

報告

# ライティング・コミュニケーションを通じた 教師—学生・生徒間の信頼関係を構築する方法 クラス・ジャーナルを用いた大学・中学校での事例紹介

Steve T. FUKUDA<sup>1)</sup> 藤川夏美<sup>2)</sup> 橋本直実<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> 徳島大学全学共通教育センター <sup>2)</sup> 徳島大学総合科学部 <sup>3)</sup> 徳島市立城西中学校

要約：教師にとって学生全員とコミュニケーションをとることは信頼関係を築くためや、クラスを運営していく上で必要なことですが、実際の教育現場では人数または時間の関係から十分なコミュニケーションをとる事は難しいと思います。本文が紹介するクラス・ジャーナルは教師—学生・生徒間でコメントのやり取り等をするための用紙であり、私たちは、教師と学生・生徒がダイアログを通してコミュニケーションをとることで、学生一人一人との関係性(relatedness)を高めることができると考えています。また、クラス・ジャーナルを利用することによって、学生自身が学習状況を振り返ることができるほか、管理することが可能になります。ここでは、大学と中学校でのクラス・ジャーナル活用術とそれぞれで現れた効果を記載しています。

(キーワード：教師—学生・生徒間コミュニケーション，関係性，クラス・ジャーナル，大学・中等教育技法)

## Relationships do matter: Enhancing communication and building student-teacher relationships with class journals

Steve T. FUKUDA<sup>1)</sup> Natsumi FUJIKAWA<sup>2)</sup> Naomi HASHIMOTO<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Center for General Education, The University of Tokushima

<sup>2)</sup> Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokushima

<sup>3)</sup> Josei Junior High School

Abstract : Teachers are always looking for ways to make their classrooms more learner-centered. Using class journals is one technique that can help teachers create a more learner-centered class. A learner-centered class is one in which the students' needs are at the heart of instruction. Without understanding where the students are coming from or what students' needs, preferences, and abilities are, it is a difficult task to pursue. We demonstrate that class journals are one way of getting to know the students through dialogue. Furthermore, this dialogue becomes a catalyst of building a stronger student-teacher relationship which is essential in the learner-centered classroom. We discuss the advantages of using class journals in the university and junior high school classrooms by providing examples of the implementation of our class journal system.

(Key words: student-teacher communication, relatedness, class journals, learner-centered techniques)

### 1. Introduction

With emphasis on learner-centered classrooms in recent literature from junior high schools to universities (e.g. Miura, 2007), lacking are classroom techniques for bettering practice. A learner-centered classroom is centered on “what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how the current learning positions the student for the future” (Weimer, 2002, p. XVI). In other words, the instruction is focused on “what students (not teachers) are doing” (p.XVI). Learner-centered classrooms are not those that allow students to choose easy

options. “It is about creating climates in classes...that advance learning outcomes. It is an orientation that advocates for more, not less, learning” (p. XVII).

If we are to implement more effective learner-centered classrooms, first, we must redefine our roles as teachers and become “facilitators, information gatherers, decision-makers, motivators, and counselors” (Kojima & Kojima, 2005, p. 67). With these new roles come new jobs such as “identifying student’s needs, interests, learning styles and strategies, and helping learners become more independent” (Kojima & Kojima, 2005, p.67). For these new roles and jobs to play out effectively, there can be no end to the dialogue between the student

and teacher. Critical for engaging in an honest, respecting, and open dialogue is student-teacher relationships.

Urdu and Schoenfelder (2006) examined the effects of student-teacher relationships stating that learning “motivation emerges from the interaction between individuals within the social context of the classroom and school” (p. 333). They concluded that dialogue was the major factor in building an appropriate social context for learning. Cornelius-White’s (2007) meta-analysis study of 119 studies found that compared to other educational innovations, positive relationships, non-directivity, empathy, warmth, and encouraging creative thinking and learning are variables that specifically correlate to positive educational outcomes. However, being caring, as Stepik (2006) mentions, does not mean coddling, but to hold students accountable while providing support and a feeling of belongingness.

This feeling of belongingness, or relatedness, is an important aspect of a learner-centered classroom. According to Neimeic and Ryan (2009), relatedness is the feeling of belongingness and connectedness with the teacher. In the classroom, relatedness is felt by the student when he or she genuinely feels the teacher likes, respects, and values him or her. From these student-teacher relationships, more internal forms of motivation surface creating more student engagement (Neimeic & Ryan, 2009), which advocates more learning.

Student-teacher relationships are dependent on how we approach learner-centered classrooms. Urdu and Schoenfelder (2006) suggest making tasks personally more meaningful by tailoring them to the students. They believe that if the task is not personally meaningful to the students, the teacher’s support may discourage attitudes. Making the class more meaningful, for instance, by presenting more personal tasks, requires a good understanding of the students. However, as most university courses are only held once a week for 16 weeks, it makes acquiring this knowledge an even bigger challenge. For junior high school students who are psychologically unstable, a relationship with the teacher is essential to school adjustment (Nakai & Shoji, 2008). To gain a better understanding of each student and keep an

ongoing dialogue, a class journal (CJ, Appendix) is a great place to start.

Teachers could use CJs to meet communicative needs while building healthy student-teacher relationships. Park (2003) suggests that using journals “actively engage students in the learning process” (abstract). More engagement creates more dialogue also providing students with a voice in the class. Better student-teacher relationships create dialogue resulting in more valuable feedback for both the student and teacher. This feedback creates more opportunities for reflection that would in turn make a better learning experience for both.

## 2. Class Journals in the University Classroom

Our CJs (Appendix 1) assisted in getting to know the students more. In the class journal, students wrote their background information, such as their names next to a picture of themselves, their clubs and hobbies as well as something that might make the class a challenge. For instance, in our English class we asked them what obstacle they were currently experiencing in their English studies.

The CJ also had attendance and homework scores sections, as well as a class participation self-assessment section. In many classes, students, and perhaps teachers, only have vague ideas as to what class participation consists. However, our CJ provided more concrete criteria in which the students could find their weak points to better themselves in class.

We also attempted to enhance student-teacher communication in every section of the CJ using the background information to encourage more writing practice. For instance, we would ask questions about their hobbies or hometowns. The other sections were used as well. For example, if there was a low score in class participation or a student was frequently late we would use words of encouragement to help them better their attitude. This seemed to work better for students than reprimanding or speaking directly to the students creating unwanted tension that conflicts with dialogue. Furthermore, it helped us not to make any wrong judgments. For some students, being late is not on

purpose, but because they, for example, got a flat tire on the way to class. In this case, we were able to make a connection with the student by not reprimanding him, but encouraging communication. The student in the above example said he was surprised because a teacher would usually scold him encouraging a negative attitude towards the teacher that could project to the class or even the subject.

At the beginning of each class, the teacher handed out CJs to the students. The students filled in their attendance by themselves. For instance, when they attended the class, students wrote *P* for present, when they were late, students wrote an *L* with a reason, and if they were absent they would write an *A* in the following class with the reason. Thus, both teachers and students could check how many times they were absent or late for the class not creating any confusion, but creating a feeling of more responsibility. When the students' quizzes, tests, or homework were returned, the teachers and students would write their score and sometimes a qualitative assessment. The teacher and student could constantly check scores or homework they handed in. This shifts responsibility of the teacher being authoritative or 'bearer-of-all-fate' and more a facilitator. With the students having their own attendance / grade book, they were able to get an idea of their strong and weak points which provided them with an experience of self-reflection and in turn to better themselves. To give another example, we were able to encourage a better study habit for students who we knew had a goal of increasing vocabulary, in that we encouraged him to do only five minutes and five vocabulary a day by writing sentences which helped him later on to further his studies as he mentioned. This is something the student himself decided to do with only teacher encouragement as a facilitator.

On the back of the CJ (Appendix 2), students reflected on the class. There was a space to write anything about the class from comments to questions. The student could write anything, for example, how they felt about a particular explanation, test score, a dialogue with the teacher for writing practice. Hence, the teacher also got an idea of students' feelings about the class. For many

students, getting a response from the teacher gradually enhanced the student's confidence in English usage. We could talk with the students informally about various topics and formally when the need arose. For instance, instead of scolding a student who did not do his homework in front of the class, which he would already know he was wrong, we could advise him in a more discrete and effective way. As such, the CJ has free writing spaces used to enhance student-teacher communication to build better student-teacher relationships.

### 3. Survey of the Class Journal

At the end of the semester, we administered a questionnaire concerning the CJ asking the students the following questions. Seven general education English courses consisting of 197 students all used CJs and answered the questionnaire. Questions one to three were 5-point Likert scale questions, and question four was an open-ended question (Table 1). The courses were conducted by the first author with the second author as a teaching assistant.

**Table 1. Survey Questions**

1. The class journal was good for practicing written communication.
2. The class journal was useful to view my learning progress.
3. The class journal was good for self-reflection.
4. What would you change about the class journal?

**Table 2. Survey Question Results**

N=197	Communication	Progress	Self-reflection
strongly agree	80	68	83
agree	71	83	64
neither	38	40	43
disagree	7	5	4
strongly disagree	1	1	3

Question one measured if students felt the class journal was effective for writing practice. All CJs had been aimed to allow an opportunity for students to practice written communication. Our results show that 77 percent of the

students felt the CJ did assist in their writing practice. There were eight people who disagreed. In each class, there were two or three students in the class that did not write any comments after each class or reply to any questions. These students were either absent on the day the teachers explained how to use the CJ, or seemed not to be interested in writing, and others still seemed to only feel that he or she were still studying only for a score and only doing the class participation assessment.

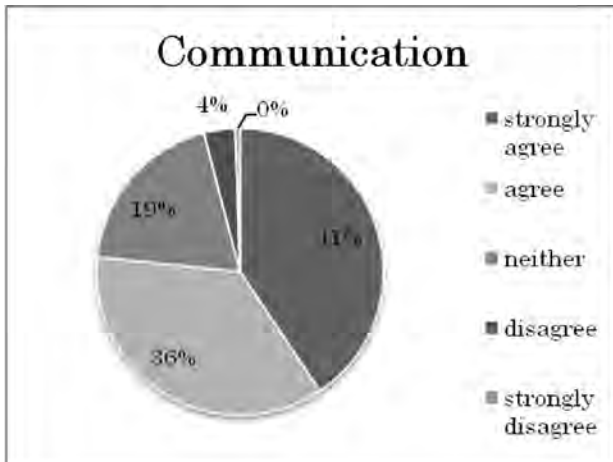


Figure 1. Results of Question 1.

Question two asked if the CJ was useful for viewing their learning progress. Results show 44 percent of the students felt so. This result may be because the CJ was used to record all attendance and homework as well as the written communication between the teacher and student was frequently about the students' learning experience. For instance, communications were centered on praise and encouragement from the teacher's view of the student in the class. Six students did not feel so which warrants further investigation. We feel that these were the same students that did not use the CJ efficiently or did not communicate with the teacher. This result suggests that teachers need to be clear of the purpose of the CJ with the students, and perhaps explaining the aims of the CJ repeatedly.

Question three examined how much the students felt the CJ assisted in self-reflection. Seventy-five percent of the students felt so. This is most likely due the Class Participation Assessment column in the reverse side of the CJ. There were six students who disagreed, suggesting they did not feel the CJ was used for self-reflection.

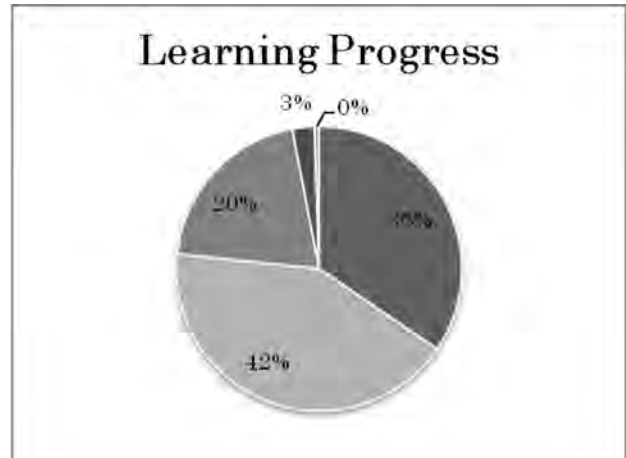


Figure 2. Results of Question 2.

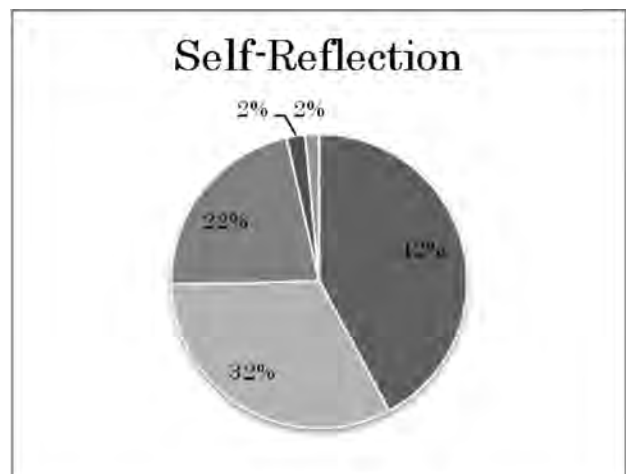


Figure 3. Results of Question 3.

This result could be from students who did not understand that the class participation assessment was for self-reflection and self-assessed themselves haphazardly. This suggests that the teachers needed to be more explicit and frequently review the reasons for the class participation assessment.

Question four, our open-ended question, showed that most students wanted more space and time for communication. Nineteen out of the 26 comments concerned the free writing space in which many students wrote *please make free writing communication space wider* or *spread space to write message to the teacher*. On the other hand, one student actually said they did not need the free writing space. The remaining five comments concerned the class participation assessment in that it was not needed or difficult to score. This was probably because as mentioned above, the students did not have a good idea of the reasons why they needed to self-reflect.

One student felt there was no need to take attendance on their own because they always forgot to record it. This, perhaps, shows that too much emphasis is placed on attendance opposed to learning in the system in general or perhaps that the student did not feel any need for a shifting of responsibility.

In sum, our examination of using a CJ in the university classroom suggests that the CJ is a great way to enhance communication with each student. This is also good for the student to practice using English. Moreover, using the CJ, the teacher can get a better idea of where each student is coming from. For example, through the CJ the second author found that one student was from the same high school as her. While deepening their communications, the student became motivated to study English more and decided to start an e-mail exchange diary, though English was a subject she once hated.

Our results also suggest students want to communicate with the teacher more, especially after a healthy relationship is built. Also, if it is important for teachers to know about students, the students would need to notice that their teachers are making an effort. If students notice that the teacher knows more about them, they are more positive towards their studies. Communicating through CJs also assisted us in remembering all of the students' names. For instance, one student directly wrote, after reading a comment from the teacher, she was happy when her name was called. Students, such as her feel that teachers do not even know their names, or do not try to get to know them encouraging less engagement. Thus, using CJs is a great way to communicate with students, not only for teaching English but also to build teacher-student relationships to raise motivation and create more engagement to learn making a better learning environment.

#### 4. Class Journals in Junior High School Classrooms

Not only at the university level, but even in junior high schools are CJs beneficial for engaging in student-teacher dialogue and fostering student-teacher relationships. It is essential to have a strong relationship with students, because they have many difficulties, such as emotional

instability. Junior high school is an extremely difficult time. Thus, it is essential to communicate with the students even outside of the classroom, but due to time constraints it is close to impossible. As teachers, we must find ways to improve students' English proficiency while finding ways to communicate with the students more. Therefore, the third author decided to use a CJ in her junior high school classrooms.

The university version of the CJ was made simpler and easier to understand for the junior high school students (Appendix 3 - 4). On the CJ, students wrote their names and put their pictures. They also wrote their club activities or hobbies for the teacher to get to know them better. There was also a space to write the date of the class and a free space to write comments about the class. There are various ways to use this space. For example, the teacher could use this space and ask students to write their feelings freely in which students give the teacher feedback concerning the class. Also, the teacher could ask them to write original sentences using new grammatical items that have been picked up in the class, thus the teacher can receive formative feedback to check student understanding.

We suggest three rules when using the CJ in junior high school classrooms. First of all, teachers should allow students to write comments in English or Japanese, because some students, especially in junior high school, are not confident or even hate English. Thus, the teacher should not want them to build a psychological barrier from the outset. Therefore, asking them to write in Japanese is permissible. Either way, the teacher must follow the goals of implementing the CJ, in which if it is to build relationships, student language choice should not matter in the beginning. Though there are exceptions such as the above, most written communication from the teacher should be in English, hence, the second rule that teachers use English in their comments. Finally, the third rule concerns giving feedback, the author did not correct any grammatical mistakes, doing so potentially makes students feel they should not make mistakes. In other words, we do not want to discourage language use.

Teachers should encourage more language use without

fear toward English. If they do so, as in our case, students who had a psychological barrier in the beginning of the semester, asking them to put a few words into English, gradually increased their English usage. This strategy of encouraging one word and gradually encouraging more has resulted in an increase in the number of the English words used by students.

Most students' attitude during the class had changed. Those who had a thick barrier at first gradually came to like English. For example, one student wrote the following comment in Japanese: *I hate English, I don't want to, Let's not.* However, the teacher did not force this student to change their attitude, but just replied by asking *Why not?* and writing the things he could do while crossing out all forms of *can't* that he wrote. By the end of the first semester, the student wrote positive comments such as: *Now I can speak English, Now I can study English.* Surprisingly, he wrote these comments in English. There are other cases such as this. For examples, one female student wrote comments all in Japanese, but from the second page (Appendix 5), she started writing everything in English, and she continues to write everything in English. To raise another example of our CJ usage, one extremely quiet female student who does not talk in the speaking activities much or raise her hand, on the CJ is extremely talkative. She writes only in Japanese, but the amount is enormous. She expresses herself with the CJ. Therefore, the third author could use her comments to tailor classroom activities and build stronger relations outside the class. This student and the author keep the dialogue going during cleaning or lunch time, building a stronger relationship resulting in more engagement in the classroom.

In sum, we recommend this CJ even in junior high school. CJs create a foundation needed to foster better student-teacher relationships which in turn better the learning experience for both parties. Moreover, the CJ potentially changes students' attitude toward English.

## 5. Conclusion

As Aspy and Roebuck (1977) had claimed over three decades ago in *Kids Don't Learn from People They Don't*

*Like*, students who feel disconnected with the teacher do not and cannot learn positively. Stipek (2006) summarized Osterman (2000) mentioning "one of the best predictors of students' effort and engagement in school is the relationships they have with their teachers" (p.46). Projecting from a positive relationship, "students who actively engage with what they are studying tend to understand more, learn more, remember more, enjoy it more and be able to appreciate the relevance of what they have learned"(Park, 2003, p.183).

Considering the importance of building relationships, we have demonstrated that a CJ is a great place to start. The CJ assists teachers in our limited time to engage in dialogue with all students. CJs also assist students who feel more comfortable communicating through writing by minimizing negative psychological factors (Bloch, 2002). For every student and teacher, CJs help build relationships even through phatic communion<sup>1</sup>. This is especially so in cultures such as Japan in which students may feel uncomfortable to interact with the teacher in front of the whole class or perhaps feel their question was not appropriate in the class.

Communicating with students in each class through the CJs took us 30 to 45 minutes a week at the college level and 20 to 30 minutes three times a week at the junior high school level. During this time, the authors basically made comments for up to 45 students a class. In the CJs, many university and junior high school students started similarly, for example, with one word sentences or in Japanese but with constant and persistent encouragement, students at both levels gradually started to write in English. In one of our discussions reflecting on our CJ usage, one author who did not make comments for five weeks mentioned she really felt distant to the students until she started communicating through the CJ again.

Finally, as reflective practitioners and researchers, Kojima and Kojima (2005) strongly advise that it is important to understand what is taking place in the classroom to improve the educational experience for both the students and the teacher. Thus, we should not be too quick to judge criticism about the class from students, which other students might be feeling anyway. Again, it

could mean that we have a strong relationship in which he can actually make that comment. We took each comment as an opportunity to reflect on the class as a means to better the situation for both of us and perhaps other students. However, without a strong student-teacher relationship, it could just be a complaint; hence, the importance of a strong and healthy student-teacher relationship.

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Bloch (2002) citing Malinowski (1947) defines phatic communion as 'how ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words.' In other words, a simple *Hello* or *How are you?* can be a catalyst for building a strong relationship.

# Class Journal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (picture)

Hometown: \_\_\_\_\_

Club / Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

My English Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_

## New English

example 1: Class Participation = 授業参加  
example 2: How is it going? = How are you?

## Questions・Comments

\* 出席したら、「P」(Present)と記入  
\* 欠席は「A」(Absent)又は、遅刻は「L」(Late)  
「A」と「L」の場合は、理由も英語で書く

## Attendance

Date	4/12	4/19	4/26	5/7	5/10	5/17	5/24	5/31
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	
P	L/overslept	P	no class	L/flat tire	X / sick	X / sick	X / sick	P
			no class					
6/7	6/14	6/21	6/28	7/5	7/12	7/26	8/2	
Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Day 16	

## Homework & Assessment(詳細)

提出期限	4/19	4/26	4/26	5/10	5/17	6/14	8/2まで	8/2
シラバス 理解プリント assignment (課題)	英語学習のため の ストラテジー プリント	クラス・ ジャーナル の 縮写真	学習目標 プリント	学習日程 プリント	学習プラン 最終評価 プリント	期末評価	学習プラン2	
Score								

## Helpful Phrases

How do you say ~? 英語で~はどうやって言いますか。  
What does ~ mean? ~の意味何ですか。  
More slowly please. もう少しゆっくり話して下さい。  
One more time please. 言い直して下さい。  
I don't understand. 分かりません。  
Let me think. 少し考えさせて下さい。  
I need help with ~. ~について教えて下さい。

## 単位取得のために。。。

教員と英語でトライ!  
欠席は3回まで大丈夫  
遅刻は3回まで大丈夫  
「~ができない」と言わない  
翻訳ソフトを使わない  
授業中に寝ない  
宿題の提出の期限を守る



# Class Participation Assessment

How? 方法	Read each item and Score as 0.0 = no, 0.5 = a little, 1.0 = mostly, or 1.5 = yes 各基準を読み適切に自己評価をしよう。0.0 = いいえ, 0.5 = 少しだけ 1.0 = もう少し頑張れた, 1.5 = はい	10/1	10/8	10/15	10/22	11/5	11/12	11/26	12/3	12/10	1/14	1/21	1/28	2/4
<b>Class Participation Criteria (授業参加基準)</b>	<b>Example (例)</b>	1.5												
1. I came to class on time. (時間通りに来た)		1												
2. I came to class prepared. (学習の準備をしてきた(物も心も))		1												
3. I used my class time usefully. (授業時間を効果的に使った)		1.5												
4. I learned some new English. (今日は新しい英語を学んだ)		0.5												
5. I did some extra study to remember my new English. (前回～今日の講義まで、授業外で英語を学習した)		1.5												
6. I know what I have to do next week. (次週の授業内容は分かっている)		0.5												
7. I learned developed skills. (今日は英語以外のスキルを身に付けた)		1												
8. I tried my best to improve my English in all activities. (活動で自分の英語力向上のためにベストを尽くした)		1.5												
9. I asked my teacher or classmates every question I had. (疑問や質問は全て先生や友人に聞いた)		1.5												
10. I tried expressing myself in English in class. (英語で物事を伝えようとした)		1.5												
<b>Total (合計)</b>		<b>11.5</b>												

<b>Today's Phrase (今日を振り返り一言)</b>		<b>Extra Work Ideas (授業外学習のアイデア)</b>		Teacher's signature	Date
Day 1		1. Speak and record yourself talking about your hobby.			
Day 2		2. Write and send a long e-mail or letter to the teacher.			
Day 3		3. Write about something you learned on TV.			
Day 4		4. Translate your own lyrics to your favorite song.			
Day 5		5. Write a comment on a blog.			
Day 6		6. Join a Just Talk! Class.			
Day 7		7. Visit the English Support Room or English Chat Room.			
Day 8		8. Read a graded reader and write about it			
Day 9		9. Study and take the TOEIC or Eiken.			
Day 10		10. Memorize 5 vocabulary everyday.			
Day 11		11. Write a diary in English.			
Day 12		12. Watch a movie in English subtitles write about it.			
Day 13		13. Listen to English a YouTube video and write about it.			
Day 14		14. (Your Idea)			





