



Ludic Language Pedagogy Playground

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Journeys of Self-Discovery and Growth through Experiential Learning in and around Games

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Key points

- **What is this?** This is a reflection on and sharing of our growth journeys in our graduation seminar.
- **Why did you make it?** In our seminar, 11 students embarked on unique self-growth journeys, each with our own goals and methods. Although we played the same games, we engaged in different activities and had diverse experiences. Yet, we found ourselves growing in similar areas, such as language, confidence, and study skills. Learning can come from many forms of media, especially through experiential learning. We want to share our insights and experiences with you.
- **Who is it for?** This is for teachers interested in integrating the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies with games, as well as for students looking to explore active learning approaches.

Tweet synopsis

11 students, 11 unique journeys—many powerful lessons! 🎮📚
Through games & experiential learning, we grew in many ways. Educators & students, explore how the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies can transform learning!
🚀 #ActiveLearning #GameBasedLearning

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👋👋👋👋 Hi There! 👋👋👋👋 12 people ([raccoons](#)) worked on this paper (Image 1). 👋👋👋👋



Image 1: 12 (sometimes messy) raccoons worked on this paper of messy and passionate learning journeys

In this paper, we'll share some things about ourselves -- who we were in the past, who we were when we worked together at university, and who we hoped to become. We'll describe the learning journey we went on -- experiencing, discussing, researching and participating with and around games. We'll show the various transformations that happened -- how our language and literacy changed, how we grew and what we achieved. Figure 1 illustrates the general path of the paper.



Figure 1: The path of the paper: who we were, what we did, how we changed

Here we go!

1. Introduction and overview

This paper reflects our shared experiences and growth during our graduation [Seminar](https://sites.google.com/site/gamelabshizuoka/graduation-theses) over the past two years. We explored topics like the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (PedML), games as learning tools, and global issues such as diversity, sustainability, and self-awareness. Our full thesis reports can be accessed on this website: <https://sites.google.com/site/gamelabshizuoka/graduation-theses>. We played and analyzed games to understand concepts such as communication, happiness, and collaboration. These activities helped us see the potential of games in education and as tools for addressing real-world challenges.

This collaborative paper was created at the end of the students' two-year journey in the seminar. Each student kept detailed notes about their individual journeys (diaries, photos, project work) during the seminar which they used to create their individual theses. After all students had successfully submitted their theses to the department, Prof. deHaan gave them an assignment to work together to draft a collaborative paper for Ludic Language Pedagogy. This assignment was in lieu of the traditional "present your thesis and field questions from professors" examination that most seminars at the university follow. Students were to take the "Playground" submission template, decide which student would take the lead on various sections in the paper, and read and talk with other students to make sure that each student's experiences were reflected in the manuscript. This assignment was a "final bookend" for the seminar, in which students would need to understand the similarities and differences in other students' journeys in the seminar. Students drafted text for their section and asked other students to check their work. When all of the sections were acceptable to all authors, the manuscript was submitted to LLP.

We begin by introducing the seminar and the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies methodology on which it is based. We then present detailed data from our journeys, outlining what we learned, where we learned it, and how these insights were gained through participatory activities, game analyses, and reflective practices.

This paper also highlights how combining practical experiences, community engagement, and self-reflection has shaped our personal and professional growth. Through research, projects, and reflective activities, we gained insights into teaching, learning, and personal development. This paper demonstrates the value of using innovative approaches, like games and participatory activities, to address educational and social challenges while fostering meaningful connections and lifelong learning.

Through research, projects, and reflective activities, we gained insights into teaching, learning, and personal development.

1.1 The graduation seminar and Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

The teaching and learning described in this paper took place at a public university in Japan. Students in the department take many classes in their first and second years, and then take fewer classes in their third and fourth years. When they are second year students, they are introduced to each faculty member's "seminar" – a mandatory two-year series of courses in which students study topics related to a professor's specialization and write a graduation thesis under the professor's guidance. Students elect which seminar to join. Some seminars have higher enrollments than others, but on average there are four 3rd years and 4 4th years in each professor's seminar. Most faculty members are Japanese and conduct the seminar and the thesis writing in Japanese. There are very few English-language seminars in the department.

The students and teacher were part of a two-year seminar for 3rd and 4th year students. All student authors of this paper elected to join the seminar and to write their graduation thesis based on their work in the seminar. This paper includes 11 students' data from their 3rd and 4th years. We think of our work over two years as a learning "journey."

Students meet as a group at least twice a month for at least three hours each time. Some meetings are only with 3rd years (focusing on doing PedML activities). Some meetings are only with 4th years (focusing on analyzing data on their learning). Some meetings are group “butterfly sessions” where students share their work and reflections and get advice from peers. Students also collaborate on public events to playtest project ideas: [Open Lab](#).

The teacher is present at all weekly meetings and mediates learning by giving short lectures, taking notes on and debriefing gameplay, introducing worksheets and activities, giving feedback on student’s ideas, and answering questions. Each student has a Google Document for their learning diaries, reports and worksheets, and the teacher also reads and comments on ideas outside of class meetings. Students also meet on a case-by-case basis with the teacher for individual help on project work.

English and Japanese are both used in the seminar. The teacher uses English for lectures and instructions. Games are played in English. Worksheets, diaries, homework and projects are written in English. The teacher gives feedback on homework and communicates in English. Students are free to present and discuss their homework and projects to other students in either English or Japanese (many elect to use Japanese). Peer communication outside seminar meetings (social media, Discord, LINE) is often done in Japanese. The students are told that the seminar is an opportunity to develop their English and Japanese skills, and also their skills at using and creating media and technology. Some students choose to use the seminar to improve their English skills, and some students in some years elect to focus on improving their written or spoken Japanese (especially business or formal Japanese) or other languages (Turkish, Chinese, Korean or Tagalog). The teacher repeatedly informs students that they are free to explore languages and learn as they like, but that they should be deliberate about what and why they choose to study and practice and do what they decide. A common pattern in participatory project work is for students to plan and discuss their project in English, then conduct the project in Japanese (e.g., holding an event, joining a community group, interacting on social media), then reporting and reflecting on the project in English.

The sequence of work in the seminar is described here:

2nd year (pre seminar)

- Students elect to join the seminar.
- Students complete “pre-seminar materials” that set the stage for in-seminar learning.
- We discuss our shared goals for the seminar and after graduation.

3rd year (in the seminar)















- Students engage in Pedagogy of Multiliteracies stages and activities
 - Experiencing:
 - Playing commercial games deeply
 - Exploring social impact games
 - Exploring game and hobby culture (locally and online)
 - Conceptualizing:
 - Discussing games
 - Reflecting on gameplay
 - Crafting theories about language, education, games and society
 - Reading articles related to experiences
 - Analyzing:
 - Analyzing texts for meaning and purpose
 - Doing readings and research on technologies, cultures, language and our community

Note: The teacher and students work through these stages in a mostly linear fashion, but some of the teacher mediation may “weave” (PedML term) the learning back and forth through these stages, for example replaying a game or discussing different aspects of games and society.

4th year (in the seminar)

- Students engage in the last stage of Pedagogy of Multiliteracies and activities
 - Participating:
 - Apply knowledge to plan + conduct + evaluate meaningful actions in society, for example, making an educational game, running a charity event, teaching using games, collaborating with a company or organization
- Students write and present their graduation thesis (Note: the thesis is the seminar's final assessment tool):
 - Organizing research materials
 - Analyzing their learning through the seminar
 - Writing drafts and revisions
 - Presenting their thesis

The seminar is based on the ideas of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The fundamental ideas are summarized in the following figure (2) (from deHaan, 2022).

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies												
① It's about literacy (think "reading" → "writing") <u>but</u> more like: ① "experiencing" → "understanding" → "applying" ② It's about the multi (because <i>more</i> is <i>better</i> !) of the ② What, Where, How, Why and Who												
What	③ Societies, technologies, & language are always changing; there are many realities . ④ Meaning/communication is created & received in many modes (ways, purposes, cultures, techs): <div> image  text  speech  sound  body  object  space (+ combinations of these (e.g., video games combine all:       ))</div> ⑤ Students should develop many languages (first, second, literacies, metalanguage) ⑥ Students should develop many literacies for different texts, technologies, contexts and purposes ⑦ Students should learn many genres : academic professional everyday hobbyist											
Where	⑧ Teachers connect and " weave " the learning that students do in many different "lifeworlds" personal academic school public professional online spaces local communities											
How	<div>⑨ iteracy involves</div> <table><tr><td>"available designs" → Reading, experiencing, examining "modes" (see ④)</td><td>"designing" → Researching, creating meaning via "modes"</td><td colspan="2">"The redesigned" "modes," learners and society change due to new designs</td></tr></table> <div>⑩ Good teaching is neither 'sage on the stage' (traditional & analytic) nor 'guide on the side' (progressive & experiential). Both have pros and cons. Combine the pros, and weave the stages back and forth to create a "reflexive pedagogy" of these 4 stages: ("complimentary" colors are used! 🤗)</div> <table><tr><td>Situated Practice "Learning in personal ways" Experience known and new things to get vivid tacit understandings +</td><td>Overt Instruction "Learning in school ways" Describe & discuss experiences using names, theories and metalanguage +</td><td>Critical Framing "Learning in school ways" Analyze & connect experiences & society critically & functionally (See (1) on next page) +</td><td>Transformed Practice "Learning in personal, school and social ways" Apply, create and participate appropriately and creatively + ...</td></tr></table>				"available designs" → Reading, experiencing, examining "modes" (see ④)	"designing" → Researching, creating meaning via "modes"	"The redesigned" "modes," learners and society change due to new designs		Situated Practice "Learning in personal ways" Experience known and new things to get vivid tacit understandings +	Overt Instruction "Learning in school ways" Describe & discuss experiences using names, theories and metalanguage +	Critical Framing "Learning in school ways" Analyze & connect experiences & society critically & functionally (See (1) on next page) +	Transformed Practice "Learning in personal, school and social ways" Apply, create and participate appropriately and creatively + ...
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Why	⑪ Teaching & learning in PedML focuses on transformation of students, teachers, schools and society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving students & teachers agency & choice; liberation (freedom) from systems of oppression• Learning new ways of teaching and learning and being ("extending repertoires")• Making a difference in the lives of students in front of us, in schools, and in society around us• Understanding meanings & contributing meaningfully (i.e., participating) in personal, academic, public & professional ways (And "weaving" between lifeworlds is additive, facilitating transfer!)											
Who	⑫ Teachers are important. They ask questions, design tasks, model work, push and motivate, draw attention, share knowledge, give feedback, guide, connect, require revision and plan and lead learning ⑬ Students are important. Their individual and collective interests, skills, and differences help them											

deHaan, J., Kajimura, J., Kawaguchi, S., Kira, H., Koike, A., Mizuno, A., Nakashima, K., Chau, N. Q., Odate, K., Suzuki, K., Tsuzuki, M., & Ueno, K. (2025). Journeys of self-discovery and growth through experiential learning in and around games. *Ludic Language Pedagogy*, 7, 66–104.

	choose, think, learn, play, act and become who they want to be ⑭ Communities are important. Classrooms, neighborhoods, organizations, families, civics, online groups, social media ... all have systems, practices and knowledge
Proof	Does it work? ⑮ Yes (my research articles) ⑯ Yes (my students' awesome journeys) I love focusing on the "how & why;" my students always achieve and surprise in terms of "what" they do.
Read	⑰ For more on a broader view of (especially game) literacy, read Zagal, J. P. (2010). Ludoliteracy: Defining, understanding, and supporting games education. Lulu.com. ⑱ Pair this with your favorite beverage: New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. Harvard Educational Review, 66, 60-93. URL ⑲ I didn't understand PedML until I read this: Cope, W. & Kalantzis, M. (2015). The Things You Do to Know: An Introduction to the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. (p.1-36) URL

Figure 2: deHaan's (2022) wh-question-organized simplification of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies
Application of PedML's "How" into the seminar

The sequence of work in the seminar is shown in the following figure (3). The numbered stages (①-⑤) are then described in more detail. The grey headings indicate where the main PedML stages are in the seminar sequence.

3rd year in the seminar				4th year in the seminar		
① Before PedML →	② Experiences →	② Theories →	③ Analysis →	④ Participation →	⑤ → Research work and thesis	
Application Additional materials (Pre Materials) Discussion of our goals for the seminar and beyond	Play games deeply Explore social impact games Explore game and hobby culture (locally, online) OPEN LAB Butterfly session	Discussion Reflection Theorizing Readings	Analyze texts for meaning and purpose Do readings and research on technologies, cultures, language and our community	Apply your knowledge to: 1) plan + 2) conduct + 3) evaluate meaningful action in society. Examples: - make an educational game - run a charity event - teach using games - collaborate with a company	Research materials (Post Materials) Reflective writings and discussions Analysis of your learning through the seminar	Thesis writing Thesis presentation

Figure 3: The seminar's work, organized by years at university and Pedagogy of Multiliteracies stages

① Before joining the seminar, we did Pre Materials. We reflected on our own history. We could understand who we are thanks to this work.

② In PedML sessions, we played games, then we discussed these games. Then, we created a concept map based on the keywords that came up in the discussion. The teacher (acting as a facilitator of a debriefing) prompted the discussion with questions (e.g., "What did you like? What were you thinking about during the game? Do you remember key moments in the game? What does this game make you think of?"). Students wrote things on post-it notes or poster paper and organized, grouped and connected the ideas. Concept maps varied from game to game, but they often included topics such as ideas, questions, connections to society, strategies, other games, game improvements, emotions, and language.

Then, we applied ideas that came up in the discussion and concept map creation and organization to a game or project. We planned and organized an OPEN LAB for the general public. We used OPEN LAB as opportunities to research our own interests, play games and communicate with others.

<https://sites.google.com/site/gamelabshizuoka/open-lab>

In the “butterfly session,” we used [Austin’s Butterfly method](#). We shared our own work, received valuable advice from seminar members and considered how we could make it better. We kept diaries each month. We discussed and wrote mostly in English (our second language).

We played a variety of games, including Snake Oil, the Marshmallow Challenge, Cockroach Poker, Values, Pictionary, Awkward Moment, Pandemic, Pursuit of Happiness, Lives of Ordinary People, and many more (Image 2 shows some of our game experiences). The teacher took us through PedML sequences themed around Language, Education, Games, Society and Health and Happiness, and he suggested a variety of games for us to choose from for each unit. He introduced his recommendations (explaining the game mechanics, experience, meanings, and language we might use in the games) before we selected (we were free to choose) the games we were interested in. Some games we played as an entire class; some games we played in small groups.



Image 2: We played Pictionary and the Marshmallow Challenge

We discussed the games in detail, analyzing their good points, bad points, ways to improve them, and the lessons we could learn from playing them. Images 3 and 4 show our discussion work.

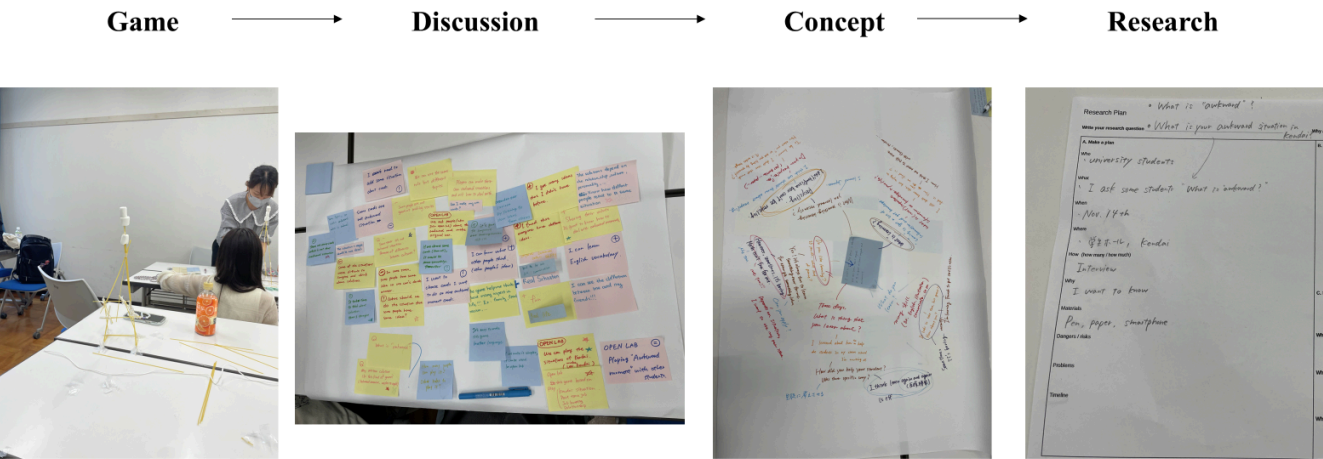


Image 3: Moving from playing, discussing, explaining concepts and doing short research projects based on our discussions.

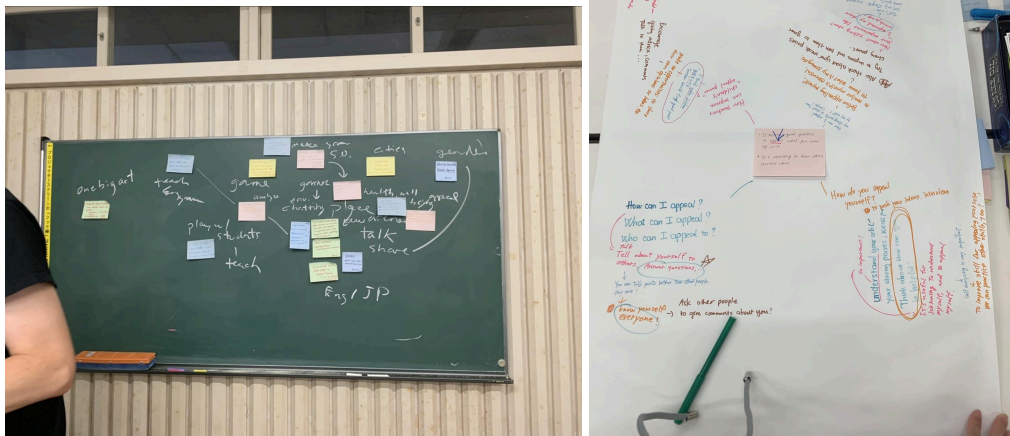


Image 4: Discussing games using post-it notes and “entakun” sheets ([see workshop example](#))

- ③ In the research project, each of us researched our own personal interests. Before we started our projects, the teacher asked us to brainstorm anything related to language, education, games, society or something else that we were curious about. We were then asked to sort our brainstorming by things we could look up and things we could do to gather new information about our ideas (e.g., a survey, interview or research project). The teacher invited us to meet with him to discuss our ideas and possible actions. Once we had decided our topic and a clear question or hypothesis, we conducted our short research project using [this research project template](#) (which includes spaces for questions, motivations, process, notes, trends and analysis, and concluding thoughts). Some played games in their area of interest, some created questionnaires about language or culture using Google Forms (which were shared on social media and with friends and family), and some attended events.
- ④ In the participatory project, we were asked by the teacher to apply what we had learned by playing and discussing games and/or conducting our research projects, or to find another way to become the person we wanted to become. We were encouraged to participate in any area of society, in any form, and on any scale we were comfortable with. Akiho used the Values card game and researched how people think about self-reflection. Aoi researched about games which can connect to our life and help us to make a healthy routine. Chau joined an English camp and learned many things about teaching and supporting children. Hikari took part in volunteer activities that teach school subjects and play games with children at Yaizu. Juan taught some English words with the Cockroach Poker card game. Kaede designed and made the リサイクル合戦 (“Recycle Battle”) card game to raise awareness about recycling paper waste. Kanna made a game to raise awareness and understanding of sustainable tourism. Kanon made a game about Turkish and Japanese and collected responses on the comparison of Turkish and Japanese attitudes toward games. Karua made and shared a Google Form to research and share what people think is “beautiful.” Maho played some games with exchange students to improve her English. Subaru held some events and researched games’ effects: developing myself, organizing thoughts, and so on.

In Post Materials ⑤ we reflected on our journeys and saw how much we had grown over the past two years.

Everything we experienced and recorded in and out of the seminar activities led to our growth and provided valuable data.

2. Who we were at the beginning of our learning journeys

Our destination will be different, but we cooperated and supported each other to improve ourselves.

Past

●Favorite Subject

- English
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Chinese



●Who we were

- University of Shizuoka students
- Study with a lot of worries and but fight for dreams
- Work at cram school
- Working hard
- Studying hard
- Study language
- part-time job
- In dehaan seminar

●Hometown

- Shizuoka
- Kanagawa
- Gifu
- Tochigi
- Hamamatsu
- Fukui
- Shimada
- Shimizu
- Iwata

Present

●Participation

- Family
- Part-time job
- In deHaan seminar
- SNS(Twitter, Instagram etc...)
- Club
- University of Shizuoka students



●Worries

- For our future
- Job hunting
- Deadline of assignments
- Graduation thesis



●Strengths

- Cooperate
- Friendly
- Improve English skills
- Talk and exchange our opinions
- Support and respect each other
- Working hard
- Deal with a lot of homework.



Future

●Personal Goals

- YouTube Channel
- Translator
- Flight Attendant
- Happy
- Teacher
- Travel planner
- Independent
- Work for people
- Support tourists



●Educational Goals

- TOEIC
- Chinese language test
- Eiken pre-1
- Spanish language test
- Work for cram school
- Make my students happy



Image 6: 2023 students' "who we are and want to be" visualizations

3. Results

3.1 Overview of our journeys

In these past two years, we all found new ways to improve our lives through our experience in the seminar community. These are different from each other; however, it is a fact that we are satisfied with our current situations. In other words, we all have been getting closer to what we want to be through activities inside or outside the seminar.

These quick overviews of what we did and what and who we have become are not meant to be in depth; they only quickly frame our paths of learning and doing things inside and outside our seminar based on PedML. We will go into more detail regarding more specific improvements regarding language and happiness, our literacy work of noticing and understanding and applying knowledge and skills, our specific transformations and some of our achievements in the next sections of the paper. We would like the reader to see the diversity of paths and transformations (some similar and many different) that can happen when a community of learners and a teacher have freedom and support to be reflective, purposeful and passionate about various ideas and projects.

Akiho wanted to travel by herself and finally did to Taiwan. Her experience (studying abroad in Canada) helped her to do so, and it gave her so much energy and confidence.

Aoi had taken some English conversation lessons when she was in 3rd grade, however she sometimes showed her laziness, so she now controls herself and manages what she has to do.

Chau was stuck between what she had to do and what she wanted to do. She is now aware of her mental or physical condition, and it helps her manage her mind.

Hikari has liked cooking, going to concerts and handmade things and she decided to evaluate her levels for these activities.

Juan could get a job she really wanted. Her teaching practice and experiences in the seminar really helped her.

Kaede connected drawing, which is her hobby, with her future job. She sometimes got paid for her illustrations and she made some games and pictures.

Kanna's interest in sustainable lifestyle and traveling led her to make a game to raise awareness of sustainable tourism.

Kanon tried several new things about job hunting, games, and exercises. She found them fun and they finally helped her get the ideal job for her.

Karua posts many contents through SNS, and they literally show how satisfying her life is. In addition, they have broadened her perspective.

Maho originally had interests in English, and her experiences like trips, going abroad, and part-time jobs inspired her to study harder.

Subaru has many hobbies like sports and music, and they connected him with many people who have the same interest. It surely helped him get closer, and made his activity in the seminar go smoothly.

3.2 Visual journeys and 4-panel images

After analyzing our pre and post data (the reflective work that we did before and after all of the PedML work and projects), and connecting this data to our diaries, reflections and project experiences, each student created a “visual journey” (like a pictorial “hero’s journey”) to show, in image or information form, what each of us did through our two years inside and outside the seminar. Kaede’s and Maho’s visual journeys are shown here to illustrate the changes, developments, and “ups and downs” that we experienced inside and outside the game and Pedagogy of Multiliteracies seminar. Kaede and Maho’s visual journeys focus on different themes (e.g., game, knowledge, art, health, participation, learning, motivation) but they each were able to overcome adversity and, in the end, demonstrate transformation and growth.

Kaede’s visual journey (Image 7) shows her ups and downs in terms of health (COVID) and happiness (difficulties with friends and worrying about her future) and her life improvements of English skills, game development, and making her own career path:

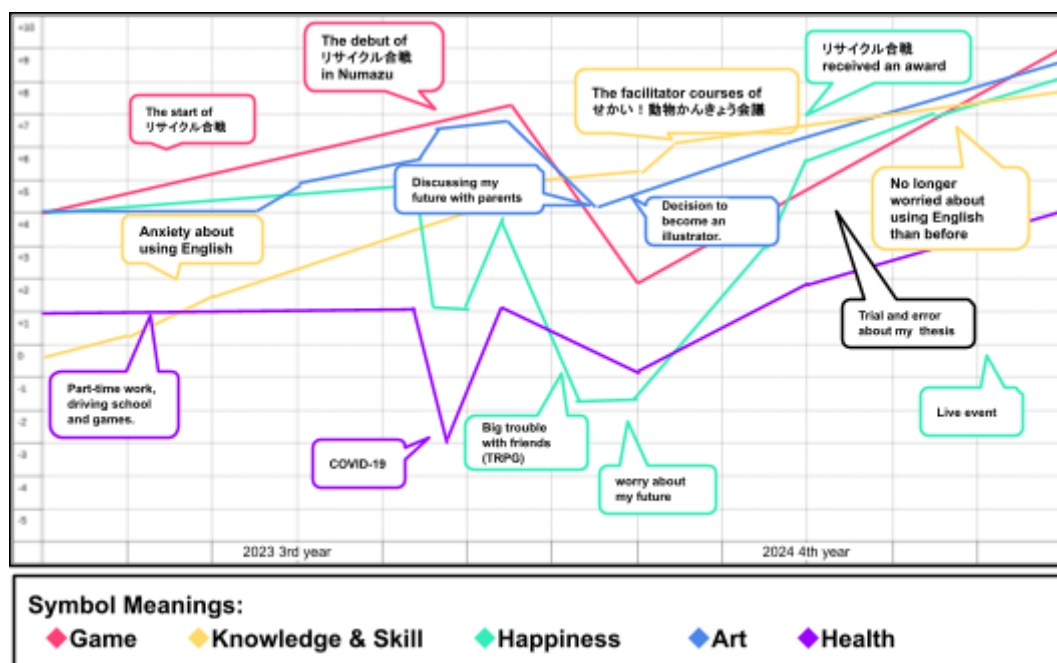


Image 7: Kaede’s visual journey

Maho’s visual journey (Image 8) shows lots of ups and downs, most notably her struggles in terms of finishing homework and also her enjoyment of game-related events:

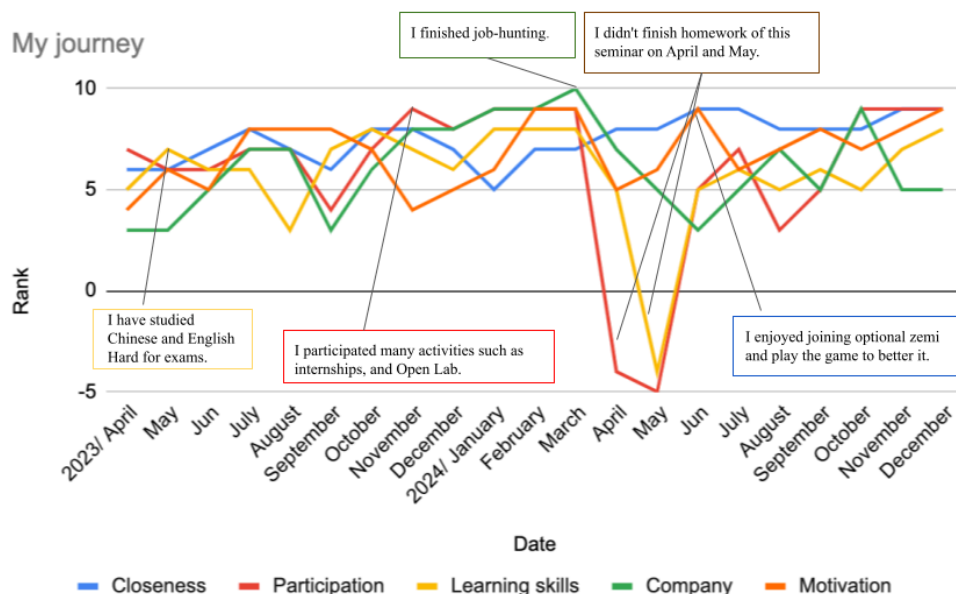


Image 8: Maho's visual journey

Other students' visual journeys are available on [the seminar thesis web page](#).

Each student also created a 4-5 panel set of comics or images or photos (capturing the “most important” moments or reflections) of their experience with the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies-informed seminar. We include Kaede's (Images in 9 are one set) and Maho's (Images in 10 are one set) as representative examples; they show the commonality of worries, growing confidence, games and language use, group and individual projects, and the importance of peer and teacher feedback.

Start of the GT seminar



When I joined the GT seminar, I was filled with worries.
I chose the seminar because of my interest in games and the personalities of the teacher, so I was not confident in my English.
I was concerned about whether I would perform well in this seminar.

Connections with Countless Individuals



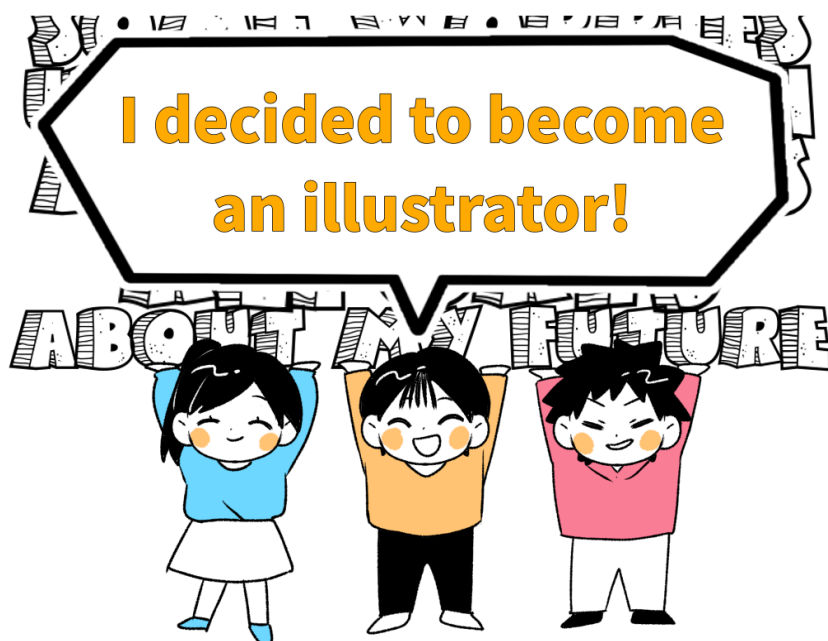
There were many classmates in the GT seminar who shared similar challenges to mine. They all had their own dreams and goals and were working toward them. The same was true outside the seminar. People from all walks of life had their own goals and were working toward them.

The Power of Many Encounters




Working with them was very important to me. We each had our own unique skills, and while we weren't always good at what we did, we were able to help and cooperate with each other in such situations. I also became increasingly dependent on them, and I could feel that my skills were useful to others. They gave me confidence and courage.

The Path to My Dream



After many of collaboration and experience, I decided to become an illustrator. It has always been a dream I have cherished for a long time. Yet, until now, I never had the courage to pursue it. My experiences through this GT seminar and various outside activities have nourished me and helped me take the first step toward my dream. I wholeheartedly support everyone's dreams to come true too! Thank you very much!

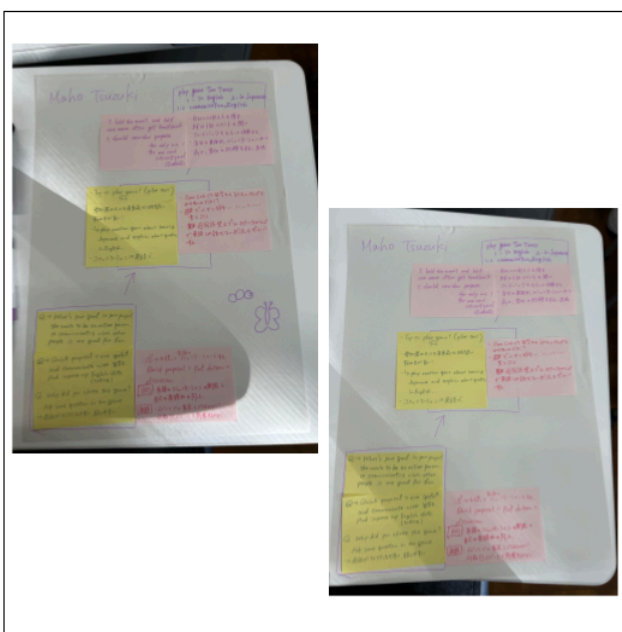
Image 9: Kaede's set of drawings capturing her most important moments in her seminar experiences and growth



Learning many games

I learned and played many games in this zemi. I enjoyed it with friends and teacher. Thought playing games I learned I can use games as educational tools not only enjoyable tools. Especially, when I played "PICTIONARY", I learned many new English words.

- Manse
- OHIO
- ENGLAND
- ESRIMO
- TUGA
- GINGER BREAD MAN
- VOODOO
- NY
- NINJA TURTLES
- JETILL & HYDE
- WEST VIRGINIA
- ARFANDAS
- GOLD FINGER

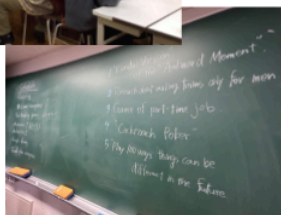


Butterfly discussion

I learned the importance of getting feedback or advice from other people to making something better. Especially, about my project, I talked my plan and got some advice then I used that.



Open Lab



When I held Open Lab as one of the leaders, I learned the importance of planning and managing time.



I made some games in English and tried in Open Lab. I think if we use games we can learn and use English with fun.

It hard for me to explain easily and quickly for children



Project

I played games in English with friends include international students because I'm interested in communication in English to improve my English skills. I could be more confidence in making new connections. I enjoyed communicate in English.



Studying abroad in Canada 🇨🇦

I learned not only English but also the importance of family and the fun of experience a lot of new things. I could also learned some culture in Canada.



Image 10: Maho's set of photos capturing her most important moments in her seminar experiences and growth

3.2 Themes in our journeys

We have worked on a variety of projects and activities over the past two years, each contributing to our individual growth and the development of skills. Despite our differences, we shared common experiences and goals, which we would like to highlight in this section.

The message we want to convey in this section is that the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies' design for ...

- many languages and literacies
- many different lifeworlds
- many different learning activities
- many different reasons for participating in school and society
- many different people and their guidance and support

... created the opportunities for

- many different paths and transformations to take place.

The pedagogy of multiliteracies' design creates the opportunities for many different paths and transformations to take place.

We will describe and illustrate the following six themes of development and transformation and experience in this section. The table below (Table 1) shows the themes in the header and shows which seminar members learned and grew according to those themes. We decided on the names of these themes after discussing our individual journeys with other seminar members. Some of the themes are directly related to the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (e.g., languages, transformation and noticing and understanding and applying) and some of them occurred alongside our PedML work (e.g., happiness and achievements). Not all of us experienced all of the themes. There is diversity in how each of us changed. However, it's important to note that all of us noticed, understood, and applied things in the seminar.

Table 1: Themes of development and transformation for each seminar member

	Improvement	Languages	Happiness	Noticing, Understanding, Applying	Transformation	Achievements
Akiho	✓			✓	✓	✓
Aoi	✓			✓	✓	✓
Chau	✓			✓	✓	✓
Hikari		✓		✓	✓	
Juan		✓		✓		✓
Kaede			✓	✓	✓	✓
Kanna			✓	✓	✓	✓
Kanon				✓		
Karua			✓	✓	✓	✓
Maho				✓	✓	✓
Subaru		✓		✓	✓	✓

👤 A quick note to the reader about the Tables in this section:
 Students took various notes and made various comparisons about their learning and development in their diaries and thesis work. There are various formats of Tables in this section. Please “go with the flow” 🌊-- as we did with our learning and research. 🍀

Many of us improved during the seminar, but each student improved in different ways.

Theme 1: Improvement

Before the seminar, Chau felt stressed and stuck between what she wanted to do and what she had to do, struggling to take care of herself. Akiho, on the other hand, lacked confidence and was unsure about her future and job hunting (see Table 2). Aoi struggled with overcoming laziness and sticking to decisions, while also wanting to improve her English.

Table 2: Akiho’s “what / how / why themes” notes in her “Pre seminar” data in her thesis.

Question	Your self-rating 1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree	Why did you give that answer?
I know how to participate in many aspects of life.	2	I don’t think so. I don’t know who I should ask about my future, job huntings, and new activities.
I want to change something about myself.	6	I have something I want to change. For example, sometimes I give up to start new challenges because of lack of courage. Also, I want to change my weak will.

Over the course of two years, Chau became happier, healthier, and more confident by playing “How Deep Will You Go,” working on self-improvement, and joining the English camp (see Table 3). Akiho grew more confident, improved her English, and became ready to create happiness for herself and others through studying abroad, completing job hunting, and embracing new experiences like solo travel and learning Korean. Aoi, through studying abroad in the Philippines, created a healthy routine, improved her time management, and became more self-directed, leading to a healthier and more organized lifestyle.

Table 3: Chau’s “Improving Life” notes in her “Tracing of Development” work in her thesis.

3	English camp	Through my experience at the English camp, I’ve found a strong sense of purpose and usefulness. Being able to use my skills and knowledge to make a meaningful contribution to the community has been incredibly fulfilling. Teaching, translating, and engaging with the children not only allows me to give back, but it also motivates me to keep improving myself, knowing that every effort I make can have a positive impact.	My friends and teachers have noticed a change in me lately, often telling me that I seem happier and healthier.
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I'm satisfied with my life now.
I've become more conscious of my physical and mental health. I've started eating healthier by cutting down on sweets and junk food. I also make sure to set aside time to relax and unwind, which helps me manage stress better.

Theme 2: Languages

We all are not native English speakers. Some of us might have been confident with our language skills. We mainly talk and do our projects in English, and these projects and activities are precious opportunities to use it. We developed our English skills inside or outside the seminar. To Hikari, it was difficult for her to understand the rules of the games not written in Japanese, however it made her more motivated to study English (see Table 4). Juan decided to be an English teacher and she had some mock classes for training. She wanted to teach English well, so she taught some words by using the game called Cockroach Poker for students. She also learned the good aspects of it. Lastly, Subaru originally entered the University of Shizuoka to study English and wanted to have a lot of opportunities to use it. His passion and interest has been strong in these 2 years. We wrote in the introduction that we play and discuss games in English, and do worksheets and have discussions in English. Hikari and Juan used these activities to prompt further language practice and use in subsequent project work.

Table 4: Hikari's "English" notes in her "Tracing of Development" work in her thesis.

Most of the games were made in other countries, so I sometimes felt it was difficult to understand how to play them. However, I really enjoyed them. Not only games but also I really enjoyed communication during the games. Sometimes we spoke English or used English during the games. I sometimes got motivation to study English harder because it was difficult for me to understand completely how to play English games, and have fun like other students.

There were many students in our groups who wanted to improve their language skills, especially English skills. In the Pre materials data (our reflections of ourselves before we started the seminar), we shared that we didn't have many opportunities to speak English. We wanted to speak English, so we liked studying English and entered this university. In these two years, we had some opportunities to speak English, such as in the seminar and at our part time jobs. Sometimes we got frustrated because we couldn't speak English well. These increased our motivation to study English. So we studied English by using games, reading books, and watching videos. In the Post materials (our reflections of ourselves after we finished the PedML parts of the seminar), we shared that we felt that we were improving our English skills and confidence because we used English and made some connections in English. We want to travel abroad, read books in English, and use English in our jobs, then speak English by ourselves.

Theme 3: Happiness

In these two years, we faced many things, people, and events. They made us happy and satisfied with our lives. In other words, we are now able to find happiness in things which we could not find before. Kanna originally thanked their family and things around her; however, she experienced many things (studying abroad, job hunting, and communication with a restaurant owner), and they made her realize what she wanted to do in her future, which is deeply connected to her being happy (see Table 5). Moreover, Karua shares how she feels happiness by using SNS like Instagram, Tik Tok, and X. She experienced many part-time jobs, interactions with her friends, and they all have broadened her perspective (see Table 6). Just like them, Kaede asked herself what happiness is for her. We all think doing something in "KISSY" (keep it super simple) is important for our activities, and this way of thinking made her happier. She could feel no stress and no pressure, and it maximized her potential. As a result, she won an award with the game "Recycle Battle" she made (see Table 7).

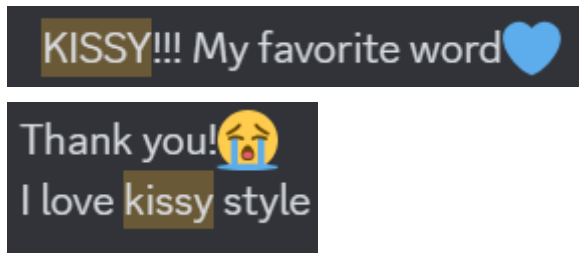
Table 5: Kanna's "why why how" notes in her "Comparison of pre and post data" in her thesis

<p>What did I write on my pre materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to. 	<p>What did I write on my post materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to.
<p>[identity] I understand my identity and role in society. 2: I don't understand the role I can play in society.</p> <p>[way of thinking] I feel free and liberated. 2: I can't take a day off from my part-time job as I want to. Sometimes I must suddenly go to work part-time because of the lack of people. So I can't feel free.</p> <p>[goal] I have a clear goal in mind for my life. 2: I don't have much time to consider my future goal.</p>	<p>[identity] I understand my identity and role in society. 5: I could understand who I am through the seminar.</p> <p>[way of thinking] I feel free and liberated. 5: I have many things to do, so sometimes I feel like I want to escape from real life, but I think I can say I'm liberated because I can choose what I will do in a day by myself. This is because I'm a university student.</p> <p>[goal] I have a clear goal in mind for my life. 4: I have a goal that I want to accomplish in my career, but I cannot say it is a CLEAR goal because I haven't started to work.</p>

Table 6: Kanna's "Skill Evaluations" in her "Comparison of post data" in her thesis

Life satisfaction	A positive attitude about your own life Being satisfied about yourself, your relationships and what you have done	6	I sometimes had a negative attitude about my life before job hunting because I wasn't not sure what I want to do in the future, but after job hunting, I found what I want to accomplish, so now I have a positive attitude about it.
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Table 7: Kaede's "Knowledge and Skill" notes in her "Tracing of Development" work in her thesis

I love KISSY	<p>It is easier to become friends when common likes are found.</p> <p>It is really important to feel secure and KISSY that it doesn't have to be English and that it is okay to make mistakes.</p>	
<p>Thank you deHaan sensei</p> <p>Thank you Yuka</p> <p>Thank you everyone</p> <p>AND Thank you KISSY</p>	<p>I have had the opportunity to participate in many activities. deHaan sensei, Yuka and many people helped me.</p> <p>Everyone in the seminar helps me. And your word "KISSY."</p>	




	<p>At first I was worried that I would be able to join the group because I am not good at English and I only joined simply because I like games.</p> <p>However, thanks to the atmosphere and fun of the seminar, I am much more relaxed and active than before.</p> <p>I really love 'KISSY.'</p> <p>The importance of keeping it simple and the lightness of it helps me to keep going.</p>	
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Individuals overcame challenges, grew through self-improvement , and became more confident, healthier, and organized by embracing new experiences and developing skills.

Theme 4: Noticing, Understanding, Applying

Everyone emphasized taking action. Aoi reflected on her proactive learning abroad, while Kanon focused on how small steps lead to big achievements. Chau (see Table 8) and Hikari (see Table 12) highlighted games as tools for connection, showing how shared efforts fostered growth through diverse methods. Akiho acquired new skills and sought to apply them in her career (see Tables 9, 10, 11). Kanna (see Table 13) expanded connections through diverse languages, and Maho (see Table 14) utilized tools for learning. The group’s approaches to noticing, understanding, and applying were shaped by individual values, backgrounds, and interests—some focused on structured methods, while others emphasized creativity or community engagement. Subaru focused on self-reflection and building connections, while Karua promoted Shizuoka’s culture. Aoi applied what she learned to structured projects, while Kaede concentrated on creative design literacy and English literacy (see Table 15). Juan embraced new ideas, whereas Chau achieved success in language exams. Akiho pursued challenges based on her interests.

Table 8: Chau’s “Teaching skill” notes in her “Tracing of Development” work in her thesis.

<p>I taught the kids at the English camp how to play Cockroach poker and AGO.</p>	<p>Before going to the camp, I prepared a vocabulary list and the rules for the games in both English and Japanese. This helped me explain the games fluently in both languages.</p>	 <p>Prepare for the camp</p> <p>1. Cockroach Poker</p> <p>VOCABULARY</p> <div>  <p>Toad - カエル</p> </div> <div>  <p>Fly - はえ</p> </div>
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		<p>Stinky bug - かめひし Spider - くも</p> <div><div><p>Bat - こうもり</p></div><div><p>Scorpion - さそり</p></div><div><p>Cockroach - ごきぶり</p></div><div><p>Rat - <u>ねずみ</u></p></div></div> <p>RULE</p> <p>The goal of the game is not to collect cards. Instead, the game ends when one player has four cards of the same type in front of them or when one player cannot pass a card and loses.</p> <p>How to Play</p> <p>Starting the Game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One player starts by choosing a card from their hand.• The player places the card face down on the table and slides it to another player, saying what type of creature it is. For example, "This is a cockroach."• The player can either tell the truth or lie about the creature on the card. <p>Receiving the Card:</p> <p>ルール説明</p> <p>ゲームの始め方：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• あるプレイヤーが1枚のカードを選びます。• そのカードを裏向きにしてテーブルに置き、他のプレイヤーに向けて、「これはゴキブリです」などと言いながらカードを渡します。• プレイヤーはカードの種類について真実を言っても嘘をついても構いません。 <p>カードを受け取った場合：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• カードを見て、最初のプレイヤーが真実を言っているか嘘をついているかを言います。• 正解した場合、最初のプレイヤーがそのカードを受け取り、表向きにして自分の前に置きます。• 間違えた場合、自分がそのカードを受け取り、表向きにして自分の前に置きます。 <p>ゲームの進行：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• プレイヤーは交代でカードを渡し、推測を続けます。• プレイヤーは同じ種類のカードを4枚集めないようにします。 <p>ゲームの終了：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• あるプレイヤーの前に同じ種類のカードが4枚集まったら、そのプレイヤーの負けです。
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Table 9: Akiho’s “about me” notes in her “Comparison of pre and post” data in her thesis.

What did I write on my pre materials? <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Copy important answers.● Tally scores● Summarize if you need to.	What did I write on my post materials? <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Copy important answers.● Tally scores● Summarize if you need to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I want to gain confidence in myself.● I care for my friends and family and want to help them when they face challenges.● I reflect on both personal and social issues.● My social network is currently limited, mostly involving personal matters.● I work to earn money and repay my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I want to gain confidence in myself and continue growing.● I hope to work globally and take pride in my contributions.● I have a broad network between myself and society, especially within school.● In my career, I want to have subordinates and

<p>and future family. I am also interested in global issues such as racial and gender inequality, environmental problems, and cultural differences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I aspire to be a family maker and a truth teller. 	<p>contribute to the success of the team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most important goal for me in life is to be happy. • I aspire to be a philosopher, a dreamer, and a linguist.
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Table 10: Akiho’s “underlying lifeworld attributes” notes in her “Comparison of pre and post” data in her thesis.

<p>What did I write on my pre materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to. 	<p>What did I write on my post materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most important experiences are the university entrance examinations and club activities. • My interests are gender, culture, and happiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most important experiences are studying abroad and zemi projects. • My interests are people and happiness. • I am focused on growing myself. • 65% stability and 35% stimulation.

Table 11: Akiho’s reflection of her “most important experiences inside/outside the seminar” in her thesis.


	<div data-bbox="810 907 1289 1478">  </div> <p>Research about self-understanding at Open Campus</p> <p>At the open campus, I researched self analysis for high school students. It was a big challenge for me, because I'm not good at talking in front of people even for a few minutes. But I could try it. It connected to my self confidence.</p>
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Table 12: Hikari's thesis reflections on "most important experiences" in the seminar


<p>As my participatory project, I started volunteering at Yaizu. I contacted and started anyway as my chance.</p>  <p>I played games and taught studying there.</p>	<p>I learned the importance and enjoyment of participation. I also learned that it is important to reflect on my activities to continue or to start new things.</p>
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Table 13: Kanna's "Skill Evaluations" in her "Comparison of post data" in her thesis

<p>What did I write on my pre materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to. 	<p>What did I write on my post materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to.
<p>I'm interested in the connection between various people.</p>	<p>My interests are languages / Japanese culture / foreign cultures / traveling / communication / sustainable lifestyle</p>
<p>Was there a change between my pre and post? Identify/describe the change.</p>	<p>Why do I think this change happened? A specific event? An activity? A person? Something you did? Something else?</p>
<p>My interest has expanded for 2 years through many experiences.</p>	<p>I think the main reason is my experience of studying abroad. I expanded my perspective there.</p>

Table 14: Maho's "Learning skills" notes in her "Tracing of Development" work in her thesis

<p>I learned it's important to tell my opinion to understand from other people. I learned sometimes talking honestly and clearly about my opinion is good for making good relationships from studying abroad in Canada. I want to learn in the way which I think is good. I learned a lot of new games. If I didn't join this zemi, I wouldn't know these games and play some games. Playing games online for so long makes our eyes and brain tired, but we can learn other languages, English words and communicate through many games. I learned we can enjoy games with everyone and chose games to suit people who play them. I often learn games from my teacher or friends. I learned the differences of English pronunciation between each country in my project. I learned the importance of asking someone and trying first. I learned about culture and lifestyles in Canada and while standing Chinese, I learned Chinese culture from the teacher. I learned which way is the best to study English for me and do it every day. When I learn or memorize new things, I often don't take the memo soon, only hearing but after that I take the memo sooner.</p>
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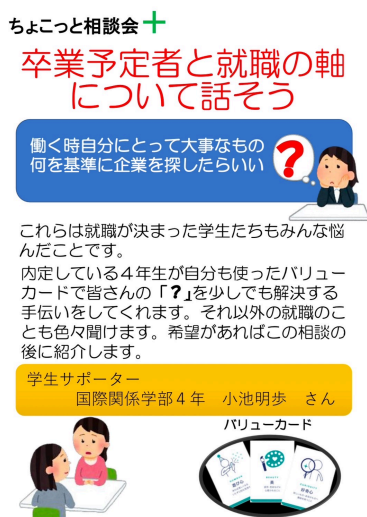
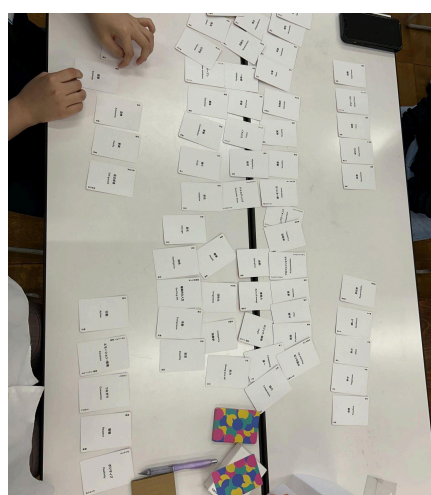
Table 15: Kaede's "noticing, understanding, applying" work in her thesis

Knowledge & Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am no longer afraid of speaking and using English than before. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The atmosphere of the seminar and deHaan sensei friendliness in speaking English made me feel less uncomfortable using English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if it's something I'm not good at, I'll try it if I get the chance. • KISSY is important, so don't be overly depressed if I fail.
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My creative skills have been helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have more creative skills than I think I do. • I think I should be more confident in my designs as well as my paintings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have decided to make my current job my future job. I want to live a creative life.

Theme 5: Transformation

The entire group experienced an increase in confidence. Akiho accelerated her growth through an active approach (see Tables 16 and 17). Hikari learned the importance of starting something on her own (see Table 18), and Aoi became more active and positive. Chau overcame shyness, while Kaede (Table 19) found creative fulfillment, mirroring their shared trajectory of personal and professional growth. Kanna deepened intercultural exchanges through language apps (Table 20), and Maho worked on improving her English skills (Table 21). Personal growth was shaped by varying influences—some through reflection, others through challenges, creative expression, or overcoming fears. Karua's transformation was centered on leadership and societal influence, while Subaru deeply reflected on herself. Kaede pursued creative expression (see Table 19), while Aoi improved communication skills through her overseas experiences. Akiho actively absorbed new knowledge and adapted to change.

Table 16: Akiho's reflection of her "most important experiences inside/outside the seminar" in her thesis.

 <p>ちよこつと相談会+</p> <p>卒業予定者と就職の軸 について話そう</p> <p>働く時自分にとって大事なものを 何を基準に企業を探したい？</p> <p>これらは就職が決まった学生たちもみんな悩 んだことです。 内定している4年生が自分も使ったバリュー カードで皆さんの「？」を少しでも解決する 手伝いをしてくれます。それ以外の就職のこ とも色々聞けます。希望があればこの相談の 後に紹介します。</p> <p>学生サポーター 国際関係学部4年 小池明歩さん</p> <p>バリューカード</p> <p>The brochure of ちよこつと相談会. This is an advertisement of the project with the career center. Mr. Kurebayashi cooperated with me and helped me to organize this event.</p>	 <p>Playing Values card with colleagues. I played Values card. The game is an important element in my zemi activity. I analyze myself through this game many times.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I joined an open lab at a children's center (jidoukan), and our event was a success. It gave me confidence and satisfaction. • My solo trip to Taiwan marked my first time visiting the country. Despite not speaking the local language, I managed well and felt a sense of accomplishment. A solo trip abroad was one of my 2024 goals, and achieving it felt rewarding. • Prof. deHaan introduced me to Ms. Fujii, with whom I discussed my project and received valuable feedback. This feedback bolstered my confidence and contributed to my growth.
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Table 17: Akiho's "Job Hunting" notes in her "Tracing of Development" work in her thesis.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I worked at a Japanese restaurant and sightseeing place in Canada. • I watched 会社説明会online in Canada. • I felt anxious because I was not in Japan. So, compared to students participating in face-to-face job-hunting events in Japan, I am lagging behind. • I feel I'm not clear what exactly I want to do in the future. There are too many kinds of jobs and working styles in the world. I wrote a personal history about my life and thought about myself a lot. 	 <p>Training before starting work</p> <p>This is a picture of my previous workplace in Canada. I had always dreamed of working abroad, so this was a good opportunity to experience what it is like to work abroad.</p>
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Table 18: Hikari's "Participation" notes in her "Tracing of Development" section in her thesis

Reflection for my project	<p>I continued volunteer activities for 3 months. Actually, at first, I wanted to do something for people. However, I learned that I was a volunteer, but to continue volunteer activities, I was really supported by other people.</p> <p>It was challenging for me to start this activity because I enter new surroundings and meet new people. However, people welcomed me, and talked to me a lot. Children talked to me about various things, and played games together.</p> <p>My theme of the project might be ambiguous because I didn't make anything like games and events. However, "continuing things" is my skill, and I became more like myself than before I started it.</p>	<p>I'm interested in supporting people, but it was challenging for me to do in practice. So, this activity, like entering new surroundings and doing things for other people, was challenging for me. I taught homework and games to children, but I was also supported by many people. For example, they welcomed me graciously, and connected to other people and children. Adult volunteers always gave me a drive to the facility and taught me many things. I was encouraged by volunteer students. Prof. deHaan always considered me, and lent some games to me. Of course I really enjoyed being with children. I think starting this activity was a big change for me as a passive person. In addition, I could understand how people help each other, and I feel happy when I do for people. I also knew that not only children but also I learned through this volunteer activity.</p> <p>In terms of children, I think the more I went to Yaizu, they gradually became less embarrassed when I talked to them. I was happy to hear that children said "Sensei come here again!" to me. Some children expected me to bring games. We sometimes talked about the future and school life. I'm happy if I can support them as a person who is close in age to them.</p>
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Table 19: Kaede's "Job and Plans" notes in her "Comparison of pre and post data" in her thesis

<p>What did I write on my pre materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to. 	<p>What did I write on my post materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy important answers. • Tally scores • Summarize if you need to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I want to find out what I want to do while expanding my future choices. - I would like to get a job drawing pictures. I would like to play games and chat with my friends regularly, like I do now. - I would also like to pay more attention to my health, as my health awareness is not high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I don't know if I have learnt everything, but I have no major regrets about my university life. - I will work as a freelance illustrator. - I want to be confident in myself and in my drawings.
<p>Was there a change between my pre and post? Identify/describe the change.</p>	<p>Why do I think this change happened? A specific event? An activity? A person? Something you did? Something else?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am clear about my future vision. - I have made up my mind to work as an illustrator. - My worries have changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were words of encouragement from various people. This helped me to realise that my pictures were in demand and to make the decision to make them my future work. - I started to take my creative work more seriously as a job.

Table 20: Kanna's "noticing, understanding, applying" notes in her analysis section of her thesis

	What I noticed	What I understood	What I applied
language	I noticed there are many tools to study languages on the internet.	If I don't go abroad, there are many chances to improve my language skill. (In addition, having international friends is also a good way to improve my language skills.)	I used Hellotalk and Tandem to improve my French skill. I could learn French from native speakers while teaching Japanese. This is also practice to teach Japanese.

Table 21: Maho's "noticing, understanding, applying" notes in her analysis section of her thesis

	What I noticed	What I understood	What I applied
English	First, I want to speak English to speak with many people. But I have a clear goal of using work at the company from next year.	I understood the way of studying English which suits me. I study English by watching Youtube and making an impression of speaking. I feel I can learn native English.	My TOEIC score increased 205 points. I use English on my trip, school, part-time job, etc.

Theme 6: Achievements

Many of us achieved our goals by contributing to society. Subaru focused on long-term objectives, while Kaede pursued her creative career. Chau succeeded in language exams (Table 22), and Karua showcased generational power, reflecting shared growth through diverse pathways. Kaede’s success in illustration (Table 23) contrasted with Karua’s societal contributions. Akiho applied new skills in projects, and Kanna connected with diverse people through language (Table 24). Each member had different focal points for success—some through academic achievements, while others emphasized creative or societal contributions. Chau’s achievement included passing language exams, while Kanon expanded her network. Aoi and Maho (Table 25) balanced confidence-building with community engagement, while Akiho applied knowledge practically. Juan shaped ideas and contributed new perspectives.

Table 22: Chau’s “Language Skill” notes in her “Summary of Changes” work in her thesis.

I got TOEIC 845. I can speak fluently. I can communicate in English with no difficulty. I passed the N1. I’m able to teach English to Japanese kids. I learned a lot about my own skills, especially in being creative, flexible, and a better communicator.

Table 23: Kaede’s “Comparison of pre and post data” in her thesis

Congratulations リサイクル合戦	The most happiest is THE GREAT NEWS about リサイクル合戦!!! Yuka and I talked about and tested and improved it many times. So I’m very happy that our game is given an award.	 Award
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Table 24: Kanna’s “Experiences outside the seminar” notes in her “tracing of development” work in her thesis


Studying abroad	I studied in Lille (France) for 9 months. This experience is meaningful in my life. It made me much stronger! I could make connections in the world.	
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Table 25: Maho’s notes about “transformation” and “reaching goals” in her analysis section of her thesis

2. Participation	I’m not active. I’m scared to do new things	I joined optional zemi on June 18th. I enjoy making something better.	I joined Open Lab Jidokan on July 20th. I did my best to explain the rules of games easily for children.	I went to vote. I can connect new people in the school, the part-time job, the company, and so on.
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I think I could reach my goals. My goals are being an active person and being confident. Both inside and outside the seminar, I participated in a lot of activities. In the seminar, I held and joined Open Lab and I made some new Games. Outside of the seminar, I have studied abroad and finished job-hunting with satisfaction. From these experiences, I feel confident because I think I can do anything if I try it.

We gained confidence, overcame challenges, and succeeded in academics, creativity, or social contributions through the learning process.

4. Discussion

Our seminar was designed to help us identify our own weaknesses and areas in which we wanted to grow. It's not totally unsurprising that, with peer and teacher support, and two years of work, we were able to plan and conduct projects and develop our skills in a variety of ways.

But we were not just focused on ourselves in the seminar. We knew that we are part of society, and that the things that we did connected to trends and problems in school and society. We explored various issues throughout the seminar through readings and discussions, in order to try to connect our individual projects to problems that we were aware of.

We did not only play and discuss games. Each of us came from different backgrounds and were interested in different ideas, so each collected information on issues that influence work and education, read graduation theses that related to their interests, and shared concerns about social trends.

Through our research on social problems, we read about topics such as diversity, education, and technology. We also read previous students' graduation theses – these inspired us and also gave us ideas for our own projects. What we learned helped us reflect on our own experiences and activities in and outside the seminar. We reconfirmed the importance of inclusivity, the role of technology in learning, and the need for personalized education, and we explored these topics more in our various projects in the seminar.

We want to stress that although games helped us experience and investigate language, concepts and ideas, we played games as a stepping stone to exploring “bigger” things in society (with the teacher's help). The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies helped us connect games to subsequent discussions, worksheets, research projects and participatory projects. The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies kept us (both students and the teacher) on our individual or collective learning paths. As we went on our journeys in the seminar, we explored social problems from multiple perspectives, highlighting the importance of addressing these issues to build a better society. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that values diversity, balances technology with human connections, and promotes inclusivity in education and work. By adopting global best practices and cultural shifts, societies can better prepare for the challenges of the future.

In the following sections, we share our findings regarding various challenges and opportunities in order to situate and connect the outcomes of our journeys to “bigger” or “deeper” social issues (again, to reinforce that games and pedagogy helped us notice and explore these in our seminar work) and then to the ideas of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies that we think helped us learn so many things and accomplish what we did.

We want to encourage other teachers to consider the pedagogy and projects that we explored in our seminar work. We expected that teachers might want to ask us questions, so we anticipated these, with Professor deHaan's help, and answered a variety of questions. In the Appendix, we answer questions related to pedagogy, games, participation focus, skills, goals and transformation.

4.1 Connecting our journeys to problems in school and society

Local and Global Societies and Challenges

Kanna and Kanon researched work-life balance and society. Japan's culture of long working hours and "presenteeism" negatively impacts physical and mental health, leading to a poor work-life balance. Reforming these practices is necessary to promote well-being. Additionally, Hikari and Maho mentioned that as demographics shift, strengthening family and community bonds is key to maintaining social cohesion. Please refer to the following sources (Daly et al., 2023; Tadenuma, 2023; Yang, Zhu, & Xie, 2021).

Karua, Juan, Aoi, and Akiho researched SDGs. Japan's progress toward the SDGs reflects its strengths in technology and climate action. On the other hand, it highlights challenges such as gender equality. Encouraging leadership and systemic reforms is key to achieving balanced progress. Subaru focused on local challenges. Locally, fostering community engagement and addressing biases can strengthen social ties and promote growth. Please refer to the following sources (JAPAN Educational Travel, 2023; Nocos, 2023.)

Diversity and Inclusivity in Education

All 11 of us mentioned diversity in our theses. Diversity fosters innovation, acceptance, and collaboration. It enhances well-being and encourages mutual respect by helping individuals understand and value differences. In education, diversity plays a critical role in shaping inclusive values. However, Japan faces challenges in promoting inclusivity, particularly in schools, where an emphasis on academic performance and segregated systems hinders progress. Adopting global practices and increasing awareness are vital to creating a more inclusive society. Please refer to the following sources (Forgeard, 2023; Nakazawa, 2023; O'Boyle, 2020; Sakamoto, 2022).

Hikari, Kaede, Juan, Maho and Subaru all emphasize that the acceptance of diversity leads to mutual understanding and well-being. Hikari advocates for inclusive education for students with linguistic and cultural barriers based on her experience of volunteering with immigrant children in Yaizu, while Kaede highlights respecting different opinions in collaborative settings in her experience of joining the event called せかい！動物かんきょう会議 ("Animal Conference on the Environment"). Juan, Maho and Subaru also mention that diversity is important to society and individuals, and that it was important to understand and accept the diversity through their experiences in the seminar over 2 years.

Technology in Education: Potential and Limitations

All of us focused on the role of education. Education is central to the development of society, providing students with life skills and fostering critical thinking. Methods such as games, diagrams, and personalized learning approaches enhance motivation and engagement. However, Japan's rigid educational system often limits creativity and self-expression, contributing to stress and low self-esteem among students. Addressing these issues requires a cultural shift that values individuality. Please refer to the following sources (Baskan et al., 2012; Carstens et al., 2021; Daly et al, 2023; Fernando, 2012).

Several of us, including Aoi, Kaede, and Karua, found inspiration in theses that explored how games can be an effective learning tool. For example, Nakamura (2023) showed how games go beyond entertainment to promote learning. Akiho and Chau admired how Harada-san (2022) and Okamoto-san (2022) used games and self-reflection to enhance their personal growth, language skills, and planning skills. The idea of keeping a diary for self-analysis was particularly influential. Juan and Karua reviewed theses that examined how digital tools like language learning apps could support learners. Subaru and Kanon were also interested in theses that evaluated the effectiveness of different educational strategies, such as Goto-san's study (2020) on ice-breaking activities in classrooms. Many of us noticed the importance of balancing technology with human interaction, ensuring that tools support rather than replace teachers.

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Aoi, Chau, and Karua discuss how technology can enhance interactive and personalized learning experiences. They used technology such as Pokemon Sleep, Trello, Google translate, Duolingo, Google documents and so on. Akiho and Kanna mention the effective way to use AI such as ChatGPT taught by Mr. Onozawa (a past member of the Game Lab and a person who stays in touch with Prof. deHaan). However, we all agree that technology cannot fully replace human interaction. Juan in particular emphasizes the essential role of teachers in providing emotional support and fostering collaboration based on her experience in teaching practice.

Gamification and Motivation in Learning

Akiho, Aoi, Chau, Hikari, Juan, Kaede, Kanna, Kanon, Karua, Maho mentioned technology in education. Technology enhances learning but cannot replace teachers, who provide emotional and social support. A balanced approach combining technology with human interaction is essential for effective education. Moreover, as technology evolves, fostering adaptability and digital literacy becomes essential to ensure equitable access and minimize the potential for social divides. Please refer to the following sources (Fernando, 2012; Galaczi, 2018; Trucano, M. 2015.)

Several of us were interested in theses that focused on self-discovery and career development. Maho was influenced by Suzuki-san (2023) and Miura-san's (2024) theses, which explored overcoming personal challenges like procrastination and goal-setting. Hikari and Kanna found motivation in Yoshida-san (2021) and Furusawa-san's (2021) theses, which emphasized learning from experiences and building cross-cultural understanding.

Hikari, Kanna, and Maho mentioned motivation and learning approaches. Motivation plays a critical role in learning. Strategies such as rewards and punishments can be effective but should be balanced with intrinsic motivation and critical thinking to sustain long-term engagement. Incorporating diverse learning methods tailored to individual needs can help students thrive academically and personally. Please refer to the following sources (EIKOH INC, 2024; Maropola, 2023).

Kaede, Kanna and Aoi mention that games are effective educational tools. They discuss how games can engage learners, develop critical thinking, and make learning more enjoyable based on their project in the seminar. Furthermore, Kanon says that social interaction (with teachers and friends) when playing games is crucial in engaging, guiding and supporting students through her past experience.

Our readings, reflections and projects emphasize the importance of embracing diversity, integrating technology effectively, and fostering flexible learning environments. We think that teachers, students and other leaders should focus on practical solutions to improve inclusiveness, balance technology and human interaction, and increase motivation in education.

Our research on social problems helped us reflect on our own experiences and activities in and outside the seminar.

4.2 Connecting our journeys to Pedagogy of Multiliteracies ideas

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies emphasizes understanding and creating meaning in diverse contexts through multimodal communication. It involves four steps: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying/participating. Each step encourages independent, collaborative, critical, and creative thinking. This approach places students at the center of learning while teachers act as guides, offering support within the frames offered by the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies method. The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies integrate diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives with multimodal tools like visuals, audio, and gestures to deepen engagement and understanding.

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In our seminar, students explored the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies by engaging in projects, games, and collaborative activities. Aoi, Juan, Akiho, Karua, and Maho learned to use games as tools for education, communication, and critical thinking. Kaede, Kannna, and Kanon implemented activities like designing games. Aoi and Hikari reflecting with tools like Entakun, and Chau volunteering helped students improve skills such as language proficiency, communication, and teamwork. Through iterative feedback and analysis, students enhanced their projects and applied Pedagogy of Multiliteracies principles to real-life contexts.

This approach to teaching and learning fosters personal growth by enabling learners to connect their interests to broader societal issues. It highlights the importance of reflection, collaboration, and adaptability in achieving goals. By integrating diverse media, cultures, and languages, we developed deeper understanding and skills for effective communication and problem-solving, preparing us for future challenges and opportunities.

There were several similarities in our reflections and critiques: reflective learning, practical application and the value of peer and teacher feedback.

Reflective Learning

We all emphasized the importance of reflection as a key learning outcome. We consistently mentioned how critiques have helped us reflect on our own academic processes and future thesis work. A common theme across our notes is learning through the experiences of others—whether it's improving communication, adapting strategies, or incorporating feedback into our work.

Practical Application

We discussed how we applied insights from these to our own projects, whether it was designing educational games, improving communication strategies, or planning future research. This demonstrates how we connected theoretical ideas to real-world applications, showing the practical relevance of our critique experiences.

Value of Peer and Teacher Feedback

We clearly valued peer collaboration and feedback from instructors. Many of us note that discussing theses with others deepened our understanding, provided new perspectives, and helped clarify and refine our critiques. There were also differences in our ideas. First is the Level of Detail in Analysis. The depth of critique varies among us. For example, Juan and Subaru focus on technical aspects like clarity and structure, while Kanon and Maho concentrate on emotional and reflective elements, such as confidence-building and overcoming frustration. Second is the Focus on Different Frameworks. We use different academic frameworks in our critiques. Akiho and Hikari reference the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, while Kaede and Kanna explore game-based learning and its impact on student motivation. Third is the Use of Personal Stories. Many of us incorporate personal stories into our critiques, making our reflections more relatable. For instance, Kanon shares moments of frustration during language learning, while Juan discusses her personal journey in improving English and teaching through games.

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies emphasizes understanding and creating meaning in diverse contexts through multimodal communication.

Conclusion

Our journeys in this seminar showed us that growth happens in many different ways—through games, projects, and reflections, but also through the support of peers and teachers. By noticing, understanding, and applying what we experienced, each of us transformed in unique but connected ways. We hope our stories encourage other students and teachers to see learning not just as study, but as a journey of discovery, creativity, and community.

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Appendix: Student Q and A (for teachers)

To provide more information for teachers interested in the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies or various projects or activities, Prof. deHaan asked the students a variety of questions which they collectively answered.

Question 1: Which element was the most important for your development inside and outside the Seminar?

The most important aspect was participation in various activities like seminars, internships, events, proactive engagement and exposure to diverse perspectives and feedback. These experiences enhanced not only our skills but also our ability to reflect and learn from both successes and failures.

Question 2: Was it necessary for you to play games in the Seminar? Are games good for learning? Did you learn anything from games in the Seminar?

We highlighted the importance of games in the seminar for fostering communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Beyond entertainment, games served as valuable learning tools, enhancing language skills and understanding complex topics like social issues and culture (for example difficult social situations from “Awkward Moment” and why different people feel awkward in different cases, consumerism and happiness in “Lives of Ordinary People” and “Pursuit of Happiness”, and teamwork and public health in “Pandemic”),

Question 3: Is it necessary to participate in school or society while a student?

We believe participating while a student is key to personal development, offering students a chance to explore and take risks without adult pressures. These opportunities are essential for building skills and gaining valuable experience.

Question 4: What main skills did you use in the seminar? What knowledge did you gain in the seminar?

The seminar helped develop key skills like creativity, communication, and collaboration. We engaged in discussions, improved problem-solving, time management, and leadership. Many of us also highlighted how feedback refined our ideas and provided valuable perspectives. These skills directly contributed to success outside the seminar, especially in personal growth, job searches, and interactions with diverse groups.

Question 5: Did you reach your goals in the seminar?

We achieved our goals in the seminar. We improved language skills, gained confidence, and enhanced project management abilities. By the end, we felt more capable of communicating, handling challenges, and applying our knowledge practically.

Question 6: How and why did you change inside and outside the seminar? Were you transformed?

The seminar transformed how we viewed ourselves and our future. We shared that our confidence, leadership abilities, and critical thinking skills improved as a result of our experiences inside the seminar. Outside the seminar, these changes led to better communication, problem-solving, and applying learning to real-world situations.

Question 7: Can you evaluate the seminar, please? What do you like about the seminar, and why?

Our answers to the question “What do you like about the seminar, and why?” were so similar even though we are 11 members. We liked the seminar because we could try whatever we were interested in. We had many opportunities to learn, by playing games, holding the Open Labs participatory project and so on, so it was easy to discover our curiosities and try to do them in practice. Although, it was sometimes difficult to keep our motivation to achieve our goals because our learning style was free (i.e., we were given freedom to work at our own paces and on self-chosen projects, but sometimes this meant that it was easy for us to lose motivation or prioritize other aspects of life), if we had problems or questions, Prof. deHaan always helped us. We students could also get feedback from each other after the work, so we could see what we should do next to improve projects and ourselves.

We are not only students; we all could be teachers and researchers in the seminar.

Seminar members recognize the applicability of the skills acquired in seminar to their future careers and daily lives. A predominant emphasis is placed on communication skills, as seminar activities and study abroad experiences have enabled them to express their opinions confidently and engage with diverse perspectives. Teamwork and problem-solving abilities are also considered valuable assets in job hunting and professional settings, contributing to project management and feedback integration. Furthermore, the knowledge gained in the seminar is seen as relevant across various fields, including education, tourism, and creative industries. The experience has fostered a willingness to take on new challenges and cultivate a mindset geared toward continuous growth, reinforcing its significance in both professional and social contexts.

It was easy to discover our curiosities and try to do them in practice.

Question 8: What advice can you give to other teachers, researchers and students?

In Japan, teachers should accept diversity more to make the learning environment in school comfortable for everyone who doesn't have a disability or language barrier. Teachers can use games more for education because we learned games are not just for fun, but great tools to teach and learn something. Furthermore, by incorporating reflection, feedback, and collaboration into lessons, they can help students build confidence and critical thinking skills. We know this is hard in the Japanese context because of large class sizes (30-40 students), short class periods (40-50 minutes) and government-mandated textbooks focused on reading, grammar and vocabulary. However, we think that teachers can help students be more critical of the English in their textbooks (e.g., what articles and images depict about different cultures), to include more pair and group work (e.g., exercises and homework) and also short games to introduce or practice language or knowledge.

Researchers could explore how games and participatory activities influence learning outcomes, particularly in improving language skills and teamwork. Many kinds of activities we experience both inside and outside the seminar show how feedback and hands-on experiences can lead to better results than traditional learning.

We think students should ask one another's opinions and get some feedback from people about their work because students could realize or get new ideas by getting some advice from their friends. If students do this, they can make their work better.