ABSTRACT
Research suggests that extroverted learners have “an easier time becoming competent in another language than introverted students,” who are “less likely to use new inputs they have learned, therefore keeping their language competence stagnant” (Lim, n.d, p.4). The current paper focuses on the integration of introverted students into English discussion classes, drawing upon observations of one particular student through a reflective journaling process. The paper outlines the decision to focus on this aspect, as well as the selected student, before outlining findings in related research and providing suggestions on how successfully English discussion class lessons can integrate students of different capabilities and personalities. Observations for this paper were conducted within a compulsory English Discussion Class (EDC) that follows a student centered approach, with students encouraged to use functional phrases in order to conduct discussions amongst themselves.

INTRODUCTION
Within compulsory courses such as EDC there will inevitably be introverted students. So the question is, how does EDC’s format work for such students? From having taught a wide variety of classes, I had noticed quite a significant drop in ability between the lowest levels and all other classes, and a handful of students who seemed extremely reluctant or unable to participate in the discussions. Interestingly, I observed that these students didn’t seem to differ in ability from the rest of their classmates (i.e. the quality of their output was of a similar level) but they took less of an active role in participating (i.e. less speaking turns, shorter sentences). I decided therefore to focus on one student who seemed to be the most extreme example of this, and to observe how the EDC format helped or hindered such students, and finally if there was anything that could be done from a teacher’s perspective to assist such students.

DISCUSSION
The word ‘shy’ is one that I’ve often heard to describe people whilst living in Japan. It's a word that seems to be neutral in its nuance, and one that people often feel quick to describe themselves as. However, in a discussion classroom setting, if a student is exceptionally ‘shy’, it can have quite noticeable repercussions for the dynamic of the class and very probably for the way the student(s) feel in the class. I decided to conduct a journaling project on one extremely quiet student in a low level class with a focus on how their behavior may change or remain the same over the course of two semesters of English discussion classes.

The idea of a teaching journal to observe this was chosen as they are said to “provide teachers with a written record of various aspects of their practice” (Farrell, 2007, p. 1). Therefore by keeping a journal, teachers can accumulate information to review later on and help the teacher reflect and gain a deeper understanding of their work (Farrell, 2007). I conducted my observations over several months of classes, with very little interference or special attention provided to the student, to see whether the nature of EDC was beneficial to such students.

It was very clear from the outset that the student in question would struggle to have discussions in English. She appeared fearful, spoke in short answers and paused at length before speaking, sometimes deciding not to speak at all and passing her turn on to someone else. However, it did not seem that she was unable to communicate in English, as after some careful deliberation she could offer accurate and easily comprehensible sentences. She was certainly no less able to
give an opinion than her classmates, many of whom would talk much more than her, make lots of mistakes, but yet seem uninhibited by what they were saying. Therefore, I began to ask the question, why is the student so reluctant to speak when she appears to have the ability to do so? One possibility was that she may have some degree of affective filters that were stopping her from communicating properly. Affective filters, as Krashen suggests in Du (2007), are certain elements that don’t allow students to allow teaching input ‘in’ and subsequently prohibit them from acquiring foreign language skills. Krashen focuses mostly on the determining factors of “motivation, attitude, anxiety and self-confidence” (as cited in Du, 2007, p. 1).

EDC and Affective Filters
From a pedagogical point-of-view, one area of EDC lessons that could be seen as a potential benefit, for students with communication apprehension is the small class size, with the same students and same teacher throughout. This hopefully allows the students to become more comfortable with their classmates and the teacher, and therefore become less anxious with the hope that they would feel more comfortable when speaking. The fact that EDC follows a simple and repetitive format could also be seen as a benefit pedagogically. The students are aware of what is required of them in each lesson, there are no angst producing surprises, and as the activities follow similar patterns, they are able to focus on what they want to say as opposed to trying to understand a new activity.

It could be argued, on the other hand, that this structure may also heighten affective filters for students. If they are not comfortable with their classmates and teacher, they may dread the fixed nature of the course. However, I believe that the former is truer than the latter and I certainly experienced that from my observations. Simply put, the student selected for the journaling project seemed to be much more relaxed as the course progressed. For instance, based on my observations, the amount of speaking turns she produced increased significantly, her use of the target language became more consistent and accurate, and she began to ask students questions without being prompted to do so.

However, there were still some very evident signs of reticence to fully emerge into the EDC format. The following were the most salient examples: the length of her speaking turns were generally very short; she rarely asked to join discussions but spoke when offered; she rarely asked questions of any original content (deciding to focus instead on set questions such as “How come?” and “Why do you think so?”). Nevertheless, as this student displayed the ability to meet the basic requirements of the course, (i.e. using function phrases correctly). I believed that she could certainly take on a more participatory role in class discussions.

How Introverted Students can be Helped in Discussion Classes
Creating a comfortable and positive environment is clearly something that would benefit students who have communication apprehension. As Du (2007) suggests, “teachers should let students have the feeling that they can learn an L2 well by using more encouragement and praise. Classroom atmosphere is very important, which should be delighted, lively, friendly and harmonious that can help students overcome their psychological barrier, and lower their anxiety” (p. 3).

Whereas I don’t necessarily agree that the classroom has to be “delighted”, it certainly seems that students will benefit from a positive environment and from positive interventions from teachers such as praise and highlighting of positive contributions they have made. As psychological theories such as Expectancy Value Theory suggests, “if a student receives positive feedback for testing new inputs, he may begin to develop a mindset that teaches him to expect rewards for trying” (Lim, n.d, p. 4).

As noted earlier, the student in question seemed to relax a lot more as the course progressed,
although there were still a few prominent issues that could be addressed to further enhance student participation and lower affective filters.

Firstly, that it appeared to take several lessons for the student to feel comfortable suggests that teachers need to tackle the affective filter issues right from the very first lesson. As the student may feel apprehension to meet new people, which is compounded by the fact that communication is performed in a foreign language. It is paramount, then, to make the students feel as much at ease as possible from the very beginning. As Du (2007) suggests, “some of the factors that can reduce classroom communication apprehension include: taking time to allow classmates to get to know each other, particularly at the beginning of the year; creating a warm, welcoming classroom environment; promoting group projects and group discussions; letting shy children work with whom they feel most comfortable; encouraging social and oral activities as opposed to just pen and paper assignments” (p. 3). EDC’s small class size also arguably lessens performance anxiety, acting on the belief that speaking in front of a smaller audience is less stressful. A gradual introduction to larger groups sizes may help (i.e. from pair work, to groups of three, and then on to groups of four).

Not only this, teachers who keep an active and flexible approach may see beneficial responses from their students, especially those who are reluctant to speak. As Krashen (as cited in Du, 2007) suggests, allowing students to speak when they're ready (rather than trying to force them to speak) may help them. “In the classroom, teachers should not only encourage students’ active participation but be patient with and allow their keeping quiet. There is little use pushing or forcing them to say something they are unwilling or not ready to say” (Krashen as cited Du, 2007, p. 3). As the student I observed was particularly slow at formulating her opinions, this suggestion seems particularly relevant although it requires patience from both the teacher and other students.

One more difficult problem to tackle is the passivity of the student I observed, i.e. her reluctance to join discussions unless prompted. This only seemed to change slightly over the course of the semester. One idea would be allow more self-reflection for the student, with a checklist including things such as “Did I ask and answer an even amount of questions?” which, rather than simply putting students on the spot and prescribing changes that they should make, allows the student to think for themselves about how they could better improve their discussion input.

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, in compulsory language courses there will inevitably be students who vary in ability and motivation. From my observations, I conclude that EDC classes have some benefits and drawbacks for introverted students, upon which the teacher can customize and improve conditions. The student described in the current paper seemed to improve in terms of the amount of turns taken, as well as in the quality of output as the course progressed. I believe that the small classes, simple and repetitive format, lack of interference from the teacher, and focus on praise may have impacted positively on the communication apprehension the student may have initially felt.

In order to further improve conditions for such students, it seems that a positive learning environment should be created from the very beginning of the course, with the teacher taking a flexible approach to the individual needs of students, another thing that is easy to do within small classes.

REFERENCES
Continuum.