Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of

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“The Development and Empirical Substantiation of Japanese Pedagogical Materials Based on Kabuki”

Department of Linguistics

Thursday, April 30, 2020
5:30 P.M.
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Li-Shih Huang, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Leslie Saxon, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)
Dr. Hiroko Noro, Department of Pacific & Asian Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Dat Bao, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, Indigenous Education, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Many researchers (e.g., Nation, 2001, 2015; Schmitt, 2000) have recognized the importance of vocabulary learning in second language (L2) or additional language (AL) acquisition. The strong effects of lexical and background knowledge on L2 reading comprehension have similarly been found in various studies (e.g., Hu & Nation, 2000; Rokni & Hajilari, 2013). In the case of Japanese language, the opportunities for acquiring the lexical and background knowledge associated with Japanese history and culture, especially traditional culture, are scant, because only a small number of Japanese pedagogical materials deal minimally with these topics. Meanwhile, many learners are motivated to study Japanese because of their interest in Japanese history and culture, according to a survey conducted by the Japan Foundation in 2012.

This project aimed to increase the opportunities for learning Japanese history and traditional culture through the development of new pedagogical materials based on kabuki, and then the empirical evaluation of the developed pedagogical materials. Nine Chinese-as-a-first language Japanese learners at the upper-intermediate level participated in the nine-week online course, including the pre- and post-course tests in the first and last weeks. Employing a multimethod research approach, the study examined the changes in learners’ lexical and background knowledge related to Japanese history and culture, their reading comprehension, and their interest in kabuki. Four kinds of multiple-choice tests were administered to collect the quantitative data. In addition, the qualitative data were gathered through the pre- and post-course questionnaires and post-course individual interviews. Overall, the findings indicated that almost all participants increased their background knowledge of kabuki, as well as their vocabulary related to kabuki and general theatrical performances. The results in other areas, such as historical vocabulary, vocabulary depth, reading comprehension, and historical background knowledge were mixed. Further, concerning the depth of vocabulary knowledge, it was found that the learning of vocabulary depth was more difficult than learning of vocabulary breadth. Likewise, the knowledge of use, such as collocations and register constraints, was found to be more difficult to learn than other aspects of vocabulary depth. The participants’ reports in the post-course questionnaire and individual interviews showed that most participants seemed to have increased their interest in kabuki. Overall, the first-of-their-kind developed pedagogical materials contributed to the development of lexical and background knowledge, specifically knowledge associated with Japanese traditional culture and history. This study may provide a model for an evidence-based approach to the development of pedagogical materials that practitioners can adopt or adapt.