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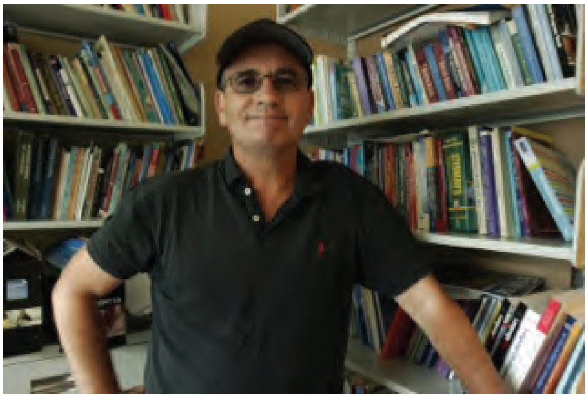
# An invitation to reflect on practice

Thomas S. C. Farrell
Brock University, Canada

*Sponsored by the Teacher Education and Development (TED) SIG*



Reflective practice is now a common term in many teacher education and development programs worldwide. Although definitions of reflective practice may vary in different programs, it generally means teachers systematically collect information about their classroom happenings, and then analyze and evaluate this information and compare it to their underlying assumptions and beliefs so that they can make changes and improvements to their teaching. This paper outlines what reflective practice is, why it is important, and how teachers can reflect.

内省の実践（意識的に深く考え注意深く観察する）というのは世界中の多くの教員養成課程で使われている一般的な用語である。内省の実践の定義は、それぞれの教科課程で異なっているかもしれないが、一般的には、授業の向上と工夫のために、教師がクラス内の情報を体系的に集め、この情報を分析・評価し、自分達の教育の前提や信条と比較する、ということを意味している。本論では内省の実践とは何か、なぜそれが重要なのか、どのように教師は授業に反映できるかについて要点を述べる。

## What is reflective practice?

Perhaps people new to teaching may consider a formal invitation for teachers to reflect to be obvious and commonsensical because, after all, most teachers think about their teaching in one way or another. Yes, such "common sense reflection" is familiar to most teachers of English to speakers of other languages as we mull over our classes before and after teaching. So, *reflect* in its everyday conversational use means thinking about what we do and what we did, but this "thinking" is not systematic, nor is it continuously related to what happened in our lesson. For example, if we have a student who suddenly does not respond to our lesson and is in fact negative, we will wonder why—especially if this student has in the past responded well. Our instinct as a teacher is to try find out "what is wrong" and to try to solve it because it may make us uncomfortable. When we have resolved this—hopefully successfully (whatever "success" means in this case)—we may feel better and hope something like this does not happen again. Either way, we just want to leave it there rather than really explore what just happened. This is not reflective practice though, as we do not try to link it to our experience and the process of our "reflecting" lacks any structure. This is *common sense reflection* and is probably the most popular type of reflection that all language teachers consider important. Reflective practice means taking such common sense reflections further, with more disciplined thinking in which we ask ourselves more probing questions about our practice. Such probing questions can include "What do I do?" "Why do I do this?" "What is the result?" and "Will I change anything in my practice as a result of finding answers to the previous questions?" Such reflective practice actively challenges our taken-for-granted ways of teaching and can be uncomfortable and challenging for anyone who tries it, as we do not know what we may find.

So reflective teaching means more than fleeting thoughts before, during, or after a lesson. Reflective practice means examining what you do in the classroom and why you do it. Reflective practice also means thinking about the beliefs and values related to teaching English as a second or foreign language, and seeing if classroom practices are consistent with these beliefs and values. In order to engage in this type of reflective teaching, teachers must systematically collect information about their classroom happenings and then analyze and evaluate this information and compare it to their underlying assumptions and beliefs so that they can make changes and improvements in their teaching (Farrell, 2007). Reflective practice can also be conducted outside the classroom by looking at the context of teaching, such as when teachers want to see either the impact of their teaching on the community and society or how the community and society impacts their teaching (e.g., Who makes the curriculum? What and whose values does the curriculum embody?).

### Why is reflective practice important?

Teachers may ask why they should reflect on their practice beyond the quick after class muse with perceptions such as, "That was a good/bad class!" or "The students were not very responsive today!" While these reflections may act as a necessary starting point for most teachers, they do not produce any real evidence that their musings or perceptions have been correct or not. For example, some teachers end class feeling really happy because they think it went well. Conversely, they may feel unhappy at the end of a class because they have perceived it to have gone badly and, worse, they had spent a lot of time preparing for that particular class. Some teachers base their initial perceptions on their teaching on the way the students respond (e.g., by yawning) or not responding during class. This kind of "evidence" may not lead to correct interpretations of the teachers' perceptions because that yawn may have nothing to do with their class and their teaching and everything to do with that student's lack of sleep or the like. Likewise, if the students do not respond to the lesson, teachers should try to find out why they were not responsive without getting too defensive. So, teachers need to know *why* some classes go "well" and others do not go so "well" and how they define what this "well" means. This is called *evidence-based reflective practice*. As such, teachers need to get solid data about what is really happening in their classroom, rather than what they think is happening. So, reflective practice is important because it helps teachers make more informed decisions about their teaching, because these decisions are based on concrete evidence systematically collected over a period of time.

### How can we reflect?

Teachers can engage in evidence-based reflective practice by themselves and this is a good starting point for all teachers. However, while we are self-reflecting we may encounter issues or situations that may be unpleasant and so we may avoid these and become biased in our reflections, considering only topics that do not upset us. In other words, we can become biased in what we self-reflect on, so we may need to be challenged because we may become too comfortable with our teaching, or because we have not asked ourselves some hard questions about what we do. As such, reflective practice is better informed by some kind of dialogue with the self, but mostly with others so that we can have a deeper understanding of ourselves as teachers.

Reflective practice through dialogue begins with the self where a teacher engages in internal dialogue about his or her own practice. A teacher can begin this internal dialogue by telling their own teaching story, such as in an autobiography, which can be analyzed later for that teacher's stated or implied beliefs, assumptions, and values about teaching and learning English as a second language. By telling their story, teachers can make better sense of seemingly random experiences because they hold the inside knowledge, especially personal intuitive knowledge, expertise and experience that is based on their accumulated years as language educators. These self-reflection stories can provide a rich source of teacher-generated information that allows teachers to reflect on how they got where they are today, how they conduct practice, and the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs that have ruled their past and current practices.

The dialogue with self can be expanded to include others such as a critical friendship or a group of teachers that form a teacher reflection group. For example, if a teacher wants to dialogue with another peer he or she can choose to enter a critical friendship, team-teaching, and/or peer coaching whereby both teachers collaborate in a two-way mode to encourage dialogue and reflection in order to improve the quality of language teaching and learning in some way. Teachers can also join a teacher reflection group with teachers from either their own institution or from other institutions. The teacher reflection group meets regularly to discuss and reflect on practice. These group discussions can break the sense of isolation many teachers say they feel when they talk about their teaching. The group can also complement individual members' strengths and compensate for each member's limitations.

## Conclusion

Reflective practice as it is outlined in this short article is much more than taking a few minutes to mull over our teaching. Most teachers do this anyway. Reflective practice as it is outlined here is evidence-based because teachers systematically gather data about their teaching and use this information to make informed decisions about their practice. In addition, reflective practice also means teachers enter a dialogue with themselves and other teachers so that they can reach a new level of awareness and understanding of their practice. This dialogue can occur with the self, a critical friend, and/or in a teacher reflection group. The dialogue is supportive and sympathetically challenging so that individual teachers can reach a level of awareness of what they do and why they do it. Indeed, I would like to invite all readers to join me to reflect during the JALT2014 conference where I am excited to speak.

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**Thomas S. C. Farrell** is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. His professional interests include reflective practice, and language teacher education and development. Professor Farrell has published widely in academic journals and has presented at major conferences worldwide on the topic of reflective practice. A selection of his recent books include *Reflecting on Teaching the Four Skills* (Michigan University Press, 2012), *Reflective Writing for Language Teachers* (Equinox, 2013), *Reflective Practice* (TESOL Publications, 2013), and *Reflective Practice in ESL Teacher Development Groups: From Practices to Principles* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). His webpage is <reflectiveinquiry.ca>.

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November 21–24, 2014 in Tsukuba, Ibaraki

# Educating and entertaining with stories and songs

## An interview with Bill Harley

JALT Junior Plenary Speaker

*Sponsored by Yokohama JALT*

## Kristin Shitara

JALT Junior Program Chair

Bill Harley is a two-time Grammy award-winning artist and recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. Bill uses song and story to paint a vibrant and hilarious picture of growing up, schooling, and family life. His work spans the generation gap, reminds us of our common humanity, and challenges us to be our very best selves. A prolific author and recording artist, Bill tours widely as an author, performing artist, and keynote speaker.

Visit <billharley.com> for more.

**KRISTIN SHITARA (KS):** You are described as a singer, storyteller, author, playwright, educator, and performing artist. Is there one of these identities that is most important to you?

**BILL HARLEY (BH):** I've never been able to choose. I guess one of the things I've always felt is that song and story go together. I see them as being just different expressions of each other or located on a continuum. And so I've always kind of fought against being defined one way or another. But I was really a performer first. But I would write material to perform. My mom was a children's writer. So writing was always something I knew people did. Then the teaching kind of comes as part of it. I've been an artist in residence in this school in Providence for 10 years. I went to the head of the school and said I'll work here regularly if you let me do anything I want because I wanted to try different things. So, I wrote songs for the kids. I wrote a play with the kids. But for the past three or four years I've been working on storytelling with third graders. I've learned some really interesting things about the connection between the oral language and written language.

**KS:** Since you have spent a lot of time in the school system, what do you see there that is going well or perhaps not going quite so well?

**BH:** This whole push over the past 20 years for high stakes testing has always been a concern to me. A lot of stuff I do isn't directly related to the test. Although I say, if kids can stand up in front of a group of people and tell a story, they are going to be OK, because there are so many elements involved in communication and language and sense of self that goes into that. When I first started working with the 3rd grade teachers on storytelling I said, "Let's just try this for a year and see how it works." And so they were like, "Well, OK. We like you, Bill, so we will." But with each year they have become more convinced of its value.

**KS:** That is really exciting what you are doing with those kids. How did you make the choice to work with children when you were starting your career as a performer?

**BH:** Part of it was following my own nose about what was working. And I guess I am very comfortable with kids. I seem to have some sort of natural aptitude to relate to them. And when I was making my first record, I was trying to figure out if it was the kid record or the adult record and my friend who was producing it said, "Well, which one are people asking for?" I said, "They are asking for the kid record." And he said, "Well, make that one first." And so that is kind of the way it worked. Another thing is I've always been concerned about issues involving social justice and this sense of giving a voice to those who don't have power. And that's kids. I feel like in some way I get to speak for what children are perceiving. So a lot of my work is not so much prescriptive about what they are supposed to be, but descriptive about who they are.

**KS:** I think you are doing a great job because I bought a few of your recordings and gave them to my daughter. She now listens to them every night before she goes to bed. And she just loves them.

**BH:** How old is she?

**KS:** She's eleven.

**BH:** That's great. I love performing for eleven year olds. That's right at the age when they are thinking, "I don't know . . . I'm supposed to pay more attention to my peers than I am to this guy." I love performing for them. They're smart.

**KS:** Right, they can follow the story. My little one is six and she had a little trouble following the story. Well, we have language and culture issues, too. But then she heard the *You're In Trouble* song and that drew her in, too.

**BH:** I have some CDs that are specifically aimed at primary grades and some for the older ones. Some of those long stories are a lot. But I'll be interested to be there [at the JALT conference] because I'm really interested in this connection of people hearing stories and what that does for their language. Over the years we have run into a lot of people from other countries who come up to us at the shows and say, "My kids listen to your recordings all the time and we've really found that it is one of the ways that they are learning the language."Because it's not just text, there's an emotional aspect to it.

**KS:** So, do you have a lot of experience performing for audiences whose linguistic or cultural backgrounds are different from yours?

**BH:** I can't say that I really do. I mean within the United States I have traveled around a lot, but I haven't done much work overseas. We were in New Zealand . . . it was a funny thing. I was doing school shows and I kept asking the kids "do you know what this is?" and finally one of the teachers said, "Bill, they watch American television all the time, it's no big deal." So, I can't say I have performed a lot in places where I walk in and I am the only white guy there and I hope that the audience gets it.

**KS:** It is something that I wondered about with my daughter. The first story I chose to play for her was *The Great Sled Race* because we had just had this huge snow. I wondered if she would take to it since she has never been sledding before and even though we speak English at home, she doesn't hear much language from her peers in English. But it was not a problem. She liked it from the start.

**BH:** I do feel like my work is particularly American. But I feel like if they can understand the emotional aspect of the story, they can make connections and understand the specific story and the particular words. You learn by inference more than you do by direct teaching. We had friends over for dinner the other night and we were talking about Bill Cosby who was a big influence on me. One of the women said, "I listened to those stories and I didn't understand everything about what was going on, but it made me want to understand."

**KS:** That provides great motivation for someone learning another language. If they want to know what is going on then that's the key right there. So, what makes a good story and how do you approach creating a new one?

**BH:** I think what I am usually looking for is some universal in terms that a lot of people have had a similar experience. And then a lot of times I am looking for a memorable moment. So what I usually do is start with those moments that are emotionally strong that are usually moments of fear, joy or relief. Usually that moment is the climax of the story. And then I go back and build around that. And I think I do that even with my books. One of my books *Night of the Spadefoot Toads* is a book about a boy and his teacher who basically live in my town. This story came from an experience I had when a friend of mine who is a biologist and I went out one night in April. She took me to this vernal pool where this endangered species was and we stood there in the middle of a thunderstorm counting these toads and it was this really amazing experience that I'll always remember. And that became the center of that book. So I think you look for an emotional moment that has a lot of resonance that you hope you can communicate to people. And you hope you can build the plot or the story around it so when you get to that moment, it means something.

**KS:** What about your future? What are you working on now?

**BH:** I'm doing this series, *Charlie Bumpers*. The second one is coming out in a couple weeks and I'm just finishing the third one. And there are three more in that series. I'm also working on an opera with a friend of mine.

**KS:** Oh my goodness! That's quite an undertaking!

**BH:** Yeah, it's exciting and a little bit scary. He's a composer and I'll take care of the story and words. And I'm just starting to work with my agent on an outline for a book about storytelling for parents.

**KS:** That's an awesome idea. My girls love it when I make up stories for them, but I often get myself in a middle of a story and I can't find a good way out.

**BH:** Stories about who you are and what you did are the ones that they will remember. There are certain kinds of basic story structures that you can use. You can learn those and have them in your pocket to use to get you out of trouble.

**KS:** I can't wait for the book. And everyone is really excited to have you come to the conference. Thank you for your time today.

**BH:** Well, we are excited, too. We look forward to seeing you.

**Kristin Shitara** has been teaching ESL/EFL for 18 years and holds a M.A. in TESL from the University of Nevada, Reno. She has taught English in America, Ecuador, and Japan. She opened her own English school in 2003 in Minano, Japan, where she teaches students from 2 to 65 years old. She has been a member of JALT since 2002 and is currently the TCSIG and JALT Junior program chair. Her professional interests include reading instruction, technology in teaching, curriculum design and teacher training.

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# Foreign language teaching and the multilingual subject


## An interview with Claire Kramsch

University of California, Berkeley

*Sponsored by the College and University Educators (CUE) SIG*

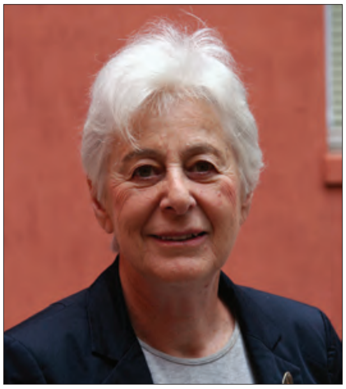
## Peter Hourdequin

JALT2014 Co-Chair


Claire Kramsch is Professor of German and Affiliate Professor of Education at the University of California, Berkeley, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Applied Linguistics and directs doctoral dissertations in the German Department and in the Graduate School of Education. She has written extensively on language, discourse, and culture in foreign language education. Two of her books, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (OUP, 1993) and *The Multilingual Subject* (OUP, 2009) won the Mildenberger Award from the American Modern Language Association. She is the past president of the American Association for Applied Linguistics and the current president of the International Association of Applied Linguistics.

**PETER HOURDEQUIN (PH):** For readers not familiar with your work, can you briefly describe some of the directions your research interests have taken you in recent years, and how this work has influenced your own classroom practices?

**CLAIRE KRAMSCH (CK):** I started out believing I would become a teacher of German at high schools and universities in the French Educational System, since I was French and I had studied German language and literature at the Sorbonne. But marrying a German who wanted to emigrate to the United States forced me to rethink my professional life. Since we lived in Cambridge, MA, I taught German at MIT for many years. But, because I



didn't understand the American way of life nor my American students' worldviews, and they didn't understand my worldviews, I felt very alienated in the U.S. So I started researching the link between language, discourse, and culture in order to understand what I didn't understand about America and about myself. This research led me to the interdisciplinary field of applied linguistics, which slowly gave me answers to my questions that the study of German literature had not. Understanding the relationship between language, discourse, and ideology helped me understand many of the misunderstandings I had experienced moving to the U.S. My first books, *Discourse Analysis and Second Language Teaching* (1981), *Interaction et Discours dans la Classe de Langue* (1984), and *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (1993) were all attempts to find classroom applications for the insights I was gaining through studying research in psycho- and sociolinguistics, SLA, and discourse analysis. In the first 20 years of my life in the U.S., I taught German as a foreign language at MIT, Cornell, and UC Berkeley, and in the last 20 years, I have mostly taught courses in applied linguistics that all draw on the research I have conducted on my own on foreign language learners and teachers in various countries like China, Japan, France, Germany, and the U.S. This work has been influenced by the tremendous changes that have occurred on the geopolitical stage and that have transformed language teaching and learning around the world: globalization, information technologies, social networks, the spread of neoliberalism, and the fight against terrorism.

**PH:** In recent years there's been a push in foreign language education for more and more standardization to guide teachers in helping their students reach "objective" benchmarks. Your most recent book, *The Multilingual Subject* (2010), however, calls for an approach that gives greater voice to language users' subjective experiences, memories, perceptions, emotions, desires, and imaginations. These may be harder to measure on many kinds of standardized tests, but they are clearly elemental components of becoming and being a multilingual. Can you discuss what you see as the proper balance between the acquisition of testable "skills" in the foreign language classroom and the foregrounding of language users' subjective experiences with language?

**CK:** The current pressure to standardize knowledge and objectives, measure results, evaluate performances, and assess outcomes are all ways in which the corporate world and the nation-states they hold hostage exercise control over language and knowledge. Foreign languages that, in the U.S., are avowedly viewed by the media, the politicians, and school administrators as merely tools for safeguarding American national security and maintaining American economic superiority, are particularly visible targets for the exercise of corporate and state control. Unlike their counterparts in literary and cultural studies, teachers of language seem to be held accountable only for developing linguistic proficiency and fluency in the foreign language (FL), not for fostering alternative worldviews or for putting in question the students' national cultural narrative. And yet, the increasingly visible contradictions in national narratives that are very much linked with the ways these narratives are "languaged" in the press and the media, are creating cognitive and emotional dissonances in the students' minds that need to be discussed openly in the language class. For example, why do the U.S. media call the knife attacks in London last year "terrorist acts," but the knife attacks in Kunming in China this year "acts of ethnic violence"? And, why is the Chinese press so upset about that? How are emotions and the actions they trigger associated with the kinds of words we choose?

**PH:** And what role do you see for teachers' own experiences of language? How important is it for these to be shared with students, and how should this be balanced with the attainment of learning objectives?

**CK:** To the extent that students are ready to hear their teacher's experiences, and to the extent that teaching a foreign language is meant to help students see the world from a different perspective, then teachers have a responsibility to tell their students about their own experiences with language and culture. However, the teacher herself is in a vulnerable position. What if the students are not mature enough to understand their teacher's experiences and the emotions associated with them? What if they ridicule them, or trivialize, or sensationalize them? The teacher also has a responsibility to protect herself emotionally and professionally, and she might therefore prefer not to share her own experiences, but use texts written by someone else to analyze, interpret, and discuss rather than put herself personally on the line.

**PH:** Many teachers and second language acquisition (SLA) researchers frame challenges of language acquisition in terms of issues of motivation, but in *The Multilingual Subject* (2010) you focus on what you call "the embodied self" of the language learner, and the role of desire rather than motivation. Can you briefly discuss how language learner desire differs from motivation, and why it's important for educators to consider desire?

**CK:** Most research on motivation in SLA is based on a version of *rational actor theory*, in which people set goals for themselves, like belonging to or identifying with a group that speaks the language (integrative motivation), or learning the language for ulterior social or economic benefit (instrumental motivation), and then move towards realizing these goals. Having learned German just for the beauty of its syntax and the musicality of its poetry, I have always missed in motivational studies the esthetic or poetic motivation that prompts learners to invest in a language like one would invest in a lover. Desire in love and desire in language are related—they demand nothing, nor do they work toward some future gratification. They exist only for the present as embodied pleasure, like a poem. Adolescents who learn a foreign language often project onto the language their innermost dreams and aspirations and their desire for fulfillment of the self. This self-fulfillment is somewhat different from motivation to "do" things or to "achieve" goals.

**PH:** You've given us the term *symbolic competence* to point to the kinds of skills foreign language users need in the 21st century. For teachers who might not be familiar with this term, could you explain it a bit and perhaps suggest some practical ways that symbolic competence can be exercised in the language classroom?

**CK:** I have defined symbolic competence as an awareness of what words index or connote in a particular context of use, and the ability to reframe these words when used in a different context. In particular it means:

- understanding the symbolic value of words and the different cultural memories evoked by different symbolic systems, for example, the fears associated with the term *communautarisme*, the values attached to a term like *laicitt* in French, the terror triggered by the word *terrorism.*
- locating oneself and others within real or imagined historical trajectories, for example, locating oneself as an American speaker within a history of race relations, liberal democracy, and frontier spirit; locating a Chinese speaker within a history of Western colonialism, Mao communism, and age-old traditions.
- manipulating social norms and expectations to reframe ways of seeing familiar events, for example, if you are Chinese, you might respond "thank you" in English to a compliment made to you in Chinese. You will thus not sound as arrogant as you would if you had said thank you in Chinese, and yet you will show that you know the pragmatics of English and can say "thank you" without having really said it.
- creating a new context so as to shift power relations among speakers, and to take up alternative subject positions, for example, answering a question with a question, using metacomments, reflecting on how things are said, not just what is said.

Symbolic competence can be fostered in the classroom by systematic attention to the words chosen by speakers or writers instead of other words they could have chosen and the different values indexed by different words, for example, the difference between calling a difficulty a *challenge* versus a *problem.* Why do Americans prefer to speak of challenges rather than of problems? A challenge evokes a can-do frontier spirit, whereas a problem implies/connotes a realistic/fatalistic worldview. The teacher might want to compare how the same event is described in the American and in the French press: for example, oil spills off the coast—an environmental challenge or an environmental catastrophe? Other activities that raise the social and political consciousness associated with symbolic competence are transposition, translation, transcription, etc.

**PH:** Can you talk a little bit about your experience as director of Berkeley Language Center and some of the insights you may have gained from that work with teachers of many different languages, and how it perhaps influenced your own research and/or classroom practices?

**CK:** I founded the Berkeley Language Center in 1994 because the majority of language teachers on campus did not know one another, didn't think they had anything in common with one another, and didn't know that language learning and teaching had a common research base in SLA/applied linguistics. It was from the start a research and resource center, not a teacher training center—nor was it responsible for delivering language instruction. The FL departments did not want someone to impose one language pedagogy on all foreign languages, and they wanted to retain the prerogative of hiring/firing and teaching all languages. But they appreciated a center that formed a community of teachers who slowly also became researchers of their own classrooms and who acquired a drastically improved morale. As director of the BLC for 12 years, I understood better the working conditions of these lecturers and have recently completed a study (with Lihua Zhang) of foreign born, native instructors in the University of California system that I am working up for publication (Kramsch & Zhang, in press).

**PH:** Your 2012 article, *Imposture: A Late Modern Notion in Poststructuralist SLA Research*, resonated with me, and I think probably many readers in Japan, because it seemed to speak very directly to dilemmas and paradoxes faced by foreign language teachers and students here. You point to ways that cultures and institutions, and even language teaching materials frame language speakers in certain ways. Could you talk a bit about this, and about things that teachers and students can do in what you term an "ethical transformative quest" to challenge dominant discourses while still deriving pleasure from language learning as a process?

**CK:** The study I have just completed with Lihua Zhang (Kramsch & Zhang, in press) addresses the issue of native instructors who increasingly teach their own native language at educational institutions around the world. These institutions thereby gain global symbolic distinction but totally underuse these instructors if they use them as mere "walking dictionaries" or "tape recordings", where in fact these instructors model day in day out for their students the difficult—and often painful—work of cross-cultural mediation at the intersection of the local and the global. I have called this work ethical, because very often cross cultural misunderstandings occur when moral universes clash, that is, when the learners encounter worldviews or actions that go totally against what they believe is "right" and "good" (e.g., euthanasia, the death penalty, or the French interdiction to wear the Muslim veil in public schools). The challenge is how to help students ask different questions than the ones they are used to. Literature and the arts can help here, as well as narrative and the personal testimony.

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**Peter Hourdequin** is a JALT2014 Conference Co-Chair. He teaches English in the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Tokoha University in Shizuoka, Japan. He is also currently a post-graduate researcher at Lancaster University, U.K., in the Department of Educational Research.

JALT2014 • PLENARY SPEAKER | II

JALT2014 Conversations Across Borders November 21–24, 2014 in Tsukuba, Ibaraki

# Investigating concepts of desire, gender, and identity in language learners

## An interview with Kimie Takahashi

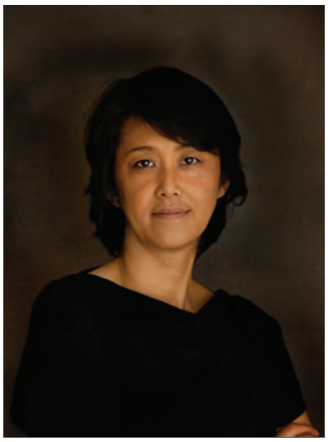
International Christian University, Tokyo

*Sponsored by the Gender Awareness in Language Education (GALE) SIG*

## Michi Saki

Ritsumeikan University

Over the course of her international career as a sociolinguist, Kimie Takahashi has spent many years working in Australia and Thailand. She has published widely on gender, race, and language learning, which she addresses in her new book *Language Learning, Gender and Desire: Japanese Women on the Move* (2013, Multilingual Matters). Takahashi is also the co-founder of the sociolinguistics website *Language on the Move* <languageonthemove.org>. In this interview, Takahashi discusses the motivation behind her research and the concept of *akogare*



and its relationship with second language learning. With many of our students learning English being women, the concepts behind Takahashi's research is of great interest to any language teacher—male or female. Such knowledge can help deepen our understanding of language learning and of our students.

The title of her JALT2014 talk is *Gendering Intercultural Communication—Asian Women on the Move.* Takahashi completed her doctorate with the University of Sydney in 2006, and is now Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of Society, Culture, and Media at the International Christian University, Tokyo. Takahashi's research interests focus on gender, race, bilingualism, and second language learning and use in transnational contexts.

**MICHI SAKI (MS):** Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the *The Language Teacher*.

**KIMIE TAKAHASHI (KT):** Thank you for inviting me to introduce myself to the readers of *The Language Teacher*. It's very timely because I'm in the process of moving from Bangkok to Tokyo to take up a new position at International Christian University in April.

**MS:** First of all, could you tell us about yourself, your current research, and how you became involved in it?

**KT:** Since I left Japan in the early 1990s, I've lived and worked in Australia and Thailand, and it's my first time to teach in Japan. It's, of course, sad to leave Bangkok after three fantastic years here, but I'm also thrilled to be on the move again and to start working closely with Japan-based academics.

I consider myself a critical sociolinguist. I'm interested in intercultural communication, language learning, and multilingualism, and how they intersect in mediating our lives in transnational contexts. Obviously, my research interest has a lot to do with the fact that I've spent most of my adult life overseas speaking different languages with people from diverse backgrounds. I've written about the relationship between life and research in the book chapter *Multilingual Couplehood* (Takahashi, 2010).

My recent work focuses on the role of language proficiency and communication skills in the tourism industries. I first got involved in sociolinguistic research on tourism when I joined Ingrid Piller's research team at Macquarie University, Australia, in 2007. Focusing on tourism between Australia and Japan, we interviewed a range of tourism organisations, service providers, and Japanese tourists visiting Australia.

For instance, in our latest publication (Piller & Takahashi, 2013), we explore the value of English and Japanese for the employment and promotional opportunities of Australia-based Japanese flight attendants. I have been conducting an extension of this research in Thailand since 2013 (funded by Assumption University of Thailand, see <languageonthemove.com/language-mobility-and-tourism> for more information). My collaborators and I are currently planning a new project on multilingualism and language learning in Japan as a tourism destination. That's another reason I'm looking forward to moving back to Japan.

**MS:** Can you explain what you mean by Japanese women's *akogare* for English?

**KT:** The notion of *akogare* as a key factor in language learning and as an ongoing challenge to rethink the concept of motivation in language learning developed out of my PhD research, which I conducted between 2000 and 2006 at the University of Sydney. I first published about *akogare* in language learning in a 2006 co-authored book chapter (Piller & Takahashi, 2006) and the concept has become quite well-known since then, particularly through the publication of my book (Takahashi, 2013a).

The key point is that we tend to think about motivation in language learning as internal to the individual. However, as I found in my fieldwork with young Japanese women in Sydney, many had begun to "desire English" (i.e., feel *akogare* for English) from an early age and in very similar ways through their exposure to, and engagement with, historical, social, and commercial discourses of what "English" means. In that way, *akogare* is a discursive construction that is always in the process of change. Many of these floating discourses tend to present English as two things: a (purchasable) resource for identity transformation—from being an ordinary to an international woman—and as access to Western men.

For example, many of my participants started to think English was cool when they fell in love with Hollywood stars or Western singers or met good-looking teachers or exchange students from the West at secondary school. These objects of their *akogare* were noticeably white men. Once they moved to Australia, many of my participants thought one of the best ways to improve their English was to find a native-speaker boyfriend. Who did they mean by "native speaker"? Well, mostly white men. But through my fieldwork, I realised that they wouldn't just go for anyone for the sake of improving English or of expanding their social network. Nor did they act as if they were inferior to native speakers/Western men. For more details, Chapter 4 of my book has many fascinating examples of their socialisation in the romantic context in Sydney.

While *akogare* for English does seem to turn on women's agency to learn and use the language and to make a transnational move, I have to say I've seen negative manifestations of it as well. When you are so enthralled with the (almost impossible) dream of transforming yourself into a "native speaker of English", or of finding a Hollywood-like romance with a "perfect" Western boyfriend, your everyday life is likely to be filled with a sense of disappointment and disillusionment. During my keynote lecture at JALT, I'll try to shed more light on that dark side of *akogare*.

**MS**: What motivated you to research the relationship between Japanese women's desire for Western culture and second language learning?

**KT:** As a researcher and a second language user of English myself, I wasn't happy about the way motivation was conceptualised in the field. The assumption of previous work on motivation was "if you are motivated, you'll learn". This didn't sit right with me because I knew for a fact that millions of Japanese were extremely motivated to study English—well, who wouldn't be if the language is continuously presented as the Holy Grail of globalisation? At the same time, there has been this relentless stigmatisation that the Japanese are bad language learners and do not speak up because they have a serious issue with shyness and protecting face—that is, their failure to learn English was entirely their fault.

It's easy to blame learners and users of English if motivation is seen as something internal to them: "Oh they are not opening their mouth because they are not motivated enough". It's not that simple. It's not rocket science to know that communication takes more than one person. It's really, really hard, if you have to speak (in any language, let alone a language over which you don't have a sense of ownership) in a highly unequal relationship. It's a common experience, but motivational research doesn't really reflect that everyday reality of inequality and injustice.

One of the key contributions of *akogare* comes from our engagement with commodification of language and identity in the market place. English continues to be relentlessly commodified and eagerly consumed as a Western product (e.g., American English, British English), while "native speakers" and white men are sold, explicitly or implicitly, as objects of desire to students/consumers. The commodification of English and the ways in which language learners internalise a desire for English is in no way unique to Japan as an ever-increasing body of research conducted by a team of PhD students and early career researchers Ingrid Piller and I have been co-supervising at Macquarie University shows. It may not be called *akogare* and it plays out differently in different contexts, but desire for English has been internalised by Olympic volunteers in China (Zhang, 2011), young Taiwanese (Chang, 2012), migrant women in Australia (Butorac, 2011), and cosmopolitan Thais (Kogar, 2013).

As far as Japan is concerned, English as a global language is no longer just located in the traditional educational discourse—it has become an object of consumption. If English is marketed as an empowering product for women in a still largely sexist society, those who can purchase it will do so (Takahashi, 2013b), but promised results are often not that forthcoming. We need to adopt a framework that will allow us to understand this and its intersection with women's personal, educational, and professional lives. The concept of *akogare* is a useful tool to do just that.

**MS:** Do you think the English language industry in Japan is sexualised?

**KT:** To say that would be a gross overgeneralisation but there can be no doubt that "sex sells". This marketing truism can be found at work in the English language industry in Japan, as elsewhere. Therefore, I think it's important to explore if, and when, sexualisation of education occurs, and critique its negative manifestation in our everyday lives (Piller, Takahashi, & Watanabe, 2010; Takahashi, 2012).

**MS:** In your new book, *Language Learning, Gender and Desire: Japanese Women on the Move*, you talk about the complex topics of language, gender, diversity, race, and desire. What do you feel are some significant implications of language desire?

**KT:** One of the key implications of our research is the urgency to engage with activism for gender equality in Japan (Piller, 2014). The reality is this: Japan has slipped to 105th place among 136 countries in the gender equality list in 2013; 25% of pregnant women have experience in being harassed in their workplace; 22,000 children are on waiting lists for day-care centres; and all five awardees of the 2013 Order of Culture and all 15 Persons of Cultural Merit selected by the Japanese government last year were men (Takahashi, 2013b).

Girls and women really have to be "superhuman" to make it in this kind of society. And what the English language industry or study abroad agencies do not tell Japanese women is that English or even university degrees from abroad—that is, their merchandises—are not enough to win respectful citizenship. In fact, the reverse is often true—English language proficiencies and transnational identity often work against Japanese women in Japan as many of the women in our projects told us. I invite your readers to visit the video exhibition *Japanese on the Move* to meet some global Japanese women, such as Kayu Hashimoto, who generously share their experiences.

As a transnational Japanese woman myself, I'm sure my return to Japan in April will present a whole range of opportunities and challenges. What I want to do is to incorporate these first-hand experiences into my further exploration of *akogare* and commodification of English and identity, and you can count on me blogging about them on *Language on the Move* as they happen. For those readers who haven't visited our website, *Language on the Move* is a peer-reviewed blog-based sociolinguistics website, where we blog about our research. The reality is, discourses of gender, of language, of transnationalism, and hence women's experiences, change at unprecedented speed today, and I find blogging and online collaboration with various research and activist groups (e.g., *Live Multilingually*, *Human Rights Now*) to be one of the most productive forms of knowledge production and of activism for gender equality.

**MS:** Thank you very much for your time, Kimie, and we look forward to your talk at the JALT international conference in November.

**KT:** Let me close this interview by saying how much I am looking forward to meeting language teachers and researchers at the conference in Tsukuba. In the meantime, I hope the readers will start joining our conversation on *Language on the Move*.

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**Michi Saki** is a full-time lecturer at Ritsumeikan University. She has been working in various fields of international education in Japan for the past 18 years. Her academic interests include intercultural communication competence, gender awareness in language education, and bilingualism.

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# Exploring worlds outside: Students as researchers

## Andrew Boon

Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo

***Sponsored by National Geographic Learning/ Cengage Learning***

Project work can be a powerful means of empowering students to take their learning beyond the classroom, to make use of the language (whenever and wherever possible) to explore the world outside, to seek answers to the issues they are interested in, and to suggest change. This article examines the process of engaging students in semester-long English projects, from developing and negotiating researchable topics and equipping students with the necessary qualitative research tools to collect primary and secondary data, to sharing their findings with one another in the final class. It will also describe students' reactions to the overall learning experience.

プロジェクト作業は、学生が教室を超えて学び、言語を（時と場所を問わず）活用し、外の世界を探求し、興味を持った問題の答えを探し、変化を促すための大変効果的な手段となる。本論では、学生が半期を通して英語プロジェクトに取り組む過程を考察する。まず調査可能なテーマを開拓し、協議し、1次・2次データを収集するのに必要な質的調査手段を学生に備えさせることから始めて、最終授業で調査結果をお互いに共有するまでを論じる。また、この学習体験全般に対する学生の反応についても述べる。

As an English lesson finishes, students may walk out of the classroom, re-enter their first language (L1) world, and forget the learning that has taken place. However, project work can be a powerful means of empowering students to take their learning beyond the classroom, to make use of the language (whenever and wherever possible) to explore the world outside, to seek answers to the issues they are interested in, and to suggest change. As Fried-Booth (2002) argues, "Project work takes the experience of the classroom out into the world and provides an opportunity for informal learning" (p. 5).

This article will examine the process of engaging students in semester-long English projects from developing and negotiating researchable topics and equipping students with the necessary qualitative research tools to collect primary and secondary data, to sharing their findings with one another in the final class. It will also describe students' reactions to the overall learning experience.

### Getting projects started

In my classes, I introduce the project to students during the first lesson of the semester. Then, I dedicate time later in the course for students to complete a research proposal for their individual projects. Students are provided with a handout that explains the kind of project they will undertake and how the end product will be assessed. For example, in my third-year Academic Learning (AL) course students are informed of the assessment criteria (see Figure 1).

> At the end of the first semester of AL, you will be asked to submit a 1,000-word assignment (30% of your final grade) and to give a 10-minute presentation on your research topic (20% of your final grade).
>
> You will be assessed on:
>
> - ASSIGNMENT — evidence of research, cohesion & coherence, vocabulary use, grammar use, formatting
> - PRESENTATION — evidence of research, poster, content, delivery, question & answer

**Figure 1. Academic Learning course assessment criteria (From Lesson 4 handout).**

Students are given time in class to decide on the topic they would like to research for their project. For example, in my AL classes, students are asked to investigate an area in which they would like to enact change (see Figure 2).

> Think about this question and then discuss it with a partner:
>
> - What do you want to change and why?

**Figure 2. Topic discussion question (From Lesson 4 handout).**

Alternatively, if the teacher is using a coursebook, it is possible to provide students with a list of research themes that include the content that will be covered in the semester (e.g., identity, sport, nightlife, and fashion).

I then ask students to consider whether their topic is both important and researchable. In other words, they should choose a topic that people would be interested in reading or listening to (or even that will change the world!) and should be within a student's ability to research (see Figure 3). *Life of an astronaut: a longitudinal ethnographic study*, although being important, would be beyond the time and means of students to research.

> Your choice of topic is very important – Do you have the time and means to research it? Will it keep your interest over the next 8-10 weeks? Is it interesting for others?
>
> My research topic is ________________________.
>
> This is important because ____________________.
>
> Moreover, ________________________________.
>
> In addition, _______________________________.

**Figure 3. Research topic selection (From Lesson 4 handout).**

Once students have chosen their topics, I have them pitch their ideas to their classmates to convince each other of the importance of their projects. Students then write a research question, identify how they will collect their primary and secondary data, and complete a research plan (see Figure 4).

Research plan:

| **Step** | **Action to be taken:** |
|---|---|
| **1** | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |

**Figure 4. Research plan (From Lesson 4 handout).**

Finally, students discuss their plans with me and make any suggested changes to it. Once my approval is given, they can then begin work on their projects.

Sample projects from the 2013–2014 AL students are:

- *Should university classes start at 9am?*
- *Should Japan allow more foreigners into the country?*

- *Do we really need the Tokyo Olympics?*
- *Is dieting risky?*
- *How can we change the current job-hunting system?*

## Collecting the data

The AL course focuses on primary data collection methods such as conducting questionnaires, interviews, and observation and secondary data collection such as finding materials either online or in the library. Classes help to support students' independent projects. Moreover, students join a private Facebook group to provide support to one another (Boon & Beck, 2013). For example, students can post their research questions and receive comments from the teacher and class members:

> *My research topic is "How do you think about university's first class starts at 9 o'clock?" This is important because first class's start time will affect our lives. University's first class starts at 9 o'clock. However, I think 9 o'clock is too early. Many students cannot concentrate on first class. I'd like to do interview. I want to know how everybody feel first class's start time*
>
> (Student M: Posted 09.23.13)
>
> *Interesting. yes, it is so early. I want to sleep in morning.*
>
> (Student D: Commented 09.23.13)

Moreover, students can use the Facebook group to collect primary data from each other. For example, students may create a questionnaire using SurveyMonkey <surveymonkey.com> and post it to the group for group members to answer. Students are also encouraged to go out into the world to conduct face-to-face interviews whenever possible.

## Providing progress reports

To ensure that the project remains at the forefront of students' minds, I find it useful to have them provide progress reports on a regular basis. Once students begin work on their projects, I ask them at the start of each class to work in different pairs and discuss their projects (see Figure 5).

**Task 1: Project Report:**

- How is your project going? What is your focus?
- Have you started to collect the data and do research?
- What are your next steps?

**Figure 5. Project report.**

This gives students the chance to talk about the work they have been doing since the last lesson and for the teacher to circulate, monitor conversations, and gain an understanding of student progress. It is also possible to have students report their progress by posting to the Facebook group.

## Sharing research findings

In the final class of the semester, students submit their written assignments to the teacher and deliver a short poster presentation on their research. Students present their findings to a small audience of class members. The audience then rotates to the next presenter and students repeat their presentations to a new audience. Students repeat their presentations four times and then switch places with the audience (audience members become presenters and vice versa). The poster event creates a unique classroom dynamic and exciting finale in which students can share what they have learned outside of the classroom with their peers (Boon & Stevens, 2010).

## What students think about doing projects

AL students commented that they liked to be able to choose their research topic (6 respondents), learn research methods (3 respondents), learn how to write academic essays (2 respondents), present their research (5 respondents), and "hear different opinions or ideas from many people" in the class (4 respondents). However, they mentioned that it was sometimes difficult to understand how to proceed with the project and how "deep" to go with the research (3 respondents).

With respect to using English outside of the classroom, three students responded that they used Japanese but then translated their research findings:

> "*My primary data is almost in Japanese, but I translate the answers*."

Four students replied that they used a mix of both English and Japanese when collecting the data:

> *"My half of data comes from Japanese and half of the rest comes from English to compare and contrast."*

Finally, three students replied that they used mainly English during the research process. One student commented that she interviewed foreign friends online. Another student commented:

> *"I did conduct my survey in English but in the other side I can only set AL students as my target."*

Finally, students agreed that the projects helped them to improve their English. As one student commented:

> *"AL projects require using English in a lot of time, so I have to use the English naturally. It's helping me to improve my English."*

## Conclusion

Project work encourages students to take their learning and use it in the world outside. Although in an EFL setting it is possible that students will use the L1 to conduct their research, most AL students tended to seek ways to collect primary and secondary data in English. Moreover, as the end product is delivered in the second language (L2), the project still required AL students to think in English outside of the classroom even when dealing with data in the L1. Such projects can boost learner confidence and autonomy via students taking "a certain responsibility for their own learning" (Fried-Booth, 2002, p. 7). Moreover, projects provide an exciting alternative to more traditional forms of classroom assessment.

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**Andrew Boon** is an associate professor in the faculty of humanities at Toyo Gakuen University, Tokyo. He has been teaching in Japan for over 16 years and is an Aston University PhD student. He has been an active member of JALT since 2004, has presented at numerous conferences, and has published several articles on teacher development, motivation, and methodology. He is also co-author of *Inspire*, a 3-level listening and speaking coursebook (Cengage Learning, 2013–14).

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JALT2014
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# Writing across borders

## Miles Craven

The Møller Centre for Continuing Education Ltd., Churchill College, University of Cambridge

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As a textbook writer for the last 17 years, I have been acutely aware of how ELT publishing has long defined itself by geographic borders—establishing groups to focus on specific, distinct, and often jealously guarded markets: South-East Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Camena (Central Asia, Middle East, and North Africa), Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North

America . . . the list goes on. Each geographic border is associated with various curriculum restraints and cultural barriers. However, diversifying trends in pedagogy and content delivery, combined with the increasing fragmentation of these geographic markets, and not least the arrival of the digital age in ELT, have resulted in the breakdown of these traditional borders. We are emerging into a new landscape—one with newer, and fewer, borders. Borders need no longer be seen as boundaries or barriers. Rather, they should be viewed as pathfinders, lighting our way to a deeper, broader understanding.

17年間の教科書作成を通して、ELT出版には地理上の境界線があり、特定の、明確な、時にはうらやむほどに保護された市場にグループ分けされていることを強く感じている。東南アジア、中東、ラテンアメリカ、カメーナ（中央アジア、中東、北アフリカ）、西欧、東欧、北米などである。いずれの地理上の境界線も様々なカリキュラムの制約や文化的な障壁と結びついている。しかし、これらの地理上の市場の断片化の進行と相まって、教育とコンテンツ配信における多様化の傾向や、少なくともELTにおけるデジタル時代の到来により、これらの従来の境界線の崩壊が起こっている。我々は新しい社会—より新しく境界線の少ない社会に突入している。境界線はもはや、限界や障壁だと見なされる必要はない。それどころか、より深い、より広い相互理解への道を明るく照らす、先導者だと見なされるべきである。

## Borders as barriers

Winston Churchill famously said, "America and England are two nations divided by a common language." To this day, perhaps the deepest historic boundary drawn in ELT publishing has been the distinction between publications written in American English and those in British English. Publishers have felt the need to create separate courses, and list them in different catalogues. This distinction is becoming increasingly anachronistic, but persists even today. This rather clumsy linguistic border readily gives way to geographic borders. Some of my books are in American English exclusively for Japan (e.g., *World Interviews*), while others are in American English, but the border is widened to South East Asia (e.g., *Get Real!*, *Reading Keys*, and *Breakthrough*). For Cambridge University Press, however, *Listening Extra*, *Quizzes, Questionnaires and Puzzles*, *English Grammar in Use CD-ROM*, *Messages 3*, and *Cambridge English Skills—Listening and Speaking* are all in British English, and within a worldwide border. Interestingly, as *Reading Keys* and *Breakthrough* are in American English, both new editions are also promoted in Latin America. With Oxford University Press, I found myself writing within yet a new border. *Q Listening and Speaking 3* is mainly for the North American ESL market, but now finds itself straddling the EFL–ESL divide, notably in Asia and the Middle East.

My professional life has therefore been defined by borders: American English versus British English; Japan versus South-East Asia; Asia versus worldwide; EFL versus ESL; secondary school versus adult; local publisher versus international publisher. For Cambridge University Press, I am viewed as a British English author of international titles, while for Macmillan I am pigeonholed as an American English author for Asia and Latin America. My experience shows just how much publishers love creating borders, and defining boundaries!

Of course, with these borders and boundaries comes a bewildering array of restrictions. There exists a minefield of cultural taboos and sensitivities that need to be carefully negotiated. Depending on the border, guidelines may include no religious references; no politics (and certainly don't mention the war!); beware of maps and flags; censor images for alcohol, smoking, and displays of affection; avoid or encourage non-standard relationships; beware of references to and images of pets (e.g., no dogs in the home) . . . "We can't have bare arms for Saudi," "Don't mention the colonization of South America," "No bare midriffs, or mini skirts," "No ham, no pork, no beef, no gambling, no ghosts, no eating in the street, no . . . "—you get the idea. Yes, there has to be an awareness of cultural sensitivities, but sometimes publishers tend towards the over-zealous in their forced depiction of an ELT-sanitized world. Amid the misery of all these restrictions, there is also room for the absurd, with advice such as "Images depicting beheading or hanging are only suitable for children over 12 years old" (Genuine, verbatim, and very recent guidance from a leading international publisher). Some might argue there have been too many borders and restrictions.

## Borders redefined

For an industry that excels at creating borders where none need exist, the arrival of the digital age has been nothing short of apocalyptic. In just a few years, technology-led innovations have made e-learning and blended learning an integral part of ELT publishing. Such is the impact that Pearson has announced its intention to focus exclusively on digital learning in the future, and others are debating how far they should follow suit. Amidst all the uncertainty, one thing is certain: The new digital learning world is reshaping the archetypal borders. Digital content crosses boundaries and borders far more easily than print. Almost as a panic, interim measure, publishers find themselves reassessing and reshaping long-cherished borders. New versioning units are springing up, tasked with the responsibility of using existing courses to supply fresh content to different markets. This stop-gap measure is partly designed to keep markets supplied with new material at minimal cost, while publishers chart their way through the digital revolution to calmer, more secure waters. Courses that were hitherto hemmed into particular niches may now stretch their wings with a new lease of life. This opportunity brings with it dangers, however. Few courses that are written for one particular market can actually work well in another. Hence the birth of versioning units, acting as benevolent midwives to safely deliver new courses to target markets. How successful the versions are depends to a large extent on the budgets available for adaptation, and only time will tell how well this strategy works. In the meantime, advice for teachers choosing a new course might be to ask whether it has been published elsewhere, and what has been done to adapt the course to the needs of local learners.

It is far better, in my view, to write a course aimed at a particular *type* of learner, than a particular geographic region. *Breakthrough Plus* addresses the needs of students who want to speak English, but who lack confidence in expressing themselves, and need practice in the skills they need to communicate effectively. By redefining "border" as a learning style, the course offers a way forward to students of shared educational experiences, expectations and abilities, wherever they may be. Moreover, as the course features people from all over the world, the variety of accents means the old American English versus British English issue is swept aside in favor of what can be called International English. Most English spoken today is between speakers whose first language is not English. We need to open up the classroom to these diverse accents, and in so doing challenge historic borders, and barriers, traditionally embedded in ELT publishing.

## Borders unbound

This new publishing landscape results in more diverse routes to publication and content delivery. Those wishing to write and publish their own work now have the possibility to publish online as e-books, as apps, in traditional print form, or in a combination of all media. I have spent the last four years developing a new TOEIC preparation course called *Pass the TOEIC Test*. Rather than going through a major publisher, I set up a company to oversee the design, content editing, copy editing, proofing, artwork, permissions, audio, web support, and so on. We license local publishers and distributors around the world. This flexibility allows us to adapt the course to local requirements, which is essential for success, and something that large publishers have been slow to offer. In Japan, for example, we distribute the full three-level international version, but we also have a very different version of the Introductory Course (published by Seibido), called *Valuable Clues for the TOEIC Test*, aimed at Japanese English teachers. We are currently working on apps, in addition to investigating e-books and an online platform.

With the breakdown of the old borders comes the opportunity to publish directly, creating bespoke courses for particular niches. Over the coming years, I hope to encourage others to develop and take control of their own writing futures, especially in Japan. If you are interested, then please come and speak to me during the conference. My personal journey has taken me across many borders, barriers, and obstacles. Now I mostly publish my own work, and I look forward to helping others do the same.

**Miles Craven** has worked in English language education since 1988, teaching in schools, colleges and universities around the world. He has a wide range of experience as a teacher, teacher-trainer, examiner, course designer, and textbook writer. He is the author or co-author of over thirty textbooks, including *English Grammar in Use Extra*, *Cambridge English Skills*, *Q*, *Reading Keys*, *Breakthrough Plus*, and *Pass the TOEIC Test*. He also acts as Advisor for Executive Education programs at The Møller Centre for Continuing Education Ltd., Churchill College, University of Cambridge.

# Use graded readers for English conversation and more

## Lesley Ito

BIG BOW English Lab

*Sponsored by Atama-ii Books*

A graded reader library is a valuable resource which can extend beyond simply extensive reading. Extensive reading has become more popular in recent years as more teachers realize how effective it is to help students become fluent readers and build their vocabularies. However, once the vocabulary has been pre-taught, the story has been read, and the headword count noted, it's a waste not to use them for other classroom activities. Get the most out of these engaging leveled stories by effectively using them in other contexts, from guiding and supporting *eikaiwa*-style conversation lessons, to structuring group discussions, to enriching writing or research tasks. Furthermore, reading activities done in class with adequate scaffolding can help the students strive to increase their reading level. This interactive workshop will highlight a variety of practical, effective, and simple solutions to fit all teaching contexts, from language school to university, and from children to adults.

段階別リーディング用図書は単なる多読の範囲を超えて活用できる貴重な教材である。多読は近年ますます人気を得ており、多くの教員が、学生の読解力や語彙力の向上に非常に効果があることを実感している。しかし、事前に語彙を教え、物語を読み、本の見出し語を数え終わった後、それらの知識を他の授業内容に活用しなければ無駄になってしまう。人の興味をそそるレベル別になっているこれらの物語を、他の授業内容でも効果的に取り入れて大いに利用すべきである。例えば、英会話スタイルの会話練習に導入したり、グループディスカッションに組み立てたり、ライティングや調査報告課題に利用することができる。さらに、適切な指導のもとに行われる教室内での読書活動は、学生の読解レベル向上に役立つ。この対話式のワークショップでは、会話学校から大学、また子供から大人までの、すべての教育現場に適合する様々な実用的かつ効果的で、簡単な解決策を取り上げる。

As someone who walked into walls as a child on a regular basis because I had my nose in a book, I was surprised when I started teaching in Japan and had so many students tell me that they didn't enjoy reading in English. Therefore, when extensive reading (ER) (Bamford & Day, 1997; Waring & Takahashi, 2000) gained popularity as a new way for students to learn English, my private language school was one of the first to have a graded reader library. This has grown over the years to include over 500 books that include graded readers of all levels as well as authentic children's materials.

ER is an essential part of my school's curriculum, but it would be a waste to put a book back on the shelf after it has been read and the headword count noted, as is often done in ER libraries. Graded readers are excellent tools that can and should be used for other classroom activities. Some teachers may worry that using graded readers other than for ER would demotivate students, but it is important to remember that while not every student may enjoy reading, almost everyone enjoys a good story. It seems that as long as an activity is interesting, short, involves the students' emotions or curiosity, and is adequately scaffolded to reduce student frustration, students will enjoy doing it (Boon, 2009).

In recent years, I have been involved with projects involving multi-path readers. Multi-path readers follow an interactive game format in which the reader makes choices during the story that lead to different endings. Multi-path readers, such as the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, have been around since 1979. Many of us grew up reading them and they are some of the best-selling children's books in history. What may not be known about these books is that they are effective in motivating reluctant readers (History of CYOA, 2014) because of their interactive quality; in other words, the choice the student makes has a direct impact on the story's ending and the student is naturally curious as to how his or her story will end. Students using these interactive stories in the classroom will find a natural need to discuss them, since the class or small group must decide together or vote on which choice to make before they can proceed. These discussions are more successful with low-level learners if the teacher provides sentence prompts such as, *I think we should/shouldn't . . . because . . . .* If the group or class doesn't like how their story ended, they can easily start again and try a new adventure. Students can engage in short writing tasks, such as writing a one- or two-sentence summary of each ending they reach or writing their own endings and then taking the activity one step further by discussing what they wrote with their classmates and ranking the endings from favorite to least favorite.

ER usually requires students to read silently on their own. The general consensus in ELT is that reading aloud is not recommended and for many teachers it reminds them of their school days when their teacher would make the students take turns reading a paragraph from the textbook. Students often dealt with this by counting how many paragraphs until their turn and then staring into space in the meantime. However, in an EFL classroom, reading aloud can have benefits such as helping to develop reading fluency and reducing anxiety in students who are nervous about speaking in English (Gibson, 2008). The key is to have students read in small groups or to a partner so there is less time between turns. Another advantage of reading-aloud activities in class is that the teacher can occasionally stop the students and clarify points (such as cultural or historical references), ask general questions, ask opinions about the plot or a character's actions, or ask the students to make predictions about what will happen next. I've found that this type of support can help students read slightly above their reading ability level. Once students finish a book at this higher level, it often gives them confidence to check out other books from the same series, genre, or by the same author from the class library the next time they read on their own (Krashen, 2004).

As I previously mentioned, almost everyone likes a good story. They also like talking about the stories they have read as much as reading them. However, EFL students need adequate scaffolding in order to accomplish this. Short book reports that include the student's opinions about the story not only demonstrate that the student has read the book, but also give them time to reflect on what they've read and think about what they'd like to say about it. Book reports are an especially effective tool to start short, casual conversations between the student and the teacher. Discussion can be taken a step further by pairing up students who have read the same book and providing them with a sample dialogue or list of sample questions. As with many activities in the EFL classroom, book reports and discussions are much more successful if the students are first given examples provided by the teacher.

People often watch a movie or read a book and then later go on Google to look up some question about it that popped into their mind. Something about the story piqued their curiosity and they were compelled to learn more on their own. Students are no different. They might wonder if the fictional reader is based on a true event. In my class, reading a graded reader, *The Lost Ship* (Colbourn, Slater, & Milne, 1992), about a "ghost ship" lost in the Bermuda Triangle led to a lesson on the famous true story of the *Mary Celeste*, a mysteriously abandoned ship. Reading a multi-path story about a stolen World Cup soccer trophy, *The Lost Cup* (Broadbridge, 2014), led to students going on the Internet in class to see if it had really been stolen (it has—twice!). Or students might want to do research on their own or in groups to find out more about something interesting they've read in the reader. Students who don't yet possess the skills to write essays in paragraph form can make "mini-posters" to present or create true or false statements with which to quiz the class (Sandy, 2011).

Teachers can also turn this idea around and find a graded reader that relates to a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL; Brown, 2014) lesson they want to use in class. In my experience, after reading a story together, students are often much more receptive to a lesson on topics that relate to the story. For example, after reading a short reader about a Nepali boy that had trouble adjusting to life as a homestay student in America, *The Homestay Friends* (Hoskins, 2000), the students were primed and willing to do a lesson comparing and contrasting the daily lives of children in Japan, Nepal, and America.

Sometimes students, especially those in *eikaiwa*-style conversation classes, are reluctant to study from a textbook and just wish to focus on "free conversation". However, that usually leads to students chatting about the same topics, using the same vocabulary, and making little improvement, which often leads to them quitting the lesson in frustration after a short time. Adding graded readers to the curriculum not only improves reading and vocabulary skills, but it also gives students meaningful content to talk about and exposes them to a large amount of comprehensible input, which will lead to greater satisfaction with their progress as students (Hoey, 2014).

Therefore, take those graded readers off the shelf, add them to your curriculum, and enjoy doing interesting reader-based activities with your students!

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**Lesley Ito** is a well-known teacher, teacher trainer, school owner, and ELT materials writer based in Nagoya. She has taught in Japan for twenty years, and has presented professionally at teaching conferences throughout the country. Her writing credits include teacher's guides for the *We Can!* series (McGraw-Hill), workbooks for the *Our World* and *Welcome to Our World* series (Cengage), *Fifty Ways to Teach Young Learners* (Wayzgoose Press), and on-line materials to support the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series (McGraw-Hill). Most recently, she has authored *Tornado Alley* and *Backstage Pass* (2014, Atama-ii Books).



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# Authenticity revisited: Corpus, conversation, and materials


## Jeanne McCarten

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The question as to whether authentic materials can and should be used in teaching materials has provoked lively debate over the years, and most recently with regard to large corpora of conversation. This paper considers various issues in using authentic or naturally-occurring spoken language in the classroom and suggests ways in which the authenticity of conversations might be judged.

"Authentic materials"（教材として作られたのではない生の素材）を指導教材として実際に使えるか、また、使うべきかが長年にわたり活発に議論されているが、最近は特に大規模な会話コーパスに関心が高まっている。本論では、実際に使われている自然な話し言葉を授業で使う時の様々な問題を検証し、会話の自然度を判別する方法を示唆する。


This paper considers some of the issues in using authentic spoken language in materials designed to teach conversation skills and strategies. The quest for authenticity in materials has been a subject of major debate since the 1970s. Clarke and Silberstein (1977) argued that "the purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life" (p. 138) and advocated that classroom activities should "parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible." On the other hand, Widdowson (1998), defining authenticity as necessarily requiring an authentic response or interpretation on the part of the reader or listener, argued that "the classroom cannot replicate the contextual conditions that made the language authentic in the first place" (p. 715). Even the definition of what is authentic in the classroom can be problematic, but we will take our definition from Wallace (1992) as that of a real-life text "not written for pedagogic purposes" (p. 145) and amend it to include, additionally, conversational language which has not been *spoken* for pedagogic purposes.

Authentic texts soon became an established ingredient in published materials, which was welcomed by teachers and students (Chavez, 1988). However, the availability of transcribed spoken corpora and the ability to analyze large numbers of conversations refueled the debate. Questions were raised as to the viability of interpreting anonymous spoken data without full access to or knowledge of its contexts (Carter, 1998; Cook, 1998; Widdowson, 2000). It is within this context that we consider some of the very practical pedagogic as well as linguistic issues.

## Real conversation versus textbook conversation

The differences between "real" and textbook conversations are the subject of many studies (for examples see Barbieri & Eckhardt, 2007; Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Cheng & Warren, 2007; Cullen & Kuo, 2007; Gilmore, 2004; Tognini Bonelli, 2001). Textbooks are often found wanting, either because they pepper their conversations with an unnaturally large number of examples of target structures and are overly lexically dense (Stubbs, 1986), or conversely, because they neglect to include enough discourse features of natural conversation, for example, false starts, repetitions, pauses, overlapping turns, and back channeling (see McCarthy, 1998, Chapter 3). Overall, "authentic" and "natural" are judged to be inherently good. The absence of authentic conversational features in teaching materials has even been described as potentially disempowering for the learner (Carter & McCarthy 1996)—perhaps rightly so. If we wish learners to acquire conversational skills and the language to realize them, the more authentic the examples we can offer, the better.

While authentic language in materials that are designed to teach conversation is therefore desirable, the challenges of using real conversational data are not to be underestimated. Real conversation presents overlapping physical, linguistic, and pedagogical challenges. At a banal level, there are physical constraints. The printed page (or screen of online materials) is designed to follow publisher and teacher expectations and can mean that in an elementary course book, say, there is a limit of only fifty to sixty words in one conversation. Real conversations, especially those with many short overlapping turns, are often simply too long to reproduce on the page. Further, conversations with a high concentration of hesitations, false starts, and digressions can be difficult to read—they were not meant to be read, after all—or even listened to. The transcription conventions for indicating features such as overlaps are not widely known and can look daunting. Transcriptions of some common articulations of certain structures (e.g., *wouldn't've* for *wouldn't have; what'**s** he do* for *what **does** he do*) are not orthographically accepted (or even acceptable). Additionally, conversations that have people speaking at the same time are extremely difficult to follow on audio recordings.

The language of real conversations also poses constant challenges to the materials writer, from macro concerns to individual details of usage. Even deciding on what constitutes a unit within conversation and where its boundaries lie can be problematic (see Atkins, Clear, & Ostler, 1992; Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth, 2000). Unlike written articles, which are published for larger audiences, conversations mostly have an audience of just one or two interlocutors. As such, it can often be difficult for a third party to fully comprehend the context and purpose of the conversation (Mishan, 2004) or speakers' references to unknown people and things. In this regard, Widdowson's (1998) claim that the contextual conditions of the original conversation cannot be replicated in the classroom has more merit. However, as McCarthy (2001, p. 138) points out, what is relevant here is learners' response to such texts. Well-chosen examples which engage learners' interest can make excellent pedagogical tools.

The avoidance of taboo words, offensive topics, derogatory references to brand names, and even trademarks (which rule out the names of widely-used social media) is an obvious limitation. However, judgments on whether to include dated references (e.g., fax machines) or language which might be perceived as above the students' level and in danger of diverting the lesson from its main teaching goal are more subjective. Acceptability is a major issue (and of great concern to publishers' editors). Common, informal usages such as *there's* + plural noun, *would have went*, ellipted auxiliaries (e.g., *You having lunch today?*) and so on, may be considered unacceptable. For many teachers, common spoken expressions such as *you know,* and *like* for speech reporting and highlighting (e.g., *she's **like** really quiet and **like** totally clams up*) may be even more undesirable. In an informal survey of seventy ESL teachers in Illinois, USA, McCarthy and McCarten (2002) found teachers rated these expressions as less acceptable in materials than the use of *there's* + plural noun.

There are also pedagogical considerations. Materials writers try hard to engage students' interest, and other people's conversations can be dull for third parties or have little real-world content around which to build a lesson. Then there is the question of practice. In the author's experience, a conversation where one speaker has much more to say than the other was rejected by the publisher on the grounds that it could not be equitably practiced in pairs (personal communications). A serious issue is that many teachers may feel threatened or ill-prepared to teach features of spoken language which they have not yet encountered in their training programs. As a profession we have not yet developed a universal, learner-friendly meta-language for describing many features of conversation such as reciprocation, convergence, hedging, or, according to McCarthy (2001) the misleadingly named *dislocated* elements (e.g., *He's a builder, **my brother***).

Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy (2011) offer possible solutions to some of these challenges, and attempts to include more natural-sounding conversation examples based on corpus observation have appeared in more recent teaching materials. McCarthy, McCarten, and Sandiford (2005a & b, 2006a & b, 2012, 2014a-e) use edited as well as specially-written conversations informed by corpus analysis. These explicitly teach the language and features of natural conversation including, for example, response tokens and backchannels (*Really?, Uh huh*), discourse markers (*well, anyway, you see*), hedging (*kind of, a little*), vague category markers (*and stuff like that, and so on*), as well as dislocated structures (*and **those news tickers**, they're another thing I hate*) (See McCarthy & McCarten, 2012 for more on their approach to syllabus design.)

## The proof of the pudding

How we judge authenticity in materials is, then, a huge area of debate. There is, of course, a question as to whether even lightly-edited conversations can ever be regarded as authentic, let alone those which the materials writer has composed based on close analysis of similar language events. We will not enter into that here except to say that any steps towards authenticity of language use in teaching materials are to be welcomed. For the classroom, perhaps a more pertinent question is, to use the term from Widdowson (1998), how are we to *authenticate* the language? The answer may lie in offering students plentiful opportunities to use the taught language and strategies in activities that require their personalized (indeed authentic) participation and contributions. In the end, however, perhaps we should judge authenticity not only in terms of the language in materials, which has been the main focus until now, but also as McCarthy (2001) suggests, in terms of learners' response, how learners themselves perceive the usefulness and authenticity of the language they are learning. A second, and perhaps more important, criterion might be how others perceive learners' fluency and ability to communicate effectively. Hasselgreen's (2004) research suggests that successful teaching of certain features of naturally occurring conversation will add positively to hearers' perception of speakers' fluency. The discussion of the importance of fluency in social contexts in McCarthy (2010) would further suggest that there is no more valuable judge of authenticity of a learner's output.

In this age of digital communications, previous distinctions between written and spoken language blur. Text messages, status updates, and (micro)blogging may be written texts, but many adopt some of the forms and features of face-to-face conversations in addition to creating their own. The debate about authenticity in a computer-mediated learning environment, as initiated by Kramsch, A'Ness, and Lam (2000), looks set to continue.

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**Jeanne McCarten** taught English in Sweden, France, Malaysia, and the UK before becoming a publisher. She has many years of experience publishing ELT materials, specializing in grammar and vocabulary. She was also closely involved in the development of the spoken English sections of the Cambridge International Corpus. Currently a freelance materials writer, her main interests lie in applying insights from corpus research to language teaching. She is co-author of the corpus-informed materials *Touchstone, Viewpoint,* and *Grammar for Business,* published by Cambridge University Press, who are sponsoring her attendance at JALT.

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# Told poems: When the familiar becomes strange

## Leslie Turpin

SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont

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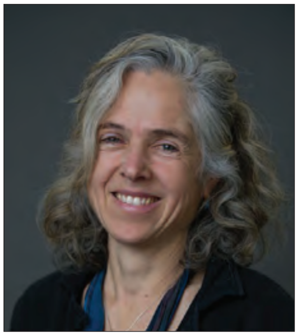
Peace-builders and teachers rely on many of the same skills, attitudes, and awarenesses to do their work effectively and much can be learned through their juxtaposition. This paper explores one teacher educator's experience incorporating concepts and skills from the field of peace-building into her own daily teaching of graduate students in an MATESOL program. Deepening her use of the familiar skills of listening, empathy, and inquiry (as her foray into peace literature suggested was necessary), proved to be more elusive than the author expected. The process surfaced an unexpected and underlying question: What does changing one's practice involve? Drawing on her experience of changing the use of storytelling in an intercultural communications course, the author offers a *Change Framework* consisting of four interlocking elements. It is the author's hope that teachers find this framework useful when grappling with the integration of old and new ideas in their own teaching.

平和推進者と教師は、仕事を効果的に行うために、同じような技術や態度、認識を多々用いており、これらを並列して考えると多くのことが分かってくる。本論では、平和推進の概念と技術を、MA TESOL Program（英語教授法修士課程）における大学院生向けの授業に日々組み込んでいる、1人の教員（養成）教育者の経験を考察する。リスニング、共感、質問のような、よく知られている技術をさらに深めることは、（平和文学に踏み込む必要があり）著者が思っていた以上に理解をえるのが難しいものだということが分かった。この過程で、「自分の実践を変えることはどう作用するか」という、思いもよらない潜在的な問いを表面化させた。異文化コミュニケーションの課程でストーリーテリングの方法を変更して行った経験を参考にして、4つの関連要素から構成される「変更の枠組み」を提案する。教師が自身の授業で新旧の見解を統合しようとする際に、この枠組みが役立つことを願っている。



When I think of border-crossings, I envision physical, geographical, linguistic, or cultural ones. But ideas also become "stuck in place" and crossing into other disciplines can expand the limits of our minds and our imaginations.

When I came to JALT in Nara ten years ago, I presented a workshop on Told Poetry, an activity that I learned from the poet, Verandah Porche (1998), which I do with my graduate students. When I return this November, I will do a workshop on the same activity. This time, however, I will examine how my thinking about it has changed as a result of my recent border-crossing into the field of peace studies.

I use Told Poems on the first day of my Intercultural Communications class. It serves as an ice-breaker and as an introduction to both intercultural communication concepts and to the way I use stories to teach the course. The activity has a simple, predictable and tight structure allowing it to feel familiar and, therefore, safe. At the same time, it is open-ended as to invite the emergence of each unique individual and group. This makes it risky, exciting, and strange.

Reflecting on this activity has led me to wonder:

- What is the nature of change in our teaching?

- How does the familiar stay strange and exciting?
- How do we make room for change in our set ways of doing things?

My initial work as a teacher and teacher educator was with refugees from Southeast Asia in the US, and in a refugee camp in Thailand. Later I did my doctoral work in a small Lao-American community in Vermont, exploring their experience of memory of place and of re-placing (Turpin, 2004). As you might expect, integrating the new and old was a complex and varied process that each person in the community experienced not only alone, but also in relationship to the other members of their family and community. As I struggled to understand the dynamic nature of their change, I stumbled onto the work of Pongphit and Hewison (2001) on change in a traditional village in Thailand. They describe four essential elements of that process: preservation, adaptation, renewal, and innovation (p. 137).

Anon Sengaloun, one of my Lao-American friends and a participant in my study, suggested that Lao are made of four other elements: earth, wind, water, and fire. These elements seemed to link to the ones Pongphit and Hewison described, and so I began to combine them into a working framework:

- Preservation = Earth (what we keep, the process of holding on)
- Renewal = Wind or Breath (what we bring back to life, the process of renewing and retrieving what has been lost)
- Adaptation = Water (what we alter or tinker with, the process of adapting with the flow)
- Innovation = Fire (what we let go of, destroy and build anew, the process of creating)

I have found these elements and their associated metaphors to be useful in understanding the dynamics of moving between cultures and across time. I have also offered them to teachers as one lens through which to organize and articulate different facets of their own change process as teachers. Now I am using them to reflect on my own changes as a teacher through the CONTACT Program.

CONTACT is a year-long course for peace-builders from around the world, including on-line work and face-to-face sessions (in Vermont and Rwanda). I have always been interested in the relationship between peace-building and teaching and I began the course with the straightforward intention of bringing the two fields together in my work.

Initially, I believed that I would learn useful peace-building "things" and "tools" to insert into my teaching practice. I would make adaptations in a fluid, water-like process. Instead, I am learning to refashion old tools for new purposes. Skills of listening, empathy, and inquiry, which I previously viewed as essential "life" skills for teachers and for the learners with whom they work, have been renewed as life or death skills. I now see them as the fragile threads that reach too tentatively across the growing rifts between us all. This renewal of purpose is transforming me and will, hopefully, refocus my teaching in new ways.

I believe that our identities are understood through the stories we share about ourselves and others. Our settings, plots, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends, speak volumes about how we see ourselves in the world. Our choice of languages and words, our gaps and assumptions of shared meaning are windows into who we are. Over the years, I have slowly worked to develop storytelling so that it sits a bit more boldly and confidently at the center of my classes. Told Poems are one concrete manifestation of that centering.

But my foray into peace-building leads me to ask more of myself, "How does an activity like Told Poetry change when I consider issues of intergenerational trauma or child soldiers, or processes of dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation that lie at the heart of war and peace?" Sharing, witnessing and listening to stories are essential pieces of the dialogue process of peace-building work. In these contexts, stories are often shared between victims and perpetrators of mass violence.

While many teachers might not plan to work in a context where story telling is woven into the reconciliation process between warring parties, we all work in the midst of exclusion and inclusion in our own classes and schools and we teach learners who are marginalized or whose identities are "wounded" by unhealed experiences. Coming from different cultures, we have different views of the powerful role of silence and of its potential for both healing and silencing within a storied landscape.

When I went to Rwanda with CONTACT this winter, I was struck by the central role storytelling played in the process of reconciliation, justice and forgiveness there. I heard stories of perpetrators, of survivors, of rescuers, and of children who had absorbed the lessons of forgiveness or revenge in their parents' stories. I heard stories from the traditional courts and stories of individuals whose organizations are devoted to mending the torn fabric of the society. I heard different versions of the root causes of the genocide and conflicted ideas about which stories would heal and memorialize and which would drive Rwanda back into a cycle of distrust and retribution.

I will end with one story from Rwanda, which speaks to how this border crossing made my familiar teaching world beautifully strange. It is from Theo Bizimana, a Rwandan man who works to create dialogue spaces between perpetrators and victims of violence and between opposing parties in conflict zones.

Theo told the story of how he starts his dialogue sessions with a simple game, "The wind blows . . . ." In this game, participants sit in chairs in a circle. There is one person without a chair who stands in the center and calls out a phrase, "The wind blows for anyone . . . who likes to play the guitar" (or who sings, or who has children, etc.). Everyone who plays the guitar has to get up and find a new seat while the caller scrambles to find an empty chair to sit in. The person left without a chair is the new caller: "The wind blows for anyone who . . . likes to eat chocolate." On it goes.

This is an old game. I remember learning it when I worked in the refugee camp in Thailand in 1985. It is an ice-breaker that gets students moving, laughing and relaxed. I have never thought much more about it and didn't expect Theo to say more about it than that.

But fun was not his only purpose. In Theo's work, the first problem is how to get enemies to sit next to each other, something they would never choose to do on their own. "The wind blows" forces people to change seats and sit next to an enemy—even if only for one or two minutes. With each shift of seating, he tells the participants to shake hands and introduce themselves to their "neighbor." This momentary connection and acknowledgement of "the other" is a crucial first step in laying the groundwork for any further trust-building.

There is also another purpose. Because the opposing sides of a conflict are so entrenched in mutually exclusive aspects of their identities (Hutu or Tutsi, for instance), they are often unable to see that they share some areas of common ground with those they hate. Recognizing that an enemy shares a love of singing becomes a source for building common ground and new "cross-cutting" identities. This little gesture allows movement from a "stuck" place of rigidly fixed views of self and other to a more fluid, changing and even joyful space where there is potential for new relationships to take root.

I look forward to exploring this more with you in November.

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**Leslie Turpin** is an associate professor at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. Over the last twenty-five years there she has taught pedagogy courses and worked with language teachers from around the world to explore questions concerning the dynamics of learning and teaching, and the processes of intercultural communication. Cultural border crossings and immigrant and refugee identity have been a particular interest and led to her doctoral work, an intergenerational exploration of memory of place in a Laotian American community. Her interest in combining education, communities, and the arts has fostered the development of many long-term and cross-border, bilingual collaborations between artists and communities.

# At the same time: A case of lexical congruency

## Crayton Walker

The University of Birmingham, U.K.

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Highly frequent nouns and verbs often have multiple meanings, and we generally use other words from the co-text to disambiguate the item. In other words, it is the collocates of the word which show us the intended meaning. We seem to use a similar process to disambiguate polysemous phrases, that is, we use one or more lexical items which occur with the phrase to identify the speaker's or writer's intended meaning. I call this process *lexical congruency*. Lexical congruency is a term which is used to refer to the way lexical items in the co-text reflect and contribute to the meaning of a particular word of phrase.

非常に頻繁に用いられる名詞や動詞は多様な意味を持つことが多く、人は一般的にその前後にある他の語を参照して意味をはっきりさせる。換言すれば、意図されている本当の意味を示すのは語の連結である。多義的な「句」の曖昧さを解消するのにも同様のプロセスを用いる傾向がある。つまり、話し手や書き手の真意を確定するために、その句と共に使われる1つまたは複数の語を利用する。著者はこのプロセスをlexical congruency（語彙調和、語彙適合）と呼ぶ。これは、前後にある語群が、特定の語句の意味を反映し理解するのに役立つ方法に言及するのに使われる用語である。

A *collocation* is normally defined as a combination of two or more words, which occur together or in close proximity to each other, in both written and spoken discourse. A typical collocation consists of two items, a *node* and a *collocate*. For example, if we are looking at the word *issue*, we will find that it is often associated with the following collocations: *thorny issue, latest issue, special issue, issue of bonds, to tackle the issue of*. In this case *issue* is the node and *thorny, latest, bonds,* and *tackle* are some of the collocates which frequently occur with *issue*.

However, many words have multiple meanings (or senses) and it is usually the collocates in the surrounding co-text which disambiguate the item, indicating the particular meaning which is intended on that occasion. A *thorny issue* is different, for example, to *the latest issue*. *Issue* has changed its meaning and it is the collocate (and the co-text) which reveals the speaker's or writer's intended meaning. Data from the Bank of English[1] corpus show how the most frequent collocates of the noun form of *issue* are associated with three distinct meanings.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| $issue_1$ | an important subject which is being discussed or argued about | e.g., *the Palestinian issue* |
| $issue_2$ | a particular issue of a magazine or newspaper | e.g., *the most recent issue of* the Listener |
| $issue_3$ | a particular issue of shares, bonds etc. | e.g., *an issue of Eurobonds* |

The corpus data clearly show that one of the main factors which influences the process by which collocations are formed is the semantics of the individual word, and where the item has two or more distinct meanings, each meaning will normally be associated with a different set of collocates (see Walker, 2008, 2011 for more details). However, what happens in the case of a phrase such as *at the same time*? Does this kind of phrase have multiple meanings and if so, do the collocates which are frequently associated with that phrase also reflect these different meanings? The corpus data would seem to indicate that the answer to both questions is yes.

Here are four extracts taken from the Bank of English Corpus each containing the phrase *at the same time*. The phrase would appear to have a different meaning in each of the four extracts.

- Extract 1: Add the rosemary and roast for ten minutes. Meanwhile cook the pasta in a large pan of boiling salted water for ten–12 minutes, or according to the packet instructions. Drain. ***At the same time,*** cook the broccoli in a pan of simmering water for five minutes.

- Extract 2: There was not the remotest possibility that the Germans might attempt to seize Gibraltar against the will of the Spaniards since they had no desire to become embroiled in a difficult struggle and so delay even further the assault on the Soviet Union. ***At the same time*** as the Germans prevaricated over an attack on Gibraltar, the British Government continued to advocate American food aid for Spain . . . .
- Extract 3: Mr Arai laments that a tradition of loyalty in Japan ties employees to their firms, even when they are forced to work unspeakable hours and accept far-off postings without question. ***At the same time,*** company managers are bad at explaining clearly what they want, preferring to muddle their way towards consensus.
- Extract 4: Entries for physics A Level declined from 32,059 to 30,701 and chemistry entries were down from 40,856 to 38,602. The number of candidates for French and German also fell. ***At the same time,*** entries for "expressive arts" rose to 11,442 from 11,401 and those for sport/PE studies increased from 16,529 to 16,716.

In the first extract the phrase literally means *at the same time* whereas in the second it seems to have a slightly different meaning equivalent to the phrase *at roughly the same time*. In the third extract the phrase is being used in a very different way to mean *in addition* or *furthermore* and, in fact, either of these items could be used instead of *at the same time*. In the fourth extract the phrase is being used contrastively to mean something like *however* or *whereas* and, once again, either of these words can be used instead of the phrase. In other words, the corpus data does seem to show that the phrase has multiple meanings and these are summarised below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *at the same time*$_1$ | at exactly the same time | e.g., *at the same time cook the broccoli* |
| *at the same time*$_2$ | at roughly the same time | e.g., *at the same time as the Germans prevaricated . . . , the British continued to advocate* |
| *at the same time*$_3$ | in addition, furthermore | e.g., *Mr Arai laments … At the same time company managers are bad at* |
| *at the same time*$_4$ | however, whereas | e.g., *The number of candidates . . . fell. At the same time, entries for . . . rose* |

When we look at the concordance lines from the Bank of English we can see that the collocates both reflect and disambiguate the meanings associated with the phrase. Lines 1–3 are associated with the second meaning, 4–6 with the third meaning and lines 7–15 with the fourth meaning.

1 ry to alter a piece of data **at the same time as** someone else was de

2 it was taking place in Derry **at the same time as** the movie was being

3 photographs were being taken **at the same time as** the work was proceed

4 opening (all in the CNS). **Also at the same time**, you are angry that som

5 tion to my opinion, and **also at the same time** acquaints us with the

6 crumbly in texture, it is **also at the same time** dense and creamy, and

7 view of knowledge seems shaky. **At the same time, however**, the relation

8 ueen's needed a new principal. **At the same time, however,** he did not

9 the letters of a close friend. **At the same time, however,** he alerts us

10 caring, creative, and curious. **At the same time, though**, it is clear th

11 cal kids (and some rap stars). **At the same time, though**, the signs of

12 nt to have a restaurant meal. **At the same time, though,** the supply cur

13 to be very rich. **But also, at the same time**, I think Edwin Edwards

14 and of course we do. **But also, at the same time**, we have to keep in mi

15 that help them, **but that also, at the same time**, serve our interests."

In the case of the single word *issue* the collocates are adding to the meaning and, in most cases, making it more specific (e.g., *the Palestinian issue, the latest issue of the Listener, an issue of shares*). However, many of the most frequent collocates associated with the phrase *at the same time* seem to be duplicating its meaning rather than adding to it and I have therefore coined a new term to describe this type of collocational behaviour. The term *lexical congruency* is used to refer to the way lexical items in the co-text reflect and duplicate the meaning of a particular word or phrase.

In this case lexical congruency is used in order to disambiguate the meaning of the phrase *at the same time*. I would argue that the writers or speakers have felt the need to use words like *as, but, also, however* and *though* together with the phrase in order to make it clear which one of the multiple meanings is intended. It is precisely because the phrase can be used in a number of different ways in order to mean different things, that lexical congruency is required to convey the speaker's or writer's intended meaning in an unambiguous manner.

It is still early days for lexical congruency and it is certainly not something which can be taught, as such, in the classroom at this stage. There is more research to be done before this type of collocation can be presented in course books and classroom material. However, it is something which reflects the complex nature of collocation and therefore something for us, as teachers, to be aware of.

## Notes

1. The Bank of English (BoE) corpus is jointly owned by HarperCollins Publishers and the University of Birmingham. The corpus currently contains around 450 million words. More information about the corpus can be found at <titania.bham.ac.uk>.

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**Crayton Walker** has been working in the English Department at the University of Birmingham since 2006 as a Lecturer in Applied Linguistics. Before joining the University he had a career in English language teaching. He taught ESP in London, Riyadh, and Stuttgart, and was in charge of the English department of a large language school in Germany for over 10 years. Crayton has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer and materials developer and has over 25 years of experience in EFL/ESL.