questionnaire sheets.

Since the activity we were introducing was a speaking one, and knowing the students were Japanese, we had to account for possible performance limitations. As far as vowels are concerned, we expected the students would not have any major difficulties. The 5 vowel sounds employed in Modern Greek are very close to the Japanese vowel realizations, so we expected the Japanese students would have no particular problems pronouncing them. To help make the process easier, we drew their attention to the fact that all vowels (the letters representing the sounds) in the Greek alphabet look similar to their English counterparts, which the students were already familiar with.

As far as the consonants are concerned, we were aware of the lack of distinction in Japanese between the sounds /l/ and /r/, so we had to present the two letters in comparison to their English counterparts since they were already familiar with those. Although we anticipated several instances of substitution between *lamda* (λ) and *rho* (ρ) in the video recordings, we were surprised to find that—except for a couple of students—that was not the case.

Another point that required attention was the choice of vocabulary we would include in the list. For the scope of this activity, and given that the students had had no prior instruction in Greek, we knew we needed to avoid words which would be difficult for them to pronounce, such as those that include sequences of consecutive consonants; since Japanese is a mora-based language it is very difficult for Japanese speakers to produce consonant sounds independent of vowels. Although the students were not able to overcome this difficulty, there were clear signs that they managed to imitate the audio files to a satisfactory level, in the few cases that were included in the list and the template.

Results

After we collected all video recordings we evaluated them on the basis of how clear and understandable the content was overlooking minor mistakes, since this was the students' first contact with the language. All in all, we evaluated 35 students—2 clips were left out because they were not playable. Overall, the results were surprisingly positive. Out of those 35 self-introductions 24 were quite clearly spoken with only negligible errors, which did not impede comprehension. The remaining 9 presented comprehension problems ranging from minor to more significant ones, and therefore were

deemed as not successful attempts in our evaluation. Nevertheless, the relatively high percentage of successful attempts—around 69 percent—was quite encouraging and the students were very pleased when we provided them with this feedback in the following class.

We also asked the students for some feedback at the end of the class in the form of a questionnaire. All in all, the introductory course was well received by the majority of the students, 72 percent of which said they would be interested to study Modern Greek after attending our class. Several of them cited the information we presented in the beginning as well as the approach we took in presenting the language as motivating factors. Regarding their preferred instructional approach to the language, the most popular answer, about 1/3 of the students, was what we had already done in class, while 6 suggested an initial focus on the alphabet. Also, 6 students opted for a focus on grammar instruction first, while 4 mentioned the presence of a native speaker as very important.

As for the effectiveness of the use of recording devices in a pair work in class, over 90 percent of the students (30 out of 33) answered positively mentioning advantages such as the ability to monitor their own progress by watching the videos afterwards. In this way, it is possible to isolate the parts they did not do particularly well at, or even those they have difficulties with, and concentrate on improving them. Another point a few students mentioned was that having to work with their peers to record each other helped simulate the stress and anxiety that are part of a real conversation. In that regard they found the approach even more helpful.

Overall, 75 percent of the students found this approach useful for the purpose of studying less commonly taught languages, as it is "a quick and effective way to learn some basic phrases and also practice pronunciation" as several students noted in their answers. Finally, a couple of students also mentioned that, after all the practice with the HTML materials, they were surprised to find out that they were able to remember a few of the words and phrases in Greek. As for the activity itself, the vast majority of the students found it quite easy and enjoyable, while only 5 students out of 33 had difficulty (Fig. 3). Moreover, well over half of the students found the activity interesting with only 2 admitting no interest. Finally, only 2 students seemed to question its usefulness, while the rest made several suggestions as to how the activity could benefit a language class. Most students mentioned pronunciation check as the most prevalent use, while also noting the fact that recording themselves on video gave them the opportunity to watch their own attempts and evaluate their progress. This helped them see what parts they did well at and what parts they needed to work on. Several students also mentioned in their answers that the activity gave them a feel for the new language while making it seem interesting and enjoyable, and as a result half of the students expressed an interest in studying the language. Finally, almost all students said they would be willing to attend a class that included such an activity.
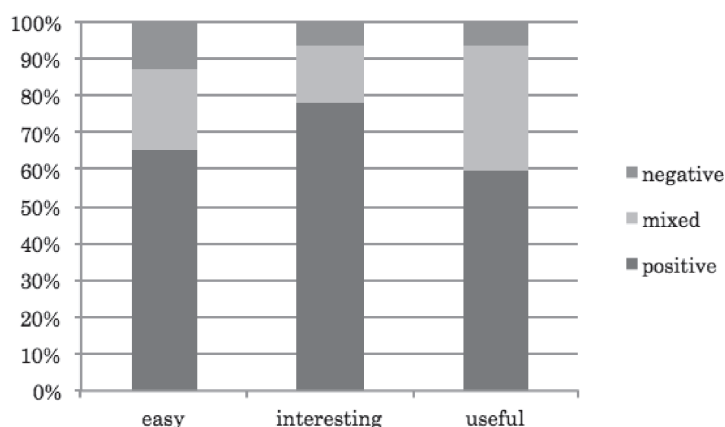
Fig. 3.: Students' answers in the Questionnaire.

Discussion

Student motivation is regarded as a significant factor in foreign language learning and, not surprisingly, it has spawned a great amount of research seeking to provide deeper understanding of its contribution in the learning process as well as better ways for teachers to motivate learners. The speaking activity we presented in a class of undergraduate students at Kyoto University aimed at introducing a different approach to language learning, and more specifically to the way learners are introduced to a new foreign language. The intent was to provide the learners with an activity that would help them assume a positive attitude towards the new language, while giving them a sense of accomplishment right from the start, thus increasing intrinsic motivation. From the students' responses to the questionnaire as well as the video content they recorded using the iPod nano® devices, it seems the students regarded the activity as successful.

This activity introduced a combination of three elements: first, a native speaker, who was involved from the initial preparatory stages of the creation of the materials, to the lecture on the presentation of the Greek language, to the guidance throughout the practice session, helping students or answering their questions, and finally to the evaluation of the video content. The second element was the use of ICT, which helped maximize the benefits of the presence of the native speaker with the creation of multimedia materials. Students were given access to those materials to help them construct their own phrases and practice pronouncing them correctly, while being able to use them at their own pace. Finally, the third element was the recording activity, which made it more enjoyable for the students to practice their own self-introductions in Greek. The recording activity helped overcome one of the most prevalent obstacles in Japanese language classrooms, which is related to the fact that Japanese learners do not feel comfortable being singled out in front of their peers and would rather remain as inconspicuous as possible attracting as little attention as possible. This is a significant factor that could

increase anxiety and, consequently, inhibit learning, especially in the Japanese classroom. The use of the digital devices used in pairs helped the students enjoy the activity without fearing that they were at the center of everyone's attention during class. More importantly, this activity gave the students the opportunity to practice speaking in a foreign language, which is something Japanese students are not used to.

Moreover, the students were able to make use of the materials we created and distributed in class in order to produce their own phrases and sentences, record them on video and evaluate their progress. From the feedback we received it appears that they saw this activity as a great opportunity to learn more about the Greek language and culture. In addition, they saw this activity as a useful tool that they could use to improve their pronunciation, while being able to evaluate their utterances and point out both the positive attempts as well as those areas they needed to further work on in order to improve their competence. In this respect, they felt rewarded after their own evaluation and, consequently, more motivated to study the new foreign language as they mentioned in their responses. What is more, the activity gave them the opportunity to get more involved in the learning process taking a more active role in it, which could probably be attributed to the increased motivation we observed. They were able to monitor their own progress and evaluate it at each stage. This was more evident when working with the HTML/multimedia materials, since they could isolate words and phrases they were not confident about, and playback the corresponding audio files to compare against a native speaker's audio recording as many times as they felt necessary.

Despite the admittedly limited exposure to the language, the limited scope of the instruction, as well as the equally limited time available for practice, the students were able to reach a level of pronunciation that could be clearly understood by native speakers or speakers of the language in general. Although not everyone performed as well—a few students' speech content was somewhat difficult to comprehend—it was encouraging that most students were able to produce clear and comprehensible self-introductions within the first minutes of being introduced to the new language.

Conclusion

We used a speaking activity at Kyoto University to introduce Modern Greek to a class of undergraduate students with the use of HTML materials we created; we then asked the students to create their own self-introductions in Greek and record them in pairs. The purpose was to find a way to introduce the new language, which would not be based on the traditional methods of strict grammar teaching. We used a speaking activity instead that would involve the students and give them a sense of accomplishment from the start hoping to motivate them to learn the language. We gave the students the opportunity to have hands-on experience with Modern Greek and practice it instead of just passively hearing about it or simply looking at words and phrases on the board; it was admittedly

a difficult task for them considering they were faced with an alphabet they were not familiar with and words and phrases they had just been introduced; that was one limitation we attempted to overcome with the introduction of the multimedia materials. Instead of relying on books already written with a wider audience in mind, we tailored the content to the students in our class, and despite the short time they were given to prepare, the activity helped them produce positive results. One point that needs addressing, however, is the amount of information provided in a single class, which made some students feel a little nervous and perhaps overburdened. Increased anxiety could significantly impede motivation and thus inhibit learning. However, it should be noted that this was the students' first exposure to this type of class activity, and consequently it is more than likely that if they get accustomed to the pace and flow of the class, the process should be smoother.

This method can also prove useful for teachers as well, since it gives them the opportunity to evaluate the content more easily and objectively. They can go over every single one of the students' video recordings and evaluate them in more detail to determine both stronger and weaker points, and then provide student-specific feedback to the class. Teachers can even go over individual recordings with the respective students to make the points clearer and help them understand exactly what points need addressing. Finally, this method can also give the opportunity to teachers to exchange video content with other classes or other schools even, and therefore expand the activity to suit different needs of the class.

More importantly in Japan, where speaking activities in foreign language classes are not often the norm, and given that Japanese students prefer to be passive observers in class rather than participate, this activity made the difference. All in all, we believe it could be an interesting and useful activity for students in an environment where the resources are rather limited and the students have little knowledge of the foreign language, given the increased motivation and interest levels we observed in our class.

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