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## **Group Dynamics and Resilience in the Process of L2 Socialization: A Longitudinal Case Study of Japanese University Students Visiting an English Lounge**

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### **Abstract**

This paper documents the socialization process of beginner-level Japanese university students into an on-campus English lounge over a year. Although initially feeling highly stressed, ten out of 37 students successfully continued their bi-weekly visits to the English lounge over a full academic year by going there as a small group of three to four students. Although the visits were originally encouraged as part of their elective homework, two of them made frequent visits to the lounge beyond the homework requirement. The reflective journals which these ten students wrote after each visit provided an emic view of their socialization processes into the English lounge. The author conducted an inductive thematic analysis of these data. Among multiple findings, the most salient was that aspects of group dynamics served to increase their resilience, or their capacity to adapt under adversity, during their socialization processes. These findings may provide insights for those language instructors and self-access language learning center staff who are in the position to facilitate students to learn in such a second language (L2) use environment, as well as learners themselves who are struggling in such a learning environment.

*Keywords:* self-access language learning center, English lounge, group dynamics, L2 socialization, resilience

### ***Sachi's Reflective Journal on Her First Visit***

入学前から英語ラウンジの存在は知っていたけれど自分には関係のない施設だろうと思っていました。英語は好きだけれどすごく勉強したいわけでもなくて、、、だから今回のように宿題という形でなければ、ずっと行かずに4年間を過ごしていたと思います。行かなければいけないと知ったときは、すごく気が重たかったし、不安な気持ちでいっぱいでした。英語で話さないといけないなんてどうしよう・・・と思っていました。(省略) 英語ラウンジに入った瞬間、緊張で手が震えました。[I knew about the lounge, but I thought it was nothing to do with me. I like English, but it's not like I want to study seriously. .... When I heard that I had to go, I felt so blue and very nervous. I thought, "What do I

*do that I have to speak in English... ”... The moment I stepped inside the lounge, my hands shattered from being so nervous.]*

The initiatives to provide on-campus self-access language learning centers such as English lounge have been expanding in Japan. Self-access learning centers are “facilities which provide access to resources and services to support learners in their language learning” (Mynard et al., 2020, p. 3). English lounge is a place where learners can gather and have informal social interaction in English (Kushida, 2020; Murray, 2017), providing a second language (L2) environment on campus to Japanese university students who otherwise have few opportunities to use English in authentic social interactions. Furthermore, those centers also afford ecosocial systems in which various kinds of supportive social activities emerge (Murray, 2018). Although using an English lounge has such benefits, some studies have observed that those who utilize such facilities frequently are the intermediate to high-intermediate learners (e.g. Kawamura, 2009), more confident students with strong ideal L2 selves (Gillies, 2010), or highly autonomous, self-directed learners (Murray, 2017; Yarwood, Lorentzen, et al., 2019). While at the same time, a large number of studies in second language acquisition (SLA) have highlighted that foreign language anxiety can hinder L2 use (Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986). It is plausible that anxiety may inhibit beginner-level learners from attending and communicating in an English lounge where most of the people there speak more fluent English than they do. It has been a concern as to how to encourage and to give support to such beginner-level students who may be afraid of communicating in a naturalistic environment of an English lounge. However, there is scarce literature that focuses on these learners. To address this gap, this study traces beginner-level Japanese university students’ experiences of on-campus English lounge visits over a year, and documents their personal development as English learners. In doing so, the paper aims to highlight the salient features that seem to have enhanced those students’ resilience.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I present my theoretical stance. First, I briefly discuss L2 socialization as my theoretical perspective in looking at the phenomenon. Then, I introduce the concept of resilience (Hirano, 2020; Masten et al., 1990; Masten, 2001; Masten et al., 2012; Masten & Powell, 2003; Taguchi, 2016) and group dynamics (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Murphey, 1998), which serve as the analytical lenses of the paper.

## **L2 Socialization**

This present study draws on L2 socialization as a theoretical framework. L2 socialization refers to “a process by which non-native speakers of a language ... seek competence in the language and, typically, membership and the ability to participate in the practices of communities in which that language is spoken” (Duff, 2011, p. 564). As seen in the definition, the notion of community of practice (CoP; Lave & Wenger, 1991) is inherent. I find this theoretical framework fits the present study, since the focal students of this paper are the university students who have been studying English as a school subject, and their experience of English lounge can be framed as L2 socialization.

Furthermore, a notion that is relevant for the present study is the identification of discomfort in L2 socialization. Duff (2010), Morita (2004, 2009), and others regard learner’s discomfort not as “simply a perception on their part, an internally generated form of anxiety or a lack of immediate identification or familiarity with the new target discourses and community practices” (Duff, 2010, p. 176), but rather, “co-constructed through interactions and other social practices, by dominant power structures and prevailing discourses of exclusion” (Duff, 2010; Morita, 2004, 2009). Discomfort involves emotional states such as conflicts, tensions, loss of face, and dilemmas (Duff, 2010). The focal learners in this study experience discomfort, not only toward the L2 use but also toward the social practices in the English lounge.

## **Resilience and Group Dynamics**

A key concept that serves as a perspective in looking at the learners’ experiences is *resilience* (Hirano, 2020; Masten et al., 1990; Masten, 2001; Masten et al., 2012; Masten & Powell, 2003; Taguchi, 2016). In the SLA literature, Oxford and Bolaños-Sánchez (2016) have used the word resilience in depicting two language learners’ learning trajectories, while Oxford (2015) and Taguchi (2016) argued for the need of theorization of this concept in SLA. However, since the above-mentioned studies were published, the field has not seen much development in this direction. To define resilience, in psychology, the oft-cited definition of resilience is “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426). Since the appearance of this definition and the construct, psychology has seen a tremendous theoretical development concerning operational definitions, models, and factors associated with resilience (Cutuli et al., 2018; Hirano, 2020; Masten et al., 2012).

Some psychologists take a social constructionist stance, and view resilience as an interactive process with the environment, and the ability to adapt is induced by both internal characteristics and external resources, which is not static but dynamic (Hirano, 2020). Resilience may be enhanced by various ways, including “relationship with others” (Hirano, 2020, p. 31). It may be even boosted by “the value required by others” (Hirano, 2020, p. 32). In this paper, the students who initially find English lounge visits overwhelmingly challenging go through the process of overcoming the difficulties of L2 socialization, and finally adapt. I propose this trajectory may be framed as resilience. In this trajectory, the students’ resilience may be induced by their internal characteristics such as motivation and personality (e.g., perseverance), but also with external resources such as social support.

As such resilience can be enhanced, another analytical concept that is used in this paper is group dynamics (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). This study considers group dynamics to be one of the factors that augment students’ resilience. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) refer to group dynamics as to how members in the community relate to each other, what roles they play, and how well they cooperate. They claim that “a group has greater resources than any single member alone” and “individuals in groups behave differently from the way they do outside the group” (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003, p. 3). One insightful key concept is near peer role models. Near peer role models refer to “peers who are close to our social, professional and/or age level who for some reason we may respect and admire” (Murphey, 1998, p. 205). Because they are influential, their advice and words of encouragement may boost students’ resilience who feel vulnerable during the difficult times at the English lounge. Another essential understanding seems to be the role of senior students (*senpai* in Japanese). This is well documented in a study by Hooper (2020). The case study highlighted the caring of junior group members (*kohai*) by senior students (*senpai*). It illustrated how senior students, who experienced struggles as they first entered the English lounge, “had often taken steps to ease the same rite of passage for newcomers” (Hooper, 2020, p. 120). The study was conducted in one private Japanese university in the Kanto area. The present study will look at these features in another social setting, focusing on beginner-level university students whose linguistic repertoires are quite limited.

### **Research Questions**

Situating the beginner-level students’ English lounge experience in the L2 socialization framework, this study aims to identify their discomfort, struggles, and resilience. This paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What kind of discomfort do beginner-level students experience in the English lounge?

RQ2: For the students experiencing serious stress and discomfort, what factors enhance their resilience when attending an English lounge?

RQ3: How do group dynamics enhance their resilience in English lounge visits?

## **Methods**

### **The Participants and the Researcher Identity**

The participants were 37 non-English major first-year university students (16 male, 10 female students) in my two English communication class groups, who agreed to participate in the study and signed the consent form. Their English level is basic (TOEIC Bridge scores 100 or below, which is equivalent to the A1 level in CEFR). In the class comment sheets, all 35 students indicated that they felt they were ‘not good at English’, and eight of them mentioned that they ‘failed’ from their English studies during the first or second year in junior high school. As mentioned, I was the teacher and at the same time the researcher of this study.

### **The Site**

The university has an on-campus English lounge. The lounge room is medium-sized, with five circular tables. During lunchtime, it is very crowded, but otherwise, the usual scene is that one or two tables are occupied with less than ten visitors. The lounge has two full-time male American staff, who are native speakers of English.

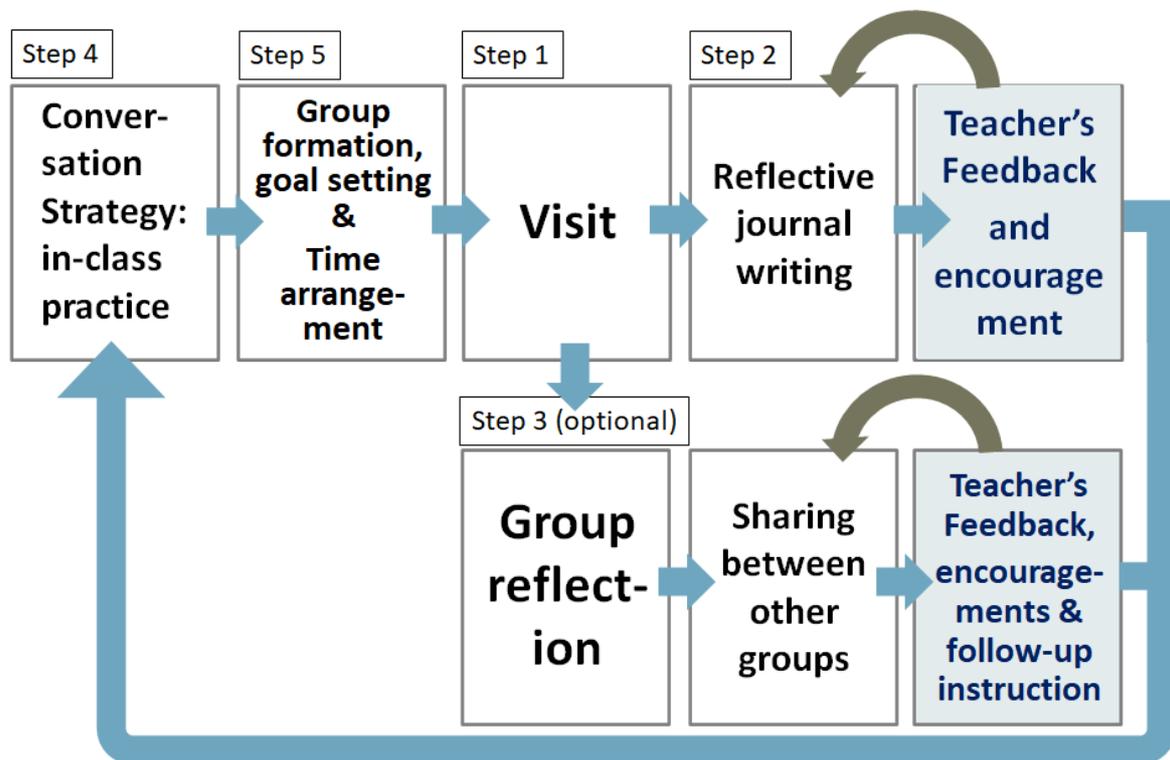
### **The Intervention**

The design of the intervention originated from my observations of students in the previous years. Before this study, I had seen a few beginner-level students who gave up going to the lounge after their first or second visits. The idea of going in small groups emerged from such observations. As a teacher, I also felt the need to include in-class group discussions of the problems and difficulties students face in the lounge, and create an opportunity to provide necessary language instructions and practices. The approach is similar to the one called discussion-based classroom intervention in a study by Yarwood, Rose-Wainstock et al. (2019). Their findings showed that many students felt the intervention helped their students to increase their use of English in their self-access learning center, yet “the majority of students were uncertain about the effectiveness of the intervention” (Yarwood, Rose-Wainstock et al., 2019, p. 356). The difference from my study is that their intervention was preparation-

oriented in their approach in which their students discussed the possible scenes in SALC using discussion prompts. In my study, students discussed their own events that actually happened to them which were loaded with emotions.

Figure 1

*The Process of the Educational Intervention*



The procedure of the intervention is described in Figure 1. I requested my students to visit the English lounge in a small group every two weeks for one academic year (Step 1). This was a required homework assignment in the Spring semester (six visits) and an elective homework assignment in the Fall semester (six visits). All of the students were asked to write in Japanese about their reflection on their experiences at the lounge (e.g. what they thought, what they felt, what they noticed, etc.) and submit it to the teacher-researcher after each time they visited (Step 2). The reflection journals also had to include the date and the time of the visit, the names of group members, the new vocabulary and phrases they encountered. They were told that the content of the reflective journal would not be subject to evaluation. After reading the submitted reflective journals, I wrote my feedback and words of encouragement. Reading the journals, occasionally there were times when I felt the class needed a small group discussion to share the burden of discomfort or to make a positive

evaluation of their experiences (Dörnyei, 2001). Therefore, in the subsequent class, I allocated a short amount of time for in-class group discussion (Step 3). The discussion was done in their first language (L1) Japanese. In class, I also allocated time for the in-class practice of various conversation strategies (Step 4), such as turn-taking by saying “Speaking of ...”, or even how to end a conversation in the middle of fast turn-taking and say “I have to go”. For the following visit to the lounge, students in groups set their group goals and arranged their visiting schedule (Step 5).

### **The Data and the Analysis**

As mentioned briefly above, I collected the learners’ reflective journals (Step 2) and after-class reflective comment sheets (after Step 3-5) or action logs (Murphey, 2021), which provided a record of their visits and their emic view of their experiences. Additionally, I took pictures of the students’ discussion notes on the whiteboards (Step 3), kept notes of relevant personal conversations I had with my students after class, and conducted interviews with two participants who became frequent visitors of the lounge. Furthermore, I occasionally visited the lounge myself during my lunch break. These further data enriched my understanding of the students’ experiences, however, the main, rich source of data that informed this study was the students’ written voices which they submitted bi-weekly over a year.

All the reflective journal entries were typed into an Excel spreadsheet. I conducted an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012) of this rich and in-depth source of data which was accumulated over one year.

### **The Researcher Positionality**

Regarding my positionality, I was sharing the same experience with my students, that is, being a beginner-level L2 speaker in the authentic L2 environment. The difference was that the students were experiencing it in the present, and I was experiencing it in the past. In the in-class group discussions (Step 3), I listened to my students’ discussions remembering my own experiences in the past when I had to go to a local elementary and junior high school in the U.S. with no English proficiency. I often made comments by referring to my own struggles and joy during my process of L2 socialization. Whenever I talked about my experience, students listened very attentively. I also made comments on the students’ reflective journals, such as “I really understand how you feel, as I exactly had the same feeling, too”. The sharing of the same experience, or the identity of being a struggling L2 speaker, may have influenced the degree of self-disclosure of the students in their written reflection journals.

As for the relationship with my students, I would evaluate we had a relaxed, friendly, and respectful relationship. In the classroom, I valued humor and a warm atmosphere, and students were able to make playful comments during the group discussions. I would say many students were very open and honest with me (e.g., one student told me at the beginning, “I don’t think going to the lounge is meaningful for me. It is a waste of time.”). Sometimes after class, some students stayed in the classroom to chat with me about various things, including what they experienced in the English lounge. At the end of the Fall semester, two female students and I shed tears for the end of the class. Such a teacher-student relationship may have positively affected the length, depth, and honesty of the articulations in the learners’ reflective journals.

## Findings and Discussions

### Overview of the Intervention Results

Out of 37 students, 17 students made the full six visits to the English lounge in the Spring semester. In the Fall semester, nine students opted for alternative homework, but 26 students continued their participation in the study, and ten of them made the full six visits (See Table 1). As will be discussed in the following sections, these students seemed to have gained joy and confidence in L2 interactions through the English lounge experience. As a consequence, one female student made a year-long study abroad to New York in her third year of university. Also, during the period of the study, two male students started going to the lounge with their own will almost every day outside their homework assignments. Notably, one of them went on a short homestay trip to Perth right after the study period.

The length of the written journals varied according to individuals, but the longest one was in 805 letters in Japanese from a male student and 649 letters from a female student.

**Table 1**

*Number of Visits Students Made to the English Lounge*

Number of visits	Spring (N=37)		Fall (N=26)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
6	17	46	10	40
5	3	8	1	4
4	6	16	3	12
3	5	14	5	2
2	3	8	3	12
1	3	8	4	16
0	0	0	0	0

### **The Discomfort: The Initial Anxiety and Stress**

Almost all students wrote about their anxiety and being overwhelmed and perplexed in their reflective journals after the first visit. All the excerpts below are original, with a few exceptions where I supplemented or changed words in round brackets for narrative smoothing. All the names are pseudonyms. The texts in square brackets are my translations.

#### ***Issa's Reflective Journal on His First Visit***

初めて英語ラウンジに行ってみたが、同じ班のメンバー4人と最初入り口で固まってしまいました。足を踏み入れることをとても緊張していて、時間だけが少しずつ過ぎて行った。その様子を見たサイモン（スタッフ）が寄ってきて話しかけてくれたけれど、自分の英語力が足りないせいか理解できないことの方が多く、サイモンを困らせてしまった。[I went to the lounge for the first time with four of my group members, but we all got 'frozen' at the entrance. We were very nervous about stepping in and only the time went by. Simon (the staff) noticed the situation and he came to speak with us, but my English skill was so poor that I could not understand, which troubled him.]

The high intensity of stress expressed in the journals led me to plan a small discussion time at the beginning of the following classroom meeting (Step 3).

### **Factors that Enhanced Students' Resilience**

#### ***Sharing the Emotional Burden***

In the subsequent class after their first visit, we had an in-class group discussion. Students sat together in circles and were told to share their honest thoughts and feelings regarding their first visit. After that, they were suggested to discuss how much they were satisfied with the visit, find some aspects that they were satisfied with, and list the aspects they were not. Then, they were asked to discuss what they can do to resolve the gap. They were told to make notes on the whiteboard. After the session, they were asked to form new discussion groups to meet other people in different groups, and share what they had discussed, by moving to the relevant whiteboard. At the end of the activity, I commented that I was experiencing the same thing every day when I had to enroll in an American elementary school, but gradually I also came to experience joy, and I wished my students they would too. The following excerpts are from their after-class reflective comment sheets.

### ***Shoki's After-Class Reflective Comment Sheet***

自分が思っていることがみんなも思ってたよかったです。[Everybody else was also thinking the same as I was, and I felt relieved.]

### ***Sachi's After-Class Reflective Comment Sheet***

英語ラウンジの振り返りをして、すごく盛り上がりました。あんなに緊張していたみんなも私も、英語ラウンジにもっと行く回数を増やしたいと言っていて、驚きました！私もすごく楽しくてまた行きたいなと思っていたので、これからもみんなで頑張れそうです。[Our group discussion went very active reflecting upon our first lounge visit. Everyone as well as myself were so nervous, but then, we ended up saying that we wanted to increase the times of our visits, which was surprising. I also felt it was fun and I wanted to go again, so I think we can invest our effort together.]

### ***Mika's After-Class Reflective Comment Sheet***

自分たちの班以外のメンバーの英語ラウンジの話をきけて良かったです。[It was good that we were able to hear stories of how the other groups did at the lounge.]

The in-class discussion seemed to have soothed the stress and discomfort. Shoki wrote about his emotional relief, while Sachi mentioned how the group was redirected to going to the lounge with more positive attitudes. The experience, which was loaded with emotions, was shared by the whole class, which seemed to have been positively evaluated by students as we read Mika's voice. This kind of group discussion (Step 3) was done several times during the semester using the class time.

### ***Group Members Helping Each Other***

After the first in-class discussion, group dynamics within the class seemed to have nurtured the supportive group atmosphere. This was seen in some of the groups' visits.

### ***Tsubasa's Reflective Journal on His Second Visit***

2回目の英語ラウンジに行って、1回目より明らかに話しやすかったと思う。うまく聞き取れなかったところは班員と助け合いうまく協力できた。(省

略) 一番感じたことは前より会話を楽しんでできたことだ。[I went to the lounge for the second time, and clearly, I felt easier to speak. For the parts we could not catch, the group members helped each other... What I felt most was that I could enjoy the conversation more than the previous visit.]

### **Support from the Teacher**

As part of the educational intervention, my class also worked on some of the conversation strategies (Step 4) that I found necessary from reading the students' reflective journals. Strategies included how to end the conversation and leave the lounge (especially in the middle of fast turn-taking), how to join the table, and how to take turns by saying "Speaking of ...", even with minimum comprehension of what is being discussed at the table.

Students communicated in their reflective journals how what they had practiced in class worked in the lounge. This kind of communication between the students and the teacher seemed to have provided not only language support but also emotional support.

### **Shizuku's Reflective Journal on Her Fifth Visit**

今日の英語ラウンジはうれしいことがありました！！それは、なんと、念願だった”Speaking of…”を使うことができたのです！！しかも、その後も少し長い文を言うことができたのです！清田先生ほめて下さい！！でも、きっとそれは、何回も英語ラウンジに行ったから、少し慣れてきて、余裕が生まれたのかなと思います。今までの積み重ねだと思います。[There was a delightful moment at the English lounge today!! I could use the phrase “Speaking of ...”, which I wanted to use for a long time!! Even more, after that, I could say a little longer sentence! Ms. Kiyota, give me praise!! I think I could do this because I got more used to (communicating in English in an authentic situation) by going to the lounge many times. This is what I have built on.]

### **The Support from Senior Students in the Lounge**

Some students had personal encounters with helpful senior students in the lounge. They were often very willing to support struggling students by giving various advice and information, as they shared the same experiences of going through that struggling stage. This aligns with the findings noted in a study in another context by Hooper (2020).

### **Issa's Reflective Journal on His Second Visit**

最後の1時間は初めてお会いした経営学部2年生の先輩と二人でお話をして(省略) 会話のやり方を教えてもらった。今後の勉強方法もアドバイスしてくださり、また少しずつ英語に対するやる気が上がり、英語に対する苦手意識が少なくなってきたので勇気を出して行ってよかったです。[In the last hour, I spoke with a second-year Management Department student, and he taught me how to carry the conversation. He also gave me advice on how to study (English) from now on. My motivation for (learning) English has gone up. My negative feeling towards English has become smaller. I am glad that I went to the English lounge with courage.]

Support from senior members not only facilitated the L2 development but also the participation in the community of practice in the English lounge. Later, we will see Issa becomes a regular member of the lounge community, visiting the lounge almost every day.

#### ***Near Peer Role Models in the Class Group***

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) claim that “‘modeling’ is held to be one of the most powerful ways of teaching; it involves setting an example that learners find worthy to follow” (p. 128). Near peer role models from the class groups started appearing in the students’ reflective journals in the Fall semester. Mika started to be a role model for the other group members.

#### ***Yuna’s Reflective Journal on Her Ninth Visit***

今日のサイモンはいつも以上にテンションが高かった気がしました！クリスマスの質問をするときに、みんなで口をそろえていったので、笑われました(笑)。美香が *Speaking of Christmas, I think of illumination*. と言い出していて、とてもよいと思いました！それに続いて、みんな *cake* や *Santa Claus* など言っていて、話が盛り上がりました！次に英語ラウンジに行く時は、美香を見習って、私も失敗を恐れず、積極的に話すことを心がけます。[Today, I felt Simon was more energetic than ever! He laughed because we asked a question about Christmas in chorus. Mika started the conversation by saying “Speaking of Christmas, I think of illumination lights.” I thought that was very good! Following that, everyone started to talk from there, about cakes and Santa Claus, and the

*conversation went so lively. Next time I visit the lounge, I will behave like Mika, not being afraid of making mistakes and actively speak up.]*

Meanwhile, Tatsuya also gradually became famous as a good communicator at the lounge. Tatsuya himself wrote about his experience of being asked to take someone else to the lounge.

***Fumiya's Reflective Journal on His Seventh Visit***

*達也がすごい話せるのは知っていて今回初めて一緒に行った。うわさ通りにすごい話せていて、ほぼ達也とサイモンに自分と竜輝がちよくちよく会話に入る感じだった。でも話す量はいつも通り話せた。自分も達也くらい話せるようになりたいと思わされた。[I knew Tatsuya can speak a lot, and this time I went with him for the first time. He spoke very well as I had been told, it was like Tatsuya and Simon were the ones who talked, and Ryuki and I joined at times, but we could speak the amount we usually speak. I was inspired that I want to be able to speak like Tatsuya.]*

***Tatsuya's Reflective Journal on His 11th Visit***

*他の授業を一緒に受けてる友達に「今度、英語ラウンジ連れてってよ！」と言われました！自分が英語ラウンジにいるのを見たようで一見さんお断り感があるから一緒に来てほしいとのことです。次の英語ラウンジ（訪問）で一緒に行ってきます。[I was asked by a friend of mine from another course to go to the lounge together. He saw me in the lounge. He felt that the lounge had a difficult atmosphere to enter for the first-time visitor. I am going to take him to the lounge the next time.]*

And, what surprised the class was the change of Mamoru and Issa to be the regular members of the English lounge, as mentioned in the following excerpt. Mika, Tatsuya, Mamoru, and Issa were the salient near peer role models who were often mentioned in the journals. Reading the students' mention of these role models, the sight of them seemed to have encouraged the other students even if the lounge experience may have been challenging and overwhelming at times.

### ***Akina's Reflective Journal on Her Tenth Visit***

(省略) メンバーの中でも美香がサイモンにとても積極的にいつも話していて私も負けないように頑張ろうと思いました。授業でやった *Speaking of...* とか皆使えるようになっていてサイモンにも驚かれていました。また、最近、英語ラウンジに行くと守とイッサが宿題ではなく自分からコトパティオに足を運んでいて、皆前期と変わったなと思いました。私も、もっと頑張りたいです。 [*Among the members, Mika is always actively talking to Simon, and I wanted to act like that. Simon was surprised to see us all being able to use the phrase "Speaking of..." . Also, recently Mamoru and Issa are visiting the lounge by their will, not as homework assignments. Everybody has changed from the Spring Semester. I want to try harder, too.*]

Below, one student wrote using meta-cognition and commented how these near peer role models had been helpful in her resilience (“*I will not give up but try my best to have communication*”). Notice how she begins her reflection with a resentful tone but ends with a positive tone referring to her classmates as role models.

### ***Mami's Reflective Journal on Her Tenth Visit***

(省略) 今回は Simon とあまり会話ができずに終わってしまった。うんうんとうなずいて聞くことることが多く、思うように会話に入れなかった。サイモンが話していることでみんなが笑っていたが、私はジェフが何を言っているのか理解できず、悔しい思いをした。(省略) 友達ががんばっているとすごく刺激を受ける。授業中もそうだが、手本となる良いクラスメイトがたくさんいるこのクラスは本当に恵まれた環境だと思った。次の英語ラウンジ (訪問) でもめげずに頑張ってコミュニケーションを取ろうと思う。 [*This time, I could not speak with Simon very much. I was nodding more (than I was speaking), and I couldn't join the conversation as I wished to. Everyone laughed at what Simon said, but I couldn't understand what he was talking about, and I felt miserable and frustrated. ... When my friends are trying hard, I get encouraged. It's the same in class, too. I think this class group has many good classmates who can be role models*

*and I feel this is truly a privileged environment. In my next visit, I will not give up but try my best to have communication.]*

### **Summary of the Findings**

To answer RQ1 (What kind of discomfort do beginner-level students experience in the English lounge?), the beginner-level students experienced anxiety and the discomfort that emerged due to the language barrier, as so expressed in many students' journals. Sachi and Issa's reflective journals on their first visit are examples. Regarding RQ2 (For the students experiencing serious stress and discomfort, what factors enhance their resilience when attending an English lounge?) The findings showed how some salient features induced and enhanced their resilience. They were sharing the emotional burden, helpful group members, and the support by the teacher, the senior students, and the near peer role models. Concerning RQ3 (How do group dynamics enhance their resilience in English lounge visits?), first, the qualitative findings illustrated how the in-class group discussion redirected the discomfort into a positive outlook. It also facilitated each other's support in the following visits. These suggest that going to the English lounge not alone but in a small group seemed to have strengthened the resilience of the students in terms of emotional support such as relief and protection. Secondly, the support from the senior members in the lounge not only offered language support but also facilitated their participation as legitimate members in the community of practice, thus provided protection. Finally, another powerful factor was the group members becoming near peer role models for each other (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The findings showed that the efforts of the near peers inspired the other members, thus bringing encouragement despite the discomfort and challenges which beginner-level learners experience.

### **Conclusion**

This study tracked Japanese university students' experience of on-campus English lounge visits over a year and documented their discomfort and challenges as beginner-level English learners in their beginning phase of L2 socialization. The findings indicate the salient factors that seem to have increased the students' resilience included social ones. The students were supported by their peers, the teacher, the *senpai*, and the near peer role models, who provided not only linguistic advice but also emotional relief, protection, and encouragement.

The findings of this longitudinal study provide a few implications for teachers, staff, and beginner-level EFL learners. First, group dynamics may be considered when encouraging their students to go to the English lounge, such as suggesting beginner-level students go in a small group. Secondly, where possible, negative emotional burdens may be attended to and shared in groups. It would also be ideal if the teacher can then provide the necessary language practices that students need. Finally, students may be reminded that the discomfort and stress they experience may be what everyone experiences as part of L2 socialization. They can be advised to utilize social resources to enhance their resilience and continue their L2 development in an authentic L2 use environment such as English lounge.

There are several limitations to this study. Although the only above aspects were mentioned, there may be other factors that have enhanced their resilience, which this paper did not explore. For example, the social interactions with the lounge staff may have provided the joy of L2 interactions and induced the students' resilience. In particular, many students mentioned Simon was kind (*yasashii*) and easy to talk with. There were several mentions in the journals that Simon often used visual images using his iPad to communicate. The willingness and the skills to communicate with beginner-level speakers are an important issue. This line of research may be investigated in future studies. Another limitation is a methodological one. As I mentioned in the methodology section, I conducted interviews with two students, but I could not find any richer nor different discoveries. However, for future studies, interviews may be undertaken to explore other factors that induced their resilience, including the participants' internal characteristics. Also, this study did not include an ethnographic account of the beginner-level students' process of gaining membership in the community of practice. Mamoru and Issa mentioned they participated in a sporting event organized by the lounge, and this became the turning point in their involvement in the community. This area may be uncovered in future studies.

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