What Japanese university EFL students like about HEL

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英語史って、どこが面白い？
－日本人大学生は指摘した英語史の授業内容における面白いポイント－

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〈研究ノート〉

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Abstract

The history of the English language (affectionately abbreviated to HEL in the research literature) is as rich and as varied as the people who have spoken it over the last 1500 years. The task of distilling 15 centuries of language change, as well as providing a socio-political framework of the context it occurred in, into a one-semester sequence of fifteen 90-minute classes may seem like a hellish task. If successful, however, a well-implemented HEL course can serve as a helpful supplement to the English language training that Japanese undergraduates have compulsorily received by the time they enter university. This short paper broadly surveys the contents and implementation of a one-semester syllabus that I designed for a HEL course at a Japanese university. I illustrate elements and topics that students seemed particularly interested in. These may be used as ideas for future HEL courses.

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要旨

英語史という授業は日本の大学ではあまり見られない授業科目である。1500年に渡るイギリス社会の変化、発展に伴い「英語」という言語は、大きく変貌してきた。その長い歴史を週１回、15回の授業にまとめるということは、大変困難な作業であり、英語の歴史を全て網羅するということは不可能に近い。一方学生にとって興味を引くポイントをうまくまとめれば、学生の興味関心を引き出し、中学、高校、大学と学んでいる必修科目としての「英語」の知識を補充し、より深い理解につながり得るものである。本研究ノートは某大学における初のネイティブスピーカーとして担当した講義のシラバスの詳細を説明し、学生たちの興味関心を上手く引き出した授業ノートをまとめ提示する。英語史という授業のシラバス作成の際の手本として参考になるだけでなく、教員志望の大学生にとっても普段の英語の授業では学び得ない知識を得る機会にもなり、日本における「英語」の発展にも繋がり得ると、筆者は信じている。

Keywords: English language history, HEL (英語史), Old English (古代英語), Middle English (中世英語), syllabus (シラバス), Japanese university (日本の大学)

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1. Introduction: History classes do not have to be boring

History classes have a bad rap. As Simonton (1994:3) writes, "'History is more or less bunk,' automobile Henry Ford once said. This comment may evoke an involuntary nod from readers who remember boring lectures and homework in mandatory high school history classes. The subject too often reminds us of having to memorize countless names, dates, and places." For students who have similarly experienced dull English language classes, a class with the title 'History of the English Language'—amusingly abbreviated as "HEL" in the literature—may solicit images of a class that can be described by pronouncing the acronym. It may seem relieving to students who harbor these images that HEL courses tend not to be compulsory, and tend to be far less common than typical EFL classes that treat the mechanics of modern English.

In Japan, EFL courses are a mainstay of compulsory education from elementary school through high school. Like the stereotypically boring mandatory high school history class, the way English is taught and learned in these EFL classes has long been beset by a reputation of demotivation (see e.g. Apple, Da Silva, & Fellner, 2013; Kikuchi, 2015). A vexingly persistent issue is Japan's high-stakes testing system, which relies heavily on rote memorization. The educational environment that accompanies this testing system not only helps generate and support those high-stakes tests, but is at the same time a slave to them. A considerable amount of research has catalogued, critiqued, and criticized the Japanese Ministry of Education's (MEXT's) efforts to refocus the process of education toward outcomes of communicative ability rather than passing written examinations (MacWhinnie & Mitchell, 2017). Japanese education specialists themselves have been some of the most vocal critics (see e.g. Amano & Poole, 2005; Yonezawa, 2010). However, even after more than 20 years of reform initiatives, Japanese scholars are still scratching their heads as to how much has actually changed (Goodman, 2013) since Ronald Dore famously commented in 1976 that Japanese education could be regarded "as an enormously elaborated, very expensive intelligence testing system with some educational spin-off, rather than the other way around (p.48-49)."

With respect to English education in Japan, the highest-stakes tests are at the university entrance level. Once entrance has been achieved, there is no longer a pressing need to teach to tests that measure students' ability to memorize information. Unfortunately, however, there is a propensity for university classes to follow the same formula of inputting and testing for information as in high school classes. This may especially be the case with large lecture classes in universities. More unfortunately, the same formula is sometimes used in smaller EFL classes in university: English words and structures are presented as information to be output on written tests, with communicative activities occasionally occurring in between.

The chances for the same memorization-regurgitation formula are arguably even greater for a specialized class like HEL. As with any content-based class, there is a heavy cognitive load placed on EFL learners when they are tasked with understanding and processing detailed content in a foreign language. This is compounded in the case of HEL, where students must deal with antique forms of a modern foreign language. That, added to the historical context in which that language occurred—the places, dates, and people's names—may seem insurmountable.

On the contrary, however, a HEL class at a Japanese university should be considered a rare and treasurable opportunity. HEL classes offer a chance to fill in some of the details about the English language that most EFL classes gloss over, and that in fact many teachers of EFL—native and non-native alike—do not have ready answers to. For example: where does third-person-singular ~s come from? Why is it there? What is the difference between sick and ill? Why do so many words (like night and know) have silent letters?

Some practitioners may regard these questions as little more than trivia. I will counter-argue that instructors who are able to address questions like these from students will at very least satisfy their curiosity, and at best will help enrich students' appreciation of the language. In cases where these students are studying to become teachers themselves, a deep knowledge of why English got the way it is promises to help them become more effective teachers.

The amount of literature on the English language, and on teaching and learning it, is oceanic. Equally vast is the body of literature on the history of England. HEL literature is plentiful, and to some extent there is research that treats how these classes have been structured and taught (for a recent anthology, see Moore & Palmer, 2019). In Japan there is some treatment of the subject (see e.g. Iyeiri, 2006; Tani, 2003, 2005). In particular, Tani (2005), who used Mother Goose nursery rhymes to introduce HEL, touches on an extremely important point, one that is essential to the

success of any class: making it fun for the students.

Another important point for teachers of HEL classes is making the content relevant to their students' environment. For English majors, and particularly those who will seek English teacher licensure, the opportunity to capture students' interest is huge. To do this, it is essential to choose topics within HEL that will be of immediate interest to them. Given the vastness of the material available to be taught in a HEL course, this is no easy task. While there are suggestions for putting together a HEL syllabus and textbooks that can and have been used (see Moore & Palmer, 2019:12), there is little if any literature that has solicited and catalogued feedback from students of HEL classes about which topics within HEL interest them the most. The following section 2 is a preliminary attempt to fill this void.

2. HEL in Japanese universities

There are a variety of ways a HEL syllabus can be constructed, however, the default seems to move from the beginnings of English in the 400s A.D. along a timeline to the present day. Most textbooks present it this way. Accordingly, most syllabuses for HEL courses are organized in this fashion. A simple search for 大学シラバス英語史 [university syllabus HEL] yields only a handful of syllabi. Two full-year courses in 2017 are provided (in Japanese) in Appendices A and B. Unsurprisingly and understandably, most courses appear to be taught by native Japanese instructors, and most syllabi appear only in Japanese. Further, the titles and descriptions of weekly units (classes)—when detail is provided at all—seem to highlight language structure, e.g. changes in morphology, phonology, syntax, etc. over time. This suggests that HEL courses tend to focus on the linguistic elements of the English language rather than the socio-historical background, e.g. shifts in power between social groups such as the Anglo-Saxons, Normans, Vikings, etc., through which these language changes occurred. A focus on language forms—that is, what happened to English words in what time periods—may be so-called par for the course. Instead, however, I will argue that the organization of a HEL syllabus around social groups and social events, with examples of how those social groups and events affected how words were used, may be a more engaging approach to teaching a HEL course at a Japanese university.

3. HEL at Hokusei Gakuen University

Not included in the list of textbooks in Moore and Palmer (2019:12) are two books that are based on two major TV documentaries: *The Story of English*, a nine-part series that aired in the United States and Britain in 1986, and a successor series, *The Adventure of English*, which aired in Britain in 2003. Each documentary series has an accompanying book (McCrum, MacNeil, & Cran, 2002; and Bragg, M., 2004, respectively).

From 2013 to 2017 I was honored to have been given the opportunity to teach a HEL course at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo. It had previously been conducted in Japanese, and I was the first non-native Japanese to teach it. I was advised by other faculty that while English Department majors had comparatively higher proficiency levels than students in other departments, they might not be able to handle large amounts of difficult reading such as many HEL textbooks for Western markets are written in. I was encouraged to create my own materials. As a start, then, I decided to produce weekly handouts and accompanying slideshows, as well as to use short clips from the two aforementioned documentary series, in order to illustrate points. In so doing I used the structure of *The Adventure of English* series as a guide to syllabus design. A list of episode titles and descriptions for the *Adventure of English* documentary series is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Adventure of English (2003) Documentary Series Titles and Descriptions
Source: https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/adventure-of-english/

Episode	Title
1	**Birth of a Language.** The modern Frisian language is the closest sounding language to the English used approximately 2000 years ago, when the people from what is now the north of the Netherlands travelled to what would be the United Kingdom and pushed the Celts to the western side of the island. Words like "blue" can be recognized in the Frisian language.
2	**English Goes Underground.** Bragg discusses how class also affected the use of English, especially in the time of William the Conqueror and for approximately 300 years after his reign; during this period, only the French language and Latin were used in state affairs and by the aristocracy, while English remained in use with the lower peasant classes.

3	**The Battle for the Language of the Bible.** In the early to mid-1300s, English fought to be the language of the Christian Bible through the efforts of theologian John Wycliffe, who opposed the church's use of a Latin scripture because it prevented most of the population from reading the bible for themselves.
4	**This Earth, This Realm, This England.** In Queen Elizabeth I's time, English began to expand to even greater depths. Overseas trade brought new words from France, as well as the now popular swearwords "fokkinge," (f--king) "krappe," (crap) and "bugger" from Dutch, in the 16th century.
5	**English in America.** Upon landing in North America, settlers encountered Squanto, a native man who had been captured and brought to England to learn English and become a guide. After escaping, Squanto returned to his tribe, which happened to live near the place that the English settlers had created their small village.
6	**Speaking Proper.** The Age of Reason began, and English scholars of mathematics and science like Isaac Newton started publishing their books in English instead of Latin. Jonathan Swift would attempt to save the English language from perpetual change, followed by Samuel Johnson who would write the A Dictionary of the English Language, made up of 43,000 words and definitions, written in seven years and published in 1755.
7	**The Language of Empire.** British trade and colonization spread the English language. In India, scholar William Jones finds some English words already present in Sanskrit. Convicts land in Australia, blending London criminal slang and Aboriginal words into a new dialect. Jamaicans reclaim patois.
8	**Many Tongues Called English.** The globalization of the English language in the 20th century owes most to the United States. Here we look at the predominance of American Black street talk, how the Second World War and American movies threatened to "infect" the mother tongue in Britain and how some nations are attempting to stamp in the invasion of English out—for example franglais in France and Singlish in Singapore.

Because each *Adventure of English* documentary episode is 50 minutes long, and because my goal was neither to cover all of the documentary material nor to spend large amounts of class time showing videos, I did the following:

(a) Revised and adjusted the topics to fit a standard 15-week university syllabus;
(b) pruned, modified and simplified the content, partly using topics from *The Story of English* (1986) documentary as inspiration, as well as assorted other reference materials; and
(c) added interactive activities and short small-group discussion topics.

The resulting one-semester syllabus that I taught for 2016 and 2017 is presented in Table 2.

Constructing slideshows, handouts, and activities for each lesson was challenging, but rewarding. Unexpectedly, over the five years that I taught the course, the number of students who enrolled in it rose, from an initial 30 in the first year to over 80 in the fifth year. In order to accommodate a larger number of students with varying degrees of proficiency, it was necessary to adjust my lecture style and the level of reading homework to something that most of them could manage without undue effort. In so doing I wound up learning a great deal about English language history, as well as what material the majority of students could handle, what they had difficulty with, and in particular, what was interesting to them. Some topics and some class activities appeared to engage them more than others. Overall, students seemed more interested in an outline of historical society and social events than they were in an overview of the systematic changes in language forms over time.

In order to grasp which topics engaged students the most, in addition to taking notes from what students commented to me casually during and outside of class, I solicited feedback through a short writing activity in the middle and at the end of the 15-week course, using one simple open-ended question: “What interested you / surprised you the most about the history of English? Why?”

I first included the question as a bonus-point writing question at the end of the final exam for 2014, the second year I taught the class. Because the exam mainly covered the topic of how the English language had come to and developed in Japan, many of the comments understandably referred to this topic. Of 57 total students, 14 referred to the English in Japan topic. Excerpts include:

> “Japan has been admiring English from way back.”
> “First Japanese exchange student Manjiro, he was really smart.”
> “I was surprised that Ieyasu Tokugawa said ‘William Adams is dead. Your new name is Miura Anjin.’ It was human rights abuse!”

Others expressed surprise at how English infiltrated Japan during the *sakoku* (isolationist) period, as well as the fact that classes at Tokyo University were originally mostly conducted in English, and how this was changed (how the

English medium was banned) during the Meiji Restoration. The most striking comment by one student was: "I learned about Japanese history in an English class."

Encouraged by the specificity of these comments, and to see whether the majority of comments would again refer to the topic of English in Japan, in each of 2016 and 2017 (the fourth and fifth year I taught the class) I asked the question once at the end of the 15th week, as an ungraded writing exercise, before the final exam week. This helped assure a more even distribution of responses across all topics during the semester. A simple count of these responses is given in Table 2.

Table 2. HEL Syllabus for Hokusei Gakuen University (one-semester course), 2016-2017

Week (Unit) No.	Lesson Title & Description	No. responses by students (N=136, 2016+2017)
1	England before it was England: Romans invade Britain	4
2	English is Born: Anglo-Saxons invade Britain	2
3	Old English	22
4	English almost dies, Part 1: Vikings invade England	15
5	English almost dies, Part 2: Normans invade England	16
6	Bible Battles: What language is the Word of God?	5
7	Middle English (MIDTERM)	
8	Headline News: Printing arrives in England	2
9	Shakespeare, wordplay, and the Great Vowel Shift	5
10	Taming the English tongue	1
11	English invades America	1
12	English invades India	
13	English in Japan, Part 1: Sakoku, shipwrecks & gunboat English	5
14	English in Japan, Part 2: English teaching & learning	14
15	English in Japan, Part 3: Now and hereafter	12
16	FINAL EXAM	
	*Generic or broad responses (can't be grouped)**	41

* Open-ended responses are difficult to group neatly into categories, hence the larger number of uncategorizable (generic/broad) responses. 'Generic' comments included "I never knew anything about English language history before," "I never liked history before this class." I grouped others into categories by keywords (e.g. any reference to "Bible" would go under category 7, and references to "French" would go under category 5). Further, because lesson topics overlap, some responses could be assigned to more than one category/unit topic. In order to get a more accurate count, a future survey item should ask specifically which lesson topic(s) they enjoyed, with open-end comments solicited afterward. The above counts can suggest only a rough trend. Low counts should not be interpreted to indicate disinterest.

4. Discussion: Elements in a HEL syllabus that interested students

This section offers synopses of elements in each unit of the 2016-2017 syllabus that interested students. It must be acknowledged beforehand that the discussion offered below is neither research-rigorous nor comprehensive. The figures and selected comments above were solicited before the end of each course, and so they may reflect some degree of halo-effect bias. Further, an inclusive treatment of all student comments is beyond the scope of this paper. I have, alternatively, summarized by lesson number in the Table 2 HEL syllabus some of the content that I perceived students expressed interest in during the course of the semester, either through personal communication with me or through comments offered in answers to the one-item surveys given in 2016 and 2017, aforementioned.

Again, much of the content for each of units 1-12 is excerpted from *The Adventure of English* documentary series and its companion volume (Bragg, 2004). This volume, along with The Story of English (2002) volume that accompanies an earlier documentary series of the same title, and upon which *The Adventure of English* documentary series is based, would make worthy supplementary texts to any HEL course.

1	**England before it was England: Romans invade Britain**

Relevance to Japanese students: Most students know nothing more than that the English language came from England, and are surprised to learn that what became the English-speaking people were themselves transplants from Germany. Further, the culture of their predecessors—the Angles and Saxons in Germany, has relevance to modern everyday

words, such as days of the week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, etc. derive from the names of Norse/Germanic gods).

A treatment of the Celts—who occupied the isle of Britain before the Roman invasions in the first century B.C., and from whence the very name of Britain comes (the Brythones, one of the Celtic tribes)—intrigues students. A discussion of Celts should include how they were invaded by the expansion of the Roman Empire—the native speakers of the Latin language, which has had enormous bearing on the development of the English language. The survival, for example, of Roman roads as well as town names (e.g. Gloucester, or *gleaw castra*, "the Roman encampments near the Celtic area known as Glevo") is of interest. In particular, the tale of Boudica, a female Celtic leader said to have led a revolt against the Roman invaders (popularized by the 2003 movie Warrior Queen with Alex Kingston and Steven Waddington), piqued the interest especially of female students in my class.

2	**English is Born: Anglo-Saxons invade Britain**

The origin of English begins in earnest with the retreat of Roman forces during the collapse of the Roman Empire around 400 A.D. and the immediately subsequent invasion of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from what is now Denmark and northern Germany. Notable is the wholesale replacement of the Celtic peoples who had been living relatively peacefully alongside their Roman occupiers for nearly 400 years: the area of land that the Anglo-Saxons would occupy, and would come to be known as Angla-Land (England), roughly corresponds to the area that was occupied by the Romans. Of further note is the fact that the language of the newly minted English people absorbed very little of the language of the Celtic peoples it pushed aside. Most telling, perhaps, of how utter the Anglo-Saxon conquest was, by comparison to the Roman occupation, was the fact that many of the Celts who survived, or who did not immediately assimilate to the culture of their new invaders, retreated to the west and concentrated in the area we now call Wales. The Anglo-Saxon word *wealas* meant foreigners or slaves. Thus there is a bitter irony that the original inhabitants of Britain wounded up being referred to as strangers in their own land.

3	**Old English**

The language of the Anglo-Saxons in their new land, referred to as "Old English" roughly between the years of 400 to 1100 A.D., is as much a foreign language to modern-day native speakers as it will appear to Japanese learners. A reading of the Lord's Prayer in Old English and in Modern English offers a good example. When students are provided with a script of the Old English, some will point out small words like "and," "to," "we," as well as prototypes of words like "name" (*nama*) and "heaven" (*heofon*).

In order to introduce students to how inflections work—as these are key in Old English—a contrast to Japanese may be useful. For example, 食べる and 食べた illustrate how Japanese inflections indicate verb tense. Some students have pointed out commonalities of Old English to Old Japanese, which is touched on in most high school curriculums（古文）. Old Japanese is, similarly, virtually a foreign language to modern speakers, and cannot be read or understood without some measure of study. In this sense, students may perceive it as an exotic foreign language, with its antique letters, wildly variant spellings, and Germanic-sounding pronunciation. In particular, students seem amused by obsolete letters such as *thorn* (þ), *eth* (ð), *wynn* (ƿ), *ash* (æ), as well as later *yogh* (ȝ); similarly obsolete letters (*kana*) such as *wi* (ゐ, ヰ) and *we* (ゑ, ヱ) exist in Japanese. It is interesting to note also that the delimitations of Old, Middle, Early Modern and Modern English periods coincide roughly with the same timeframes as Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern Japanese.

Particularly for students seeking licensure as English teachers, a treatment of how word order changed from SOV to SVO as a result of inflection loss may be beneficial to their teaching; a select group of curious students raised this question to me each year. A discussion of SOV versus SVO is relevant to a treatment of the so-called "five basic sentence patterns" (５文型) that are covered in junior and senior high school textbooks across Japan. For example, the difference between the Third Sentence Pattern (example: I give him apples) and the Fourth Sentence Pattern (I give apples to him) is relevant to Old English. In Old English, the Third Pattern was more possible. I used the following pattern as an example:

Se cyning biteþ þone æppele.
The king bites the apple.
Biteþ se cyning þone æppele.
Bites the king the apple. (?)
Đone æppele biteþ se cyning.
The apple bites the king. (!?)

In Old English, the meaning remains essentially the same (The king bites the apple) when word order is switched, whereas in Modern English, switching the word order yields completely different meanings. (NOTE: I used OE æppele to mean 'apple' in the modern sense, although the word originally meant 'fruit' in general).

4	**English almost dies, Part 1: Vikings invade England**

By the year 800 A.D., just as Old English and the society of the people who spoke it seemed to be developing stably, another invader—one who coincidentally set sail from some of the same Danish shores that the Angles and Saxons had come from—began to threaten the survival of the fledgling English language. Persistent and increasingly concentrated Viking raids along especially the eastern shores of England resulted in a routing of English armies to the region of Wessex, an area in western England that the invading Saxons took over and named for themselves: *West Seaxe*, or "West Saxons."

Were it not for the skillful tactics of King Alfred of Wessex—later to be referred to as King Alfred the Great—English as we know it today may not have existed. Among other things, his military efforts halted the Vikings' advance, and compelled the Vikings to acknowledge the English people as a force to be reckoned with. Alfred helped broker a treaty with the Vikings by which a large chunk of eastern England was ceded to Viking rule. It was named the 'Danelaw' as its governance fell under the law of the invading Danes (Vikings). In return, the Vikings were not allowed to try to take over new land.

It is helpful to illustrate the distinction between 'dialect' and 'language' to students here. Old English, and the language of the Viking invaders, Old Norse, were like 'cousin' languages. They were similar enough that Vikings and English may well have understood one another enough to engage in simple conversation. It appears to have been enough to allow the two societies of people, speaking cousin languages, to trade with each other. In some cases they married and had children with each other. Through this interaction, a huge number of new words were imported from Old Norse into English. This explains some words that are cousin-like. An example that will be familiar to Japanese learners is the difference between *skirt* and *shirt*. Originally, these words were simply different pronunciations of a word with essentially the same meaning: a tunic-like garment, or a long shirt.

Of other interest to students may be a host of small words that begin with "sk." Sky, skill, skull, and skin all come from Old Norse, the Vikings' language. During this unit it is also useful to point out that Old Norse and Old English speakers, eager to get along with each other, began to do away with the inflections in each of their languages. One can imagine a great many clumsy utterances—replete with negotiation of meaning using roots of words that were familiar to each speaker of Norse and of English—were the stuff of daily life, of trade, and even of romance and of family in the border regions between England and the Danelaw during the 900s A.D. Speakers made do with the language they had. As non-native speakers who may have experienced similar situations in their travels or interactions with non-Japanese, many students will identify with this situation.

Many students seemed interested in the concept of Vikings and English marrying each other and raising children, and particularly in the fact that English tended to become the dominant language in the family (and later of the country), as referenced in McCrum, MacNeil, and Cran (2002). Coincidentally, perhaps, this tendency for Old-Norse-speaking Vikings to assimilate to the language of the people they invaded is repeated during the same time in history (800s A.D.) in northern France. A treaty with invading Vikings was signed by the king of France that ceded them an area of land that would become Normandy (from *Northmannia*, or 'land of the Northmen', a.k.a. Vikings who came from the north). It is further ironic that this land would birth the next wave of England-invaders, the Normans. In any case, there seemed significant indication from students that bilingualism in the Anglo-Norse families as well as Anglo-Norman families is a topic of interest to them.

5	**English almost dies, Part 2: Normans invade England**

The fact that yet another sweeping invasion occurred just 250 years following the advent of Viking hordes is surprising to students. While it is somewhat difficult to distill the details of the political circumstances that resulted in the 1066 Norman invasion into a simple summary, the fact that the Normans quickly took over is fairly straightforward. From this story comes an intriguing situation of hierarchy: the Normans, who spoke Norman French—which was descended from ancient Roman Latin—were in control of a majority of Germanic-based English speakers. This political situation resulted in a hierarchy of languages and, within the English language itself, a hierarchy of words. A good example of this hierarchy of words is, perhaps, the difference between 'cow meat' and 'beef' (Anglo-Saxon origin versus Norman origin). Japan is renowned for its attention to fine cuisine, and Japanese is replete with French-origin loanwords borrowed through Japanese exposure to English, such as pork, beef, sauté, broil, and roast.

In sum: speaking Norman French was necessary for some. It was 'cool' for others. Even if one couldn't speak Norman French, it was 'cool' to borrow terms from Norman French in order to sound sophisticated and higher-class. There is a significant parallel to the way English has been treated in Japan, given the enormous amount of English loanwords that have

permeated the Japanese language, even without English having ever taken over as an official language in any capacity.

A parallel can also be drawn with respect to words borrowed into Japanese many hundreds of years before, from Chinese. Again, China never ruled Japan, but Japanese scholars who went to China—whose society was viewed as higher-class in olden days—brought back with them boatfuls of new words, phrases, and writing systems that are now an integral part of Modern Japanese.

6	**Bible Battles: What language is the Word of God?**

At this point a continuation into Middle English is possible, however, in 2017 I decided to punctuate it with a tangent into Biblical English matters. Throughout the Old English period and into the Middle English period, English language learning, and especially writing, was largely the domain of monastic life. That is, the written word was under the purview of Christian monasteries. In these, too, the main language was Latin, with English script occurring first as margin notes to Latin texts. Most of these texts, too, were religious ones, in particular the Christian Bible.

Throughout the period of early England, the Christian religion was avidly seeking inroads into a previously pagan Anglo-Saxon community. It did so mainly through itinerant monks, who spread the Good Word through oral means: that is, through preaching in English. Latin, meanwhile, remained solidly the traditional language of the Christian Church, and of the Bible it centers around. The copying of books and texts was mainly for churchly purposes, and the use and knowledge of Latin was limited largely to elite religious and/or scientific circles. The broader English populace was reliant on the interpretation of the Bible and other religious texts through priests and monks.

But because humans are humans, however religious they may purport to be, some of these priests were unforgivably ignorant, corrupt, and manipulative. These individuals could not fool the watchful eyes of church reformists like John Wycliffe, who is credited with overseeing the first complete translation of the Catholic Church's Latin Vulgate Bible, the gold standard of Bibles at the time. His efforts were followed by William Tyndale, who reached out to earlier source languages like Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, to arrive at a re-translation into English of the New Testament.

The Church's reaction to these efforts was the opposite of welcoming. Officials saw it as an attempt to render the Word of God into a lesser, uncouth language, and in so doing corrupt its message—moreover to make that message directly accessible to the eyes and ears and hearts of common folk. Despite the grim fate that both Wycliffe and Tyndale met at the hands of church leaders, there are stories of delicious subversion that will capture students' interest. In Tyndale's case, for example, the Bishop of London tried to curb the flow of English-language Bibles into the city by buying them up and burning them. According to Bragg (2004:102), "The bishop bought and burned the books, and Tyndale used the money to rework, prepare and print a better version, as it were at the Church's expense."

It would take until the 1600s when the Church would finally officially acknowledge a fully English version of the Bible, most notably the King James Version of 1612. In all instances of attempts to wrest the Word of God from the tight grip of Latin, the focus on translation into English of such a ubiquitous piece of literature had profound effects on the development of the language in terms of vocabulary and turns of phrase, perhaps especially with respect to the connection of English to Latin and Greek. A treatment of the English Bible story is, therefore, quintessential to any HEL class. For universities in Japan like Hokusei Gakuen University, which has Protestant origins (of which Wycliffe and Tyndale were notably a part), a treatment of the English Bible story goes without question in terms of its relevance to HEL and to students' academic lives.

7	**Middle English**

It borders on ridiculous to imagine that the Middle English period, roughly from about 1100 to 1500 A.D., can be adequately surveyed in one lesson, let alone one semester. The fragments I touched on during 2016 and 2017 concerned the wide variation in language forms—including spelling—that characterized the period. Bragg (2004) notes, for one example, churche, cherche, chirche, cherch, chyrch, cherge, chyrche, chorche, chrch, churiche, and chirche as variants of the word "church." The theme of the Middle English period was one of prying itself out of the domination of its Norman captors, who during the earlier Middle English period occupied seats of power and who governed with the Norman French language, but who were ultimately too few in number to allow the Norman French language to take over as a language of the people. According to shifts in power and national identity with regard to the relationship of the Normans to the country of France as a whole, the Normans would—perhaps not unlike their Viking forbears—adopt the language and ultimately the identity of the people they had taken over. Norman French words would, however, forever retain their prestige in the

English language; thousands of Norman French words ended up enriching the language of their former conquerors. One could affect airs of aristocracy by, for example, speaking of acquisition rather than getting, of conversation rather than talking, and of beautiful fragrances rather than good smells. Even today, if we speak of perfume, the French-based term "eau de toilette" sounds more appealing than its literal rendering in Anglo-Saxon-based English, "toilet water" (more appropriately "grooming water") or "bathroom water."

There is a striking parallel in the case of Norman French loanwords into English with the influx of Chinese words into Japanese, although not under the same sociopolitical circumstances. Over the centuries—from the 600s A.D. onward—huge numbers of Chinese terms, along with Chinese characters (*kanji*, literally, Chinese Han-Dynasty characters), were imported into Japanese, so that one can say 購買する (*koukai suru*), purchase, instead of 買う (*kau*), buy; or 食事する (*shokuji suru*), dine, instead of 食べる (*taberu*), eat. Purchase and dine are similarly from Norman French as are buy and eat from Anglo-Saxon. In both cases of Chinese and Norman French borrowings, the register is different from counterpart terms that come from Anglo-Saxon-based English or from Yamato-based Japanese. My students have expressed interest in this parallel.

As was the case with Old Norse and Old English speakers in the Danelaw, or Old Norse and Old French speakers in Normandy, the stories of bilingualism that must have occurred in cases of Norman French speakers and Old English speakers are compelling. Bragg (2004) observes that the language of the hand that rocks the cradle—that is, the likelihood of English to have been the mothers' native language in a society where English is predominately used in daily life—became the main language of the children who grew up with it. Because the status of English in Japan is generally regarded as prestigious and desirable, the idea of English having been a lower-status language is of interest to Japanese learners.

It is indeed remarkable that, after the Anglo-Saxon speakers of proto-English marauded into Britain and swept away the Celtic language speakers who were there before, the English language faced extinction twice, at the hands and mouths of both Viking and Norman French invaders, and that in both cases it rebounded and ultimately subsumed the languages of its would-be conquerors. In essence, the English language started out as an invasion, and went on to repel two subsequent invasions. This bit of history is arguably a testament to its resilience.

8	**Headline News: Printing arrives in England**

Of all machines that changed the English language forever, the printing press, and its arrival in England at the end of the Middle English (late 1400s), has been by far the most impacting. Herein lies, for example, the reason behind some of the English spelling conventions that have tormented Japanese EFL learners (and even native speakers) for centuries. Of critical relevance to the Japanese EFL classroom is the fact that the printing press helped 'fix' spellings that were in a state of flux during the Middle English period. In brief, even as pronunciations of words kept changing and evolving, the printing press helped keep spellings the way they were. Handy examples are words like night, knife, thought, and through. In Old English, these words would have been pronounced much as they are spelled (e.g. *ki-NEE-fuh* for knife). My students were surprised and even glad to understand why spelling conventions like these are the way they are—especially, why they have *remained* the way they are—as few if any Japanese EFL textbooks, particularly in middle school and high school, include any mention of etymology, much less older forms of pronunciation.

A discussion of the printing press can also include how books and other printed matter became exponentially cheaper and more acquirable by common folk. And, as the desire for books increased, so did the need for literacy, which helped thrust English language pedagogy—and all the troubles and issues concomitant with it—to the forefront of mainstream society.

9	**Shakespeare, wordplay, and the Great Vowel Shift**

A one-class treatment of Shakespeare may seem like a fool's errand, however, one of the biggest lessons that my students picked up was the way Shakespeare played with language, unabashedly juggling prefixes and suffixes, and changing parts of speech at whim. HEL instructors can therefore point out to learners the fun of verbing nouns, the nounification of verbs, the use of adjectives adverbially, and so forth, and that these acts should not be restricted to the purview of famous authors but reside within the authority of any speaker, both native and non-native. At essence is the nature of human beings to play with language, and by so doing invent creative new forms of expression. To advocate this stands refreshingly in opposition to the prescription and proscription of language forms that pedagogy—and hence EFL classrooms—is commonly concerned with. Even without delving into a survey of Shakespearean literature,

my students tended to have great fun with this segment of the HEL course.

10	Taming the English tongue

As English began to spread across the world after the 1500s, and as its wordstock and powers of expression blossomed explosively as a result, it occurred to pedagogues that there should be 'right' ways—and by extension 'wrong' ways—of using it. This section of the HEL course covers how the art of sounding like a book was essential to being able to shift social status—for example from a 'lowly farmer' to a 'middle class merchant'—as how one spoke reflected the social circle one was a part of. A typical example is the play *Pygmalion*, popularized by the movie *My Fair Lady* in 1964, starring Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn (Audrey Hepburn was particularly popular in Japan). Within this pedagogical movement a good many "correct" grammar conventions were born, some of which with somewhat random and whimsical origins. An example is the rule that the English infinitive should not be split. Thus, the statement made famous by the Star Trek series, "To boldly go where no one has gone before" would be incorrect. The reason: infinitive verbs in Latin were one word, and English should be more like Latin, because Latin was a "classical" and unchanging language. Unchanging, notably, because it is no longer a living language!

The lesson for the pedagogy of English, and I would argue for Japanese learners in particular, is that "correct" and "incorrect" have always ever been at least partially subjective, and are open to being questioned. This notion stands in contrast to the way English is traditionally taught to Japanese speakers, who tend to be passive inputters of what teachers prescribe is "the way" of using English. Because of Japan's relentless pursuit of test fairness, especially for sake of the high-stakes testing mechanism in place in pre-tertiary education, the tendency for learners to assume that English is "fixed" and that there is always a right and a wrong is fundamentally erroneous. Further, this assumption is inhibiting of, and grossly misrepresents, the creativity and breadth of expression that the English language is capable of construing, even by non-proficient, non-native learners. The notion that ultimately learners don't have to 'get it right' in order to communicate well is, I believe, one of the most powerful messages that a HEL course can offer Japanese learners.

11	English invades America

This unit, as well as the following unit on India, is intended to show some of the irony of how the English language and people ventured overseas to do the same thing that was done to them in earlier chapters of England's history. The American experience with English is of particular interest to Japanese students, likely because United States English has influenced Japanese EFL education heavily ever since it came crashing onto Japan's shores with the arrival of Commodore Perry in the 1850s, as well as following the end of World War 2.

As with the way Anglo-Saxon replaced Celtic languages in the early 400s in England, there is a striking parallel to how English replaced the languages of Native American peoples and in what is now the United States. A further parallel is the way in which Japanese replaced native Ainu languages in Hokkaido, ironically during the same time period, the 1800s. Of more immediate intrigue to students, however, were the notions that, compared to British English, American English tends to reflect older language forms and meanings. One reason was arguably the result of strict practices of Puritans, who first invaded American shores in the 1600s. England English, Bragg (2004) argues, was more fluid and changing. The irony is that some students perceive British English as an older, more formal, more original form of the language, but in fact American English preserves word usages and nuances that became obsolete in England. Examples include the propensity for Americans to use the word 'fall' instead of 'autumn', or the American tendency to enunciate words like med-i-cine (instead of British med-cine) or mil-i-tar-y (instead of British mil-i-try). American spellings, too, hearken back to older Latinate spellings. For example, American 'center' and 'honor' for British 'centre' and 'honour'. The former reflects Latin (Roman) spellings, while the latter belies a Norman French influence.

12	English invades India

The position of the English language in India bears similarities to how Norman French occupied England just after the 1066 conquest. Rather than an abrupt takeover, however, English colonially crept its way into the seats of Indian government over hundreds of years. Throughout this gradual takeover, however, the populace at large maintained the everyday use of a vast array of native Indian languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, and Urdu. Today, English maintains a 10 percent second-language status among India's total population, and has evolved into its own particular brand of "Indian English." Amusing examples of Indian English include "wafers" for potato chips, "dry grapes" for raisins, "goggles" for sunglasses, and "loose motion" for diarrhea. A more

poignant legacy, however, is captured in the articulate words of Mahatma Ghandi, a lawyer and statesman who worked tirelessly toward the independence of India from British rule during the first half of the 20th century, when he said: "To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them… Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium, that when I become a barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd?" (Bragg, 2004:248).

13	**English in Japan, Part 1: Sakoku, shipwrecks & gunboat English**
14	**English in Japan, Part 2: English teaching & learning**
15	**English in Japan, Part 3: Now and hereafter**

These three units were created and included by me following the first two years teaching the course, after I perceived that students seemed fascinated by elements of the history of the English language in Japan that I commented offhand during class. The stories of Manjiro Nakahama ("John Mung") and Ranald MacDonald (who has no relation to the clown mascot of the popular fast food chain) are covered briefly in some junior high and high school textbooks, but the details of how they affected the introduction of English into Japanese society are left out. Indeed, there are many other stories like these about how English seeped its way into the Japanese socio-educational milieu over a series of centuries, and despite a well-known period in Japanese history that saw a dedicated effort to repulse all things and all people foreign. It is as if the Japanese had some kind of prescience that English has a propensity for invasion, intrusion, and infiltration.

Noteworthy, perhaps, is that despite the enduring popularity of English since it began to wash ashore in the 1600s, Japan was never colonized by English, never dominated by it. Meanwhile, however, Japan was fascinated by it, enamored of it, taken (but not taken over) by it, ever since a shipwrecked William Adams came ashore in the year 1600 and, on account of his coincidental knowledge of shipbuilding, became a person of great interest to Ieyasu Tokugawa. Tokugawa ruled Japan just before the age of *sakoku*, a policy he himself helped construct that in principle closed off the entire country to foreign interaction, until the forceful arrival of American statesman Commodore Perry in the 1850s.

Shipwrecks and English are a theme for Japan: It was through shipwreckery that key figures such as the Three Kichis and Manjiro Nakahama found their way overseas, and by which William Adams, Ranald MacDonald (who deliberately shipwrecked himself to get into Japan) and several others made their way through the formidable barricades of *sakoku* and into the annals of early interactions with the English language.

These interactions would turn out to be profound when, for example, Manjiro Nakahama as well as former Japanese students of MacDonald would become instrumental in navigating the Japanese government through the ramifications of post-*sakoku* opening to foreign trade following the Meiji Restoration. It was this new, burgeoning trade that saw the creation of the *Bansho-Shirabesho* (蕃書調所)—the Institute for the Study of Foreign Literature, or as I like to translate it, the Bureau of Barbarian Books—was created, which would later become the foundations of Tokyo University. Of particular interest to students is the fact that until the 1880s classes at Tokyo University were conducted mainly in English, and that this practice was deliberately halted by a nationalist agenda that persisted until the end of the Second World War.

Beauchamp (1998), Sasaki (2008), and Shimizu (2010) offer detailed accounts of the evolution of English in Japan from the 1600s to the present day. From these and other references a wealth of English language history with particular respect to Japan can be sourced. A focal point that will be of immediate relevance and interest to students is the fact that, while English has long retained prestige in Japanese society, it has always had little immediate social value. This societal status has great influence on the way English has traditionally been taught and learned in Japan, as well as other countries (e.g. Thailand) that were similarly never colonized by foreign English-speaking powers. A review of teaching methods, therefore, and of the way it has been traditionally tested (see Sasaki, 2008) was of immediate interest to my students. In sum, three weeks on the subject of English in Japan seemed to me to leave the most material untreated, the most unexamined, and the most unspoken.

5. Conclusions

According to a survey given to 32 teachers of HEL courses in universities across North America and Europe, the following topics were recommended as the most relevant to students:

1) Language change (processes, motivations);
2) Variation and diversity: e.g. attitudes and ideologies about standard vs nonstandard varieties, and prescriptive vs descriptive practice;

3) HEL as background for present-day English (particularly irregularities);
4) Colonial impact of English (as a world language);
5) Defining *language*;
6) External history: e.g. impact of social, economic, technological change;
7) Phonological changes: e.g. Great Vowel Shift;
8) Grammatical principles and change: e.g. shift from a more synthetic language to a more analytic one; and
9) Relation of English to other languages.

(Moore & Palmer, 2019:11).

While a one-semester, one-90-minute-class-a-week syllabus is horrendously insufficient to be inclusive of these topics, I believe that what I have discussed above sufficiently scratches the surface of some of them. For Japanese university students in particular, a review of English's function and position in Japan are a quintessential component to include in any HEL course—one which, to date, it appears that many syllabi do not regard. An exception is the 2017 HEL syllabus of Hosei University in Appendix A, where an English language history-focused spring semester serves as a springboard into a fall semester that contrasts English with Japanese language elements.

Moore and Palmer (2019:148) further point out the dual cognitive burden placed on students in HEL classes that follow a traditional Old-English-to-Modern-English linear timeline, observing that "mastery of the historical facts that provide the context for linguistic change requires memorization skills, while the linguistics content requires analytic skills (in addition to memorization). The synthesis of linguistic understanding and historical context in regard to language change then requires the deeper study of both subjects." This comment is with reference to native-speaker learners. For Japanese university students taking a HEL course delivered in all English, the cognitive burden is tripled, as students must also contend with their non-native grasp of Modern English.

Despite the potentially heavy cognitive burden on students, however, the reception I received during the years I taught the course at Hokusei Gakuen was overwhelmingly positive, although I admit that some of my students told me the tests I gave were hellish. One regret I have is that I did not have time to develop more communicative elements (i.e. groupwork) to the weekly lectures. This could be achieved by, for example, assigning short readings on each unit, having certain groups become specialists on certain subtopics, and having groups teach other groups—in Modern English, in class.

To conclude, the lesson I learned from constructing a HEL syllabus and conducting a HEL class at the Japanese university level was that the majority of students expressed interest in historical developments in English-using societies, rather than in analyzing and understanding the mechanisms of obsolete forms of English. The implication is, therefore, that student interest in HEL resides more in a focus on a review of the societies and politics that incidentally gave birth to linguistic change, rather than a more traditional focus on a sequence of changing language forms that by-the-way were part of certain social developments.

While there are many students who have had less than thrilling experiences with history classes (Strauss, 2017), the stereotype that history classes cannot avoid being boring needs to be dispelled. Depending on the effort and enthusiasm that instructors are willing to invest, a HEL course can be a heck of a good time and a meaningful experience for all involved. Positive student feedback, meanwhile, helps promote the virtuous cycle of teacher-student motivation. If I were to teach the class again in future, I would like to undertake a suggestion by Seiler (2019) to reverse the traditional chronology of working from Old English to Modern English, but instead by going backward from Modern English to Old English.

Finally, but not of least importance, is the potential for a HEL course to equip future teachers of English with missing puzzle pieces that enables them to show a broader picture of the language to their students. To be able to address students' questions, and to pique their curiosity, about why the English language is the way it is and the way it is taught and learned, adds to the measure of credibility in an English teacher's performance. A virtuous cycle is supported: the more confident English teachers are about their grasp of the subject they teach, the more confident their students will be in learning it. In this respect, the development and promotion of HEL courses seems essential to MEXT's vision of bolstering an understanding of English among Japanese people.

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Appendix A: Full-year HEL course, Hosei University (2017)

Spring Semester

第 1 回	**ガイダンス:** 授業についての説明、必要な教科書、参考文献についての説明
第 2 回	**外面史:** 英語成立の歴史的背景について
第 3 回	**世界の中での英語:** インド・ヨーロッパ祖語とは
第 4 回	**語族による分類:** インド・ヨーロッパ語族について
第 5 回	**英語の位置づけ:** 英語に近い親戚語
第 6 回	**ゲルマン系とは:** ゲルマン語派
第 7 回	**ゲルマン系言語の主要3系統:** ゲルマン諸語の特徴
第 8 回	**古英語の地域的変種:** 方言
第 9 回	**古英語と社会:** キリスト教への改宗
第 10 回	**古英語の発音について:** 子音
第 11 回	**古英語の発音について:** 母音
第 12 回	**古英語の文法:** 名詞の性
第 13 回	**古英語の文法、現代英語との大きな違い:** 名詞の格
第 14 回	**古英語の文法:** 形容詞・副詞
第 15 回	**春学期のまとめ:** まとめと試験

Main Text:
Thomas Pyles 著 『The English Language: A Brief History』(英宝社) [and excerpts from various English-language titles]

Supplemental Text:
[to be specified in class]

Fall Semester

第 1 回	**ガイダンス:** 秋学期授業の紹介
第 2 回	**春学期の復習と、課題についての講評:** 課題について、評価を行う
第 3 回	**英語の変化:概論:** 理論をどのように歴史変化の分析に使うか
第 4 回	**現代英語:** 束縛理論～問題点
第 5 回	**通言語的考察:** 束縛理論を使って英語以外の言語の分析を行う
第 6 回	**通言語的考察:** 日本語における再帰代名詞
第 7 回	**通言語的考察:** 日本語と英語の違い
第 8 回	**通言語的考察:** 日本語に束縛原理は適用されるか
第 9 回	**古英語:** 古い英語における再帰現象
第 10 回	**理論的分析:** いくつかの重要な先行研究ーその1
第 11 回	**理論的分析:** いくつかの重要な先行研究ーその2
第 12 回	**英語教育の観点から:** 日本人英語学習者の誤り
第 13 回	**英語教育の観点から:** 日本人の犯す誤りの分析
第 14 回	**英語教育への応用:** 英語教育において束縛理論をどのように活用するか
第 15 回	**秋学期のまとめ:** 秋学期に学習した内容をまとめる

Main Texts [excerpts from various, including]:
Allen, C.L., (2008). *Genitives in Early English: Typology and Evidence*. Oxford: OUP.
Fischer, O., van Kemenade, A., Koopman,, W., & van der Wurff, W. (2000). *The Syntax of Early English*. Cambridge: CUP.
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Radford, A. (2004). *Minimalist Syntax: Exploring the Structure of English.* Cambridge: CUP.
Taylor, J.R. (1996). *Possessives in English: An Explanation in Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: OUP.

Supplemental Texts:
Denison, D. (1993). *English Historical Syntax*. London: Longman.
Levin, B., & Hovav, M.R. (1995). *Unaccusativity: At the Syntax-Lexical Semantics Interface.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Appendix B: Full-year HEL course, Kanagawa University (2017)

Spring Semester

第 1 回	導入: 授業方針、英語史概要説明
第 2 回	古英語期以前: インド・ヨーロッパ言語、ゲルマン諸語（英語の起源）
第 3 回	古英語期(1): ビードの語るブリテン、古英語詩、初期古英語文学
第 4 回	古英語期(2): ヴァイキングの襲来、アルフレッド大王の英語散文翻訳、ウェセックス方言
第 5 回	中英語期(1): ノルマン征服、修道士の文学、古英語と中英語の狭間、12 世紀の英語、フランス語宮廷文化
第 6 回	中英語期(2): フランス語と英語の関係性、政府と地方、チョーサーの出現、印刷技術の開拓
第 7 回	古英語期、中英語期までのまとめ: 中世文学を読む
第 8 回	初期近代英語期(1): 文芸復興（ヨーロッパとイングランド）、清教主義、古典主義
第 9 回	初期近代英語期(2): ロマン主義、規範文法、ジョンソン博士の辞書
第 10 回	後期近代英語期(1): 大英帝国の形成、俗語、ピジンとクレオール
第 11 回	後期近代英語期(2): オックスフォード英語辞典、RP、20 世紀の英語
第 12 回	アメリカの英語: アメリカへの植民、ウェブスターの影響、黒人英語
第 13 回	現代の英語、世界に広がる英語: 21 世紀の英語、英語の変種
第 14 回	初期近代英語から現代英語までのまとめ: 近代英語を読む
第 15 回	前期授業内容のまとめと授業内試験

Main Text:
堀田　隆一『英語の「なぜ？」に答える　はじめての英語史』[研究社]2016

Supplementary Texts:
寺澤　盾『英語の歴史　過去から未来への物語』(中公新書)2008
家入　葉子『ベーシック　英語史』[ひつじ書房]2007
保坂　道雄『文法化する英語』[開拓社]2014

Fall Semester

第 1 回	導入: 英語史概要（前期で扱った内容の復習）と後期授業ガイダンス
第 2 回	発音・綴り字(1): 古英語や中英誤記を中心に
第 3 回	発音・綴り字(2): 大母音推移から現代へ
第 4 回	語形(1): 性・数・格について
第 5 回	語形(2): 動詞の語形について
第 6 回	語形(3): 形容詞・副詞について
第 7 回	音韻・綴り字、語形の内容のまとめ
第 8 回	統語(1): 助動詞 do を中心に
第 9 回	統語(2): 仮定法について
第 10 回	統語(3): 進行形、完了形、受動態について
第 11 回	語彙・意味(1): 語彙の階層性について
第 12 回	語彙・意味(2): 単語の意味変化について
第 13 回	方言・社会: アメリカにおける英語の変種について
第 14 回	統語、語彙・意味、方言・社会の内容のまとめ
第 15 回	後期授業内容のまとめと授業内試験

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