ABSTRACT
This paper will discuss the potential merits and future implications of gamifying the language practice activity in an English Discussion Class (EDC), a compulsory course for first year students at Rikkyo University. The paper will further discuss and consider the cognitive principles of automaticity and furthermore evaluate, to what extent, gamification and the anticipation of reward (or success) may have upon the students and their performances.

I sought to design and implement a class leaderboard which could be employed primarily to foster and increase automaticity, to create a sense of competition and community amongst the students and furthermore to set up and establish short-term goal setting, achievement and thus, in turn, hopefully reward. Most generally and to be discussed further, the results collected both from a control and treatment group tend to the assumption that employing a leaderboard does in fact increase use of the target language.

INTRODUCTION
In a typical EDC lesson the practice tasks are conducted after the language function presentation and it is at this point that the students are tasked with semi-controlled or controlled use of the appropriate language function. Various strategies are employed by instructors to ensure controlled through to automatic use of the function phrases such as student function phrase check sheets and timely top down corrective and/or formative feedback. In terms of the Skill Acquisition Theory (Anderson, 1983), through such systematic and broad repetition these controlled processes become automatized, thus implying that through extensive repetition, learners will be better able to gain fluency of the language in focus. It is through this guiding principle of automaticity (Brown, 2007) that this paper primarily wishes to explore the connections between the literature and the classroom leaderboard activity. This paper will also further consider the aspect (or anticipation) of reward (Brown, 2007) in terms of goal achievement displayed on the class leaderboard and how this may further relate to learner motivations.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The EDC program’s objectives can be defined as promoting and improving oral communicative competence, fluency and encouraging its students to actively and effectively participate in extended discussions (Hurling, 2012). Underpinning this mission and philosophy is the focus on the proceduralization of language and automaticity. In order to achieve this, the students take part in controlled practice activities which aim to automatize the language presented to them.

The automaticity principle (Brown 2007), which this paper and activity uses as a theoretical tool, focuses on the purpose of language over the form, whereby the detailed processing of the complexities of language is on the periphery of attention. Brown (p. 64) further suggests that the Principle of Automaticity emphasizes the importance on an automatic mode of processing language and the resistance to the temptation to overanalyze language forms.

The linguistic graduation to oral fluency or automaticity is naturally an integral element of becoming a proficient language speaker. Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988) propose that in order to achieve such status the “emphasis is on the speakers’ ability to respond without needing an inordinate amount of time to formulate an utterance” (p. 474). Gatbonton and Segalowitz call for the creative automatization of specific utterances: “what is needed is an activity designed to enable learners to practice [repeat] many tokens of the target sentences while they are engaged in real
communication” (p. 479). The writers further suggest a two-phase automatization process which at first creates a need to use the target language and subsequently an opportunity for further communicative based exercises.

In a classroom setting, the call to consistently and repetitively use the prescribed functional language, in essence, can be presented as a competitive exercise – against oneself, a partner or the class as a whole. Self/peer-monitoring can provide an opportunity for the participants to compare scores or recorded instances of appropriate language use. As a minor guiding principle, to what extent does the anticipation of success, praise and reward impact upon the learners’ performance? Brown (2007) highlights the constructive classroom implications of the anticipation of learner reward “The anticipation of reward is the most powerful factor in directing one’s behavior” (p. 66). On completion of a task or fulfilment of a challenge immediate praise and encouragement both by peers and from the teachers themselves can provide the student with a better opportunity to foster more intrinsic motivation to succeed, heighten self-esteem and lessen anxieties (Dornyei, 2001).

In consideration of Brown’s principles stated above and with the classroom leaderboard activity in mind it might be advantageous to consider literature into the strategies for meaningful gamification. At a particular and chosen point of a lesson, it might be somewhat offbeat but illuminative to view learners as simply players of a game. In the context of an EDC class, any given language practice task can be ‘gamified’ and this small scale project assesses, to what extent, gamifying a task might motivate the players (students) to automatize and produce more language. Marczewski, (2013) extending upon the general player type framework by Bartle (1996) categorizes player/learner type by motivation. Kim (2015) in further analysis, asserts that “gamification will have two different types of people: those who are willing to play for extrinsic rewards and those who are not” (p. 30). Indeed, some learners will be motivated intrinsically to achieve mastery (Marczewski, 2013). However for the extrinsically motivated player type, Kim further states “It is clear that offering external rewards…will increase user participation and engagement” (p. 30).

A challenge for the teacher is to appeal to the extrinsically motivated learners by offering praise and or facilitating peer-to-peer commendation upon a successful task outcome. A further key pedagogical decision is the task/game itself. Van Eck (2006) argued that not all games will be equally effective and in order to promote automaticity and task engagement, Figuroa (2015) suggests techniques such as leaderboards and immediate feedback create “a sense of empowerment and engagement” (p. 38).

This paper and classroom activity proposal acknowledges that there is an appropriate time and lesson stage for a gamified task. There should be a clear distinction between language practice with a focus on achieving automaticity of the presented language and a subsequent freer use of said functional phrases in an extended discussion. Figuroa (2015) states further, “A very important aspect in gamification with educational purposes is based on the implication that envisions educational objectives” (p. 43). In a positive outcome, the players graduate from their distinct practice challenge stage to “successful” learners, operating at a “higher level” in discussion.

**TASK AND MATERIALS**

The classroom activity is designed to reflect the guiding principles as previously stated. The task itself is based upon a class leaderboard which is displayed on a monitor at the front of the class. For this activity the instructor will need a PC, access to the class monitor, a PowerPoint slide and a student checklist (see Appendix B).
PROCEDURE
Leaderboard set up
The PowerPoint leaderboard can be easily set up before class and ready to turn on as and when the activity starts.

The groups and check sheets
After presentation of the lesson’s target language, the students are put into pairs and given a self-check sheet for the activity (see Appendix B). They are asked to monitor and record their uses of the function together as a pair. Each student uses a different colour pen in order to further distinguish which student may in fact be dominant or more (or less) proficient. The self-check sheet is double-sided for the next round/practice question.

Question 1 – round one
The students proceed to discuss for an allotted time frame (2 minutes and 30 seconds) the practice question. As stated above, student instances of functions used are recorded. When the activity ends, the students report back to the instructor the instances of speaker and listener functions used and the results are recorded on the leaderboard. The results are displayed to the class.

Goal setting
Each group is then challenged to better their score from round one and increase their use of the target function. The activity is then repeated with question 2 under the same time limit. The students are encouraged to speed up and to focus on using the phrases they did not use as frequently in round one in order to engage an element of competitiveness and thus foster automaticity of the target language. In terms of the validity of the activity design, the top down instructions between both control (no leaderboard) and the treatment groups were standardized and strictly adhered to.

Success?
After round two, the scores were again recorded to show a better (or worse) performance. Both top-down praise and peer-to-peer praise/feedback was shared generally and more specifically on listener or speaker roles. When applicable, the students’ utterances for more meaningful feedback and praise, were also recorded in the white IDEAS section on the leaderboard.

Week-to-week winners were identified and groups/pairs were randomly mixed. As the activity ended and the students finished the practice task, they were instructed to use the target functions more freely and naturally over an extended limited time in larger groups of three or four. All the student check sheets were then collected for treatment to control comparison.

VARIATIONS
There are many permutations in which an instructor can conduct this activity. It is simple in that it can be presented as a game to better one’s own score or that of another group, or simply the class as a whole. Initially the activity was conducted using only two practice questions. However, this is obviously flexible in that it can be extended over a longer period and also into discussion preparation tasks at the instructor’s discretion.

The leaderboard simply visualizes the frequency of recorded functions used and having such a visual and immediate representation of language produced (in positive cases) may well foster a “can-do” attitude in the language classroom with lower-level students. Alternatively, in cases where the students did not perform as well in the second round of questions, there is a column for IDEAS to which the instructor can give positive feedback on content. The PowerPoint slide is
fully adaptable to record and present specifically what the instructor is aiming to measure. One further alteration to the activity as a whole could be in terms of how the students record their target language. It could be possible for peers to monitor and record and provide student-to-student, rather than top-down, feedback.

DISCUSSION
Automaticity and Reward
Primarily the need to use the function is generated by the perceived anticipation of success or reward that the students may feel when they can see an improvement on the leaderboard. In line with Gatbondon and Segalowitz’s (1988) concept of creative automaticity, the students both experience the need to use the language and the opportunity for further communicative output after rounds one and two. The urgency to improve upon a previous score draws the attention away from an over analysis of language-based rules or to think too much unit by unit. Meaningful feedback of the students’ utterances presented on the leaderboard can further highlight the focus towards the purpose of language over the form. The results displayed give the students a reminder of the short-term progress that they are making and their development can then be steered towards a longer term reward by demonstrating the use of the function of language in future discussions and tests throughout the rest of the EDC course.

The results collected and collated tended to the assumption that the treatment group in fact produced more instances of the target function. Each class performance was calculated by totalling the number of functions used and dividing that by the number of students present in the activity due to the unequal number of students in each class.

Table 1. Level I class. Con refers to the Control group. Tre refers to the Treatment group.

The above tables display the results from six weeks of data collection. The vertical axis represents...
the frequency of functions used and the horizontal the lesson number.

As depicted above the treatment group consistently improves (albeit in some cases only marginally) round by round. Both the higher Level I and Lower level III control groups display similarly inconsistent results.

Table 3. Level II class - 2-A

In anticipation that some of the students would get used to the activity and work with less urgency to use the target language, I decided after three weeks of the activity to swap the control and treatment groups. The results are shown above in the level 2-B classes (Table 4). The results displayed above suggest that after switching the control and treatment groups (from week 10), the students produced more target language when using the leaderboard.

In consideration of the effect that the leaderboard may have had upon the discussion class students, I do believe that with a specific class dynamic it can motivate the students to focus solely on form for a limited time period rather than stray off topic or into unstructured freer conversation without using the target function phrases. However, some classes/students may well have become accustomed to the activity and reverted to back to performing with less urgency in their practice tasks.

CONCLUSION

The leaderboard activity, I foresee, will take some time to become logistically operational within the EDC lesson timeframe. However, with efficient instruction and classroom management, it could be possible to conduct the activity fully and effectively over the range of levels and classes.
assigned in the semester. There are some limitations and challenges to the activity in terms of classes with an odd number of students and the obvious possible risk of actually de-motivating under-performing students.

It will be most interesting to record differences in single and mixed gender classes and between differing departments. The activity may also reveal some illuminating findings towards student perceptions of the gamification of the practice activity and potential correlations towards classes with low motivation. The leaderboard task is simple in that it can be modified, expanded upon or substituted by potentially more complex games or software such as mobile voice recognition applications. Furthermore, weekly collated data can be compiled and collated for analysis over a longer period and potentially presented to the students for feedback on their in-class performances.

REFERENCES
APPENDIX A – Screen shot of the leaderboard.

APPENDIX B – Student target language check sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1 - Name:</th>
<th>ROUND 1 - Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asking for Opinions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Giving Opinions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What are your views on...?</em></td>
<td><em>From my point of view...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What are your thoughts on...?</em></td>
<td><em>It's just my opinion, but I think...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How do you feel about...?</em></td>
<td><em>I would say (that)...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
<td>[Blank Lines]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>