

Global Educators, Local Connections

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The *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum was conceived of with the goal of allowing panelists to explore connections between their work, the conference theme, and the work of other researchers. As the facilitators of the forum took the unorthodox approach of featuring and conducting one-to-one interviews in the presence of a live audience followed by a panel discussion between the interviewees, the authors begin this paper with a description of the process and rationale behind the format of the event. This is followed by descriptive summaries of each of the 3 interview exchanges that featured 2 invited speakers, Steve Mann and Reiko Yoshihara, and plenary speaker Hugh Starkey. The authors conclude with a reflective analysis on the connections and commonalities that were established through the interviews and subsequent discussion.

Global Educators, Local Connections フォーラムでは、3名のパネリストに、自己の研究、今回のテーマ、そして他の研究者の研究との関連性について討論してもらった。次に、フォーラムのファシリテータとして視聴者の前で一対一のインタビューを実施するという、あまり一般的ではない方法を採用したので、最初に本フォーラムの内容と根拠について説明する。さら

に講演者であるスティーブ・マン教授と吉原令子教授、基調講演者のヒュー・スターキー教授の3人のインタビューの内容を説明する。最後に、3名のインタビューと、その後に行われたパネルディスカッションの関連性と共通性についての分析結果を報告する。

Applied linguistics is a field of research that has a global reach and yet is also highly fragmented; a satisfactory definition of applied linguistics has yet to be fully agreed on (see Evensen, 2013; de Bot, 2015). As Medgyes (2017) said, “In addition to exploring problems concerning language education, [language-related academic research] also covers second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, clinical linguistics, language testing, translation and interpreting, lexicography, and many other fields” (p. 493). Members of the diverse group of researchers who all identify as “applied linguists” may therefore have little understanding of each other’s research areas. Medgyes went so far as to say that “researchers are locked up in their own little cage with no periscope available to scan the whole landscape,” and that “experts in second language acquisition, for instance, seldom exchange views with lexicographers, nor does the clinical linguist consult the discourse analyst. Typically, academic discourse is conducted among a handful of fellow researchers working in the same specialist field” (p. 493). These two facts together mean that applied linguistics can often be more accurately described as a blanket label for a number of highly specialized subdisciplines that rarely talk to one another, and this can lead to an unresolved and ongoing tension among researchers from different areas who may have a lack of interest in or understanding of each other’s work.

The Aim of the Forum

The main aim of organizing this forum was to explore ways in which representatives of different areas of applied linguistics research could be brought together in order to foster a sense of mutual understanding and cooperation among scholars from divergent disciplinary backgrounds. To achieve this goal, the presenters brought together three

researchers from different subdisciplines and gave them the opportunity to listen to each other being interviewed and to discuss shared themes and points of connection between their own professional work and that of the other participants. Our hope was that the specific format of the forum, as described in the following section, would provide a space in which researchers had the chance to learn about and identify connections between their different research fields, thus leading to a greater level of mutual understanding of the work being carried out in other areas of applied linguistics.

The Format of the Forum

The *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum was the second of its kind, following the *Teacher Interviews: Stories of Transformation* forum at the JALT2016 Conference. Unlike many other forums at conferences that may involve participants giving short presentations or group discussions around a theme, we wanted to present a different dynamic for participants to experience. In the *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum we delivered three interviews between featured conference speakers and ourselves as the forum facilitators, followed by a panel discussion involving the three participants. The forum was initially conceived of following our experiences with conducting interviews in an independent podcasting project that regularly features interviews with prominent figures in ELT and applied linguistics.

Having had experience with making interviews for the podcast, we decided to expand on the concept and produce interviews in front of a live audience. For the *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum we began the planning process by selecting three of the JALT2017 featured or plenary speakers whose research and work would connect in some way to the theme of the conference. With this in mind, we contacted the following three scholars to be interviewed, all of whom accepted:

- Dr. Steve Mann—Associate Professor in the Centre for Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick whose research interests are reflective practice and teacher development,
- Dr. Reiko Yoshihara—Professor at Nihon University and researcher focusing on feminist pedagogy and gender issues in language education, and
- Dr. Hugh Starkey—Professor of Education at University College London’s Institute of Education, working in the areas of democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Before the forum, we prepared questions based on our interviewees’ published work. We made adaptations to these questions and wrote additional ones after attending workshops and presentations by the interviewees during the conference itself. The forum lasted 90 minutes, with each of us, as forum facilitators, taking turns to conduct a 20-minute interview with one of the participants. The interviews were semistructured, an approach in which the interviewer has some degree of flexibility in terms of the questions being asked (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In semistructured interviews, the interviewer will have prepared questions but may also ask follow-up questions in response to what is being said (see Mann, 2016). The forum concluded with the three interviewees returning to the front of the room to collectively reflect on the connections they had identified among their research areas and to ask questions of one another. All interview sessions, as well as the discussion that followed, were recorded and subsequently edited and released as individual podcast episodes (see Appendix A).

Analytic Framework: Cooperative Development

In order to analyze how successful the forum was in terms of fostering communication among researchers, we have adopted Julian Edge’s (2002) cooperative development (CD) framework, which is defined as a way of two or more people working together or cooperating with one another for an agreed period in order to allow one person to work on his or her (self-) development (p. 18). Edge and Attia (2001) described CD as an “inquiry-based approach . . . that foregrounds non-judgmental discourse in professional interactions” for the purposes of “personal growth” and “interpersonal engagement” (p. 65). Inherent to CD interactions are the positions of a *speaker* and an *understander*. The understander’s role in CD interactions is to assist the speaker’s development, by “deliberately setting out to make as much space as possible for the Speaker while at the same time actively working to help the Speaker use that space creatively” (p. 25). CD interactions are artificial and do not resemble natural communicative exchanges such as conversations or discussions amongst peers. The understander must be active and attentive in their¹ exploratory listening role, maintaining a nonjudgmental position characterized by empathy, respect, and sincerity (see Rogers, 1992). In order for the speaker to benefit from CD interactions, communicative techniques such as *attending*, *reflecting*, *focusing*, *thematizing*, and *challenging* may be employed. In attending, the speaker is made to feel that they are being listened to; in reflecting, the understander mirrors ideas to provide a clearer view of what is being said; and in focusing, the understander pinpoints a topic of interest for future development or interaction. When thematizing, the understander separates and brings together points to more

effectively compose the interaction and when challenging, may ask for clarification when the speaker expresses two seemingly contradictory ideas (see Edge, 2002). Interview interactions between professional peers can be mapped on to these techniques to a degree. Interviewers must be attentive to what is being said, listening for chances to reflectively ask about what is mentioned or compose questions that further focus topics. Interviewers may deliberately structure their questions thematically, with these themes brought together or juxtaposed towards the end of the interview.

The goal of this forum was to help researchers identify connections between their research areas in order to foster mutual understanding between scholars from different applied linguistics subdisciplines. We feel that using this framework to analyze the interactions between the interviewees and facilitators (and crucially between the facilitators themselves) will provide a useful lens through which to decide whether or not the forum achieved its intended goal.

One point of difference between CD interactions and interviews of the nature described in this paper is that the speakers (or interviewees) in the forum were not taking part in the exchange for intrinsically motivated self-development but had instead been invited by the understanders (the interviewers). It can even be argued that the interviewers, whilst actively questioning and attending to what the interviewees were saying, were undergoing a self-development process of their own, learning from listening to what the interviewees were saying about the question being asked and developing their insights in the shape of follow-up questions or responses. This being said, although the interviewees may not have entered into the interactions with the express purpose of professional self-development, through the position of being questioned on their research, work, and beliefs and having to attend to and identify connections with the research of another scholar, we believe that it was possible for them to uncover new revelations or reformulations of their work that would have been otherwise unavailable.

Interview Summaries

We will now present summaries of the three interviews that were conducted as part of our forum. Each summary will present an abridged version of the actual exchange that took place, presenting the main questions and points of interest that arose. Each summary will be written from the personal perspective of the individual forum facilitator who conducted the interview.

Interview 1: Steve Mann (by Matthew W. Turner)

My interview questions were principally focused on Steve Mann's book, *Reflective Practice in English Language Teaching* (2017), which he coauthored with Steve Walsh. The interview began with Mann contextualizing his research interest by sharing his professional background. I asked him to personally define reflective practice (RP), which he described as the everyday thoughts that all good teachers have, either as retrospective, in-the-moment, or forward-looking activities. Descriptions of RP are simple, he said, with the real questions being how RP can best be supported and what activities are available.

Mann stated in his aforementioned book that RP "had become a little 'tired' and in need of revitalizing" (p. 1). When I asked him to elaborate, he acknowledged the orthodox-like yet unexamined status of RP; that although it is part of the teacher development landscape, it has perhaps not been given thorough attention. Mann highlighted assumptions of RP being an individual and "inside the head" activity, with writing often the tool for reflection. According to him, these views of RP undervalue the collaborative and dialogic nature of reflection. The idea of revitalization was then explored, with Mann stating that teachers and teacher educators should involve themselves in sharing their practice and associated data so that RP can be concretely represented.

This was followed by a question concerning whether one of his aims was to present a clearer framework for RP. Mann said that it was not, explaining that the landscape was already crowded with plenty of frameworks. He reconfirmed that he and his coauthor wanted to promote data-led approaches to dialogic reflections. I then asked Mann for some examples of spoken tools of RP. He highlighted CD, describing it as a different way of individuals interacting, avoiding evaluation and suggestion, and creating a zone of proximal development whereby interaction works to scaffold ideas. Unlike in natural talk, inclinations to give advice are avoided in favor of being an empathetic understander. CD was then explored with regards to postobservation teaching conferences, in which supervisors or peers could develop ways of making interactions more evidence-based. Mann added that this may not always be desired, although efforts should be made to understand a little more and talk a little less.

Considering the conference theme, I asked Mann to talk about the sociocultural background of reflection. He considered the current situation, in which education could be seen as questions with answers that may or may not be of interest, while seeing education as better if learners are asking questions and educators are involved

in the facilitation process. He explained that although the feeding of information and views into this process is sometimes needed, a sociocultural view of learning favors the creation of spaces in which people are able to make progress in their own development and have ownership over stimulus. Video-based tools of RP bring more evidence to the learning process and move teacher development away from the transmission of received knowledge.

I asked what Mann and Walsh (2017) meant by “static views of context” (p. 30). Mann addressed the idea of the *global* and the *local*: the global considered as the floating around of big concepts received through education and the local being a place that such concepts should be mapped onto and situated to, where one teaches and where learners and materials are worked with. He reflected on the work of Prabhu (1990), who claimed that one best method is no longer globally transferable, before saying that we should be developing a sense of plausibility through RP and the technological methods at our disposal. Mann concluded by calling for the bottom-up approach of local teachers globally sharing their experiences in a community of practice rather than looking for larger concepts that roll theory into practice. The exchange concluded by turning the focus back to the role of interviews themselves and the way that meaning is co-constructed by the individuals involved in the interaction.

Interview 2: Reiko Yoshihara (by Robert J. Lowe)

My interview with Reiko Yoshihara was focused on her work in feminist pedagogy and drew heavily on her recently published book *The Socially Responsible Feminist EFL Classroom* (Yoshihara, 2017). We began by discussing Yoshihara’s background studying English and women’s studies in the United States and how this combination of influences led her to complete a doctorate in education, focusing on feminist pedagogy in EFL.

Moving on from this, we talked about the eight principles of feminist teaching that had arisen from her research. These included the exploration of challenging issues such as female genital mutilation and domestic violence in lessons alongside more “safe” topics such as the pay gap, calling on female students more often in the classroom, teaching gender neutral language, and incorporating local women’s issues into classes (such as the illegality of married couples having separate surnames in Japan). The first of these struck a chord with me. I commented that I often felt that in my own classes, by sticking with safe and unchallenging topics and encouraging only surface-level discussion of gender issues, I allowed my students to reinforce their own stereotypes. Another interesting

connection arose during her discussion of incorporating local women’s issues into classes, as she motioned toward Mann and indicated she agreed with a statement from his interview in which he expressed a similar concern about focusing on local issues. Yoshihara stated that a major goal of engaging in feminist pedagogy was to build a sense of “sisterhood” and a concern for social justice issues among her students. She described taking students to events to raise awareness of AIDS and breast cancer as being not just an extra-curricular activity, but something that was one of her key goals as an educator.

At this point, I decided to pursue the question of awareness-raising and asked how she would respond to accusations that she was “brainwashing” students by imposing a particular view of the world on them during her lessons. Yoshihara responded thoughtfully, referencing the work of researchers such as Sarah Benesch (see Appendix B), and the history of debates around the inclusion of political issues in language classes, never going so far as to claim that her statements rose above the status of beliefs and assertions, but forcefully arguing that as members of an international society (both teachers and students), teaching political issues should be seen not as indoctrination but rather as an important part of attempting to achieve global equality among all people.

Picking up on the theme of international society and attempting to make a connection with Hugh Starkey’s plenary session (Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Language Learning) and the theme of the conference, I enquired whether feminist pedagogy was something she felt was important in terms of helping students to become global citizens. Yoshihara spoke about reflecting on her professional responsibility as an EFL educator, particularly in connection to a personal experience of challenging a colleague about the omission of gender from his work on global issues in EFL. She explained that this led her to realize that talking about gender issues as an EFL educator is a “duty and responsibility,” and that gender issues are as critical in the EFL classroom as any other global political issue.

Interview 3: Hugh Starkey (by Matthew Y. Schaefer)

For the final interview of the forum, I spoke with Hugh Starkey, who had been invited to the conference to give a plenary talk about his extensive knowledge of the integration of global issues in language teaching. This topic was addressed through his plenary talk on cosmopolitan citizenship and his workshop on intercultural interactions.

The interview began with a brief career history: Starkey gave a concise yet thorough summary of the many steps that led him from working in the VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) program as an EFL teacher to becoming professor of citizenship and human rights education at UCL Institute of Education, London. I then asked Starkey to explain

the central theme of his plenary talk: cosmopolitan citizenship. According to his definition, cosmopolitan citizenship is a recognition that a world-wide community must be based on equality in dignity and rights for all people. Starkey pointed out that the basis for this dignity and these rights can be formal documents like the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (see Appendix B) or religions or ideologies. He concluded the definition by describing cosmopolitan citizenship as both a connection between the local and global contexts and a need for collaborative action towards justice.

I followed this by asking about some of the challenges one would face to become a global citizen. Starkey replied that, although he often has to deal with the term global citizen because of its ubiquity, he has issues with its use because of the accompanying implication of a system of world government, which he disagrees with. Instead, he prefers the term *cosmopolitan citizen*, which focuses on relationships among people. He then raised the idea of a *diplomatic* view of languages, which was defined as an ascription of identity to people based mainly on nation, which he felt was problematic.

Next, I asked Starkey if he had any predictions regarding the nation-state era and the development of globalization. He replied with an idea of Charles Taylor's (see Appendix B) regarding the possibility of seeing cosmopolitanism and patriotism as compatible with each other. This is done by defining patriotism not as simple allegiance to a flag but rather as pride in one's nation for supporting human rights.

I then shifted the focus of the interview towards language teaching by asking if all language teachers had a responsibility to make their classrooms more cosmopolitan. Starkey referenced his 2015 paper with Audrey Osler and pointed out that "education, by definition, is about the future," and therefore educators needed to think about what kind of future they want. He cited the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as a text written with a vision of promoting freedom, justice, and peace. He then spoke about the ways in which the language classroom was well suited to promoting discussion of these issues, specifically the principle of allowing for large amounts of student talking time through pair and group work. He explained that this was a "democratic" way of sharing ideas in that it is aimed at ensuring equal participation. Starkey next refuted the notion of political education as a kind of brainwashing, saying that the recognition of human rights as freedom of thought, conscience, and religion was an accepted international norm.

My next question was a request for advice regarding what to do when teachers hear students air discriminatory views in the classroom. Starkey had several suggestions. First, he promoted the practice of drawing up a class charter, in collaboration with students. Second, he advocated the principle of giving students a "rehearsal" period in which

they are allowed to first develop their ideas through discussion in pairs or small groups. Finally, he said that, when necessary, insulting language could be clearly ruled out as being inappropriate for a classroom.

My final question referred to Starkey's workshop and asked for a definition of an intercultural interaction. He positioned *intercultural* in contrast to *international* and pointed out that it is important to recognize that nations are culturally formed constructs that cannot define any one person. He concluded by suggesting that what should be focused on in the classroom is the individual backgrounds of the students and how they can learn and gain from each other.

Connections and Resonances

Finally, all three panelists were invited back. They were asked, one at a time, to share their thoughts on each other's interviews. This was followed by questions from the audience.

Mann began by discussing some of the thoughts he had while listening to Yoshihara's interview. He mentioned that he had previously not given much thought to the representation of women in ELT materials, but that he felt that the issue was an important one, although often ignored. He also talked about how a feminist view of conducting interviews had opened his eyes to issues of empathy and disclosure.

Next, Starkey spoke about his appreciation of Yoshihara's emphasis on social justice in the classroom. He pointed out that feminist issues often inspire debate, but that they are central to all aspects of society. Starkey then noted the shared mention of Dewey (see Appendix B) in both his and Mann's interviews, remarking on the lasting influence of Dewey's ideas on democracy and education. Mann responded by noting their shared interest in the work of Charles Taylor (see Appendix B). Yoshihara also picked up on the topic of Dewey, noting that his progressive ideas on education were a key influence on feminist pedagogy.

However, Yoshihara then professed skepticism at the notion, referred to by Starkey, of the global citizen—who is often stereotyped as an English-speaking person involved in the world of international business—and this person's idea of an international society, whose values may in fact be predominantly Western. She felt that the promotion of such ideals in the classroom may include an element of cultural imperialism. She asked Starkey to comment on the notion of cultural relativism and the possibly dangerous assumptions that go along with any discussion of a global citizen or society.

Starkey began his reply by claiming a need to dispel some myths inherent in

Yoshihara's question. First, he pointed out that, with regards to a global person, most contemporary cosmopolitans are migrants who have had to leave their home country due to wars and other disasters. He mentioned that these people have a cosmopolitan perspective through the links they form between societies globally and the fact that they often speak more than one language. Next, he addressed the issue of cultural relativism, stating that all cultures develop and change and are therefore potentially subject to the influence of other cultures, including current international standards. He held the view that cultural relativism could be dangerous when invoked to allow for violations of human rights and argued instead for cultural relationalism, which is a search for how cultures relate to each other.

Next, an audience member asked Starkey a question about how to approach elementary school teachers' reluctance to being trained in topics such as English language or global citizenship when they have no interest in the areas. Starkey replied that, after introducing new educational policies, the government has a responsibility to support teachers in implementing those policies by providing continuing professional development (CPD) training. Yoshihara suggested a need for teachers to engage in some kind of reflection. She then asked Mann how, based on his research, he thought this could best be done. He responded by supporting Starkey's warning against governments implementing policies that pushed teachers to teach subjects that they were neither interested nor qualified in and Starkey's suggestion of CPD, adding that it was important to create a community of practice in which such development could flourish. This concluded both the panel discussion segment and the forum as a whole.

Evaluation of the Format

The *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum led to the identification of a number of connections among the three researchers, who were able to find and explore important resonances between their research and the ideas of their coparticipants. The format was Edge's (2002) cooperative development framework, in which two colleagues adopt the roles of speaker and understander, with the aim of creating a nonjudgmental space in which ideas can be expressed and explored.

The forum was an effective, if unconventional, use of this framework. First, three interviews were conducted, with a facilitator acting as the understander in each interview and the participant playing the role of the speaker. Our goal was to create a space in which the interviewees could speak about their research areas openly, while we as facilitators guided their thoughts and led them to consider and expound on some of their positions in detail, as documented in the summaries above. This was accomplished

through the use of questions that could help the participants explore and express their ideas, with the interviewer maintaining an active, attentive, and nonjudgmental stance.

During each interview, the other two participants were also listening for connections to their own research and were therefore playing the role of what we may call "passive" understanders—attentive to what their coparticipants were saying but not engaging with them directly. During this time, the observing participants were *attending* (listening carefully), *focusing* (attempting to identify shared themes and connections between their research areas), and *thematizing* (constructing questions for their coparticipants to be asked during the panel discussion).

In the second part of the forum, the participants switched from the role of passive to active understanders: asking questions, creating space for their coparticipants to speak, and identifying connections and shared themes between their research areas. During this section, the roles of participants shifted rapidly: participants became either speakers or understanders depending on whether they were being questioned or asking questions. At this point the interaction took a more dialogic turn, and connections between these seemingly disparate research areas began to emerge.

It seems clear from this that the forum was successful in helping to foster mutual understanding between these researchers and allow space for connections and resonances between their work to arise and be discussed. This kind of interaction is very important for applied linguistics because it is such a fragmented field with great variety in its disciplinary landscape. Encouraging more of this kind of interactive move towards shared understanding would do much to benefit the field as a whole.

Conclusion

We began this paper by arguing that applied linguistics is a field characterized by a lack of mutual understanding or communication between its various subdisciplines. Through the *Global Educators, Local Connections* forum at JALT2017, we brought together three researchers from varied disciplinary backgrounds and provided space for them to explore and discuss their own research areas as well as listen attentively to the ideas of others. This resulted in the identification of connections and resonances between the research areas of the participants, which we believe shows a move towards mutual interdisciplinary understanding and cooperative development. This is of course only one example of this format being carried out at one conference, and these results should not be extrapolated beyond that which can be reasonably inferred. However, it seems that this format, if replicated at other conferences or events, could have the potential to increase mutual understanding between researchers from different disciplines and thus

afford these researchers a broader view and a clearer understanding not only of the field of applied linguistics but also of their own place within it.

Note

1. In this paper, we have chosen to use the pronouns they and their as singular pronouns of indeterminate gender.

Bio Data

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Appendix A

Released Podcast Episodes of Forum Interviews and Discussion Steve Mann Interview

- Turner, M. W., Lowe, R. J., & Schaefer M. Y. (Producers). (2017, December 6). *TEFL Interviews 35: Steve Mann (JALT 2017)* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://teflology-podcast.com/2017/12/06/tefl-interviews-35-steve-mann-jalt-2017/>

Reiko Yoshihara Interview

- Turner, M. W., Lowe, R. J., & Schaefer M. Y. (Producers). (2017, December 20). *TEFL Interviews 36: Reiko Yoshihara (JALT 2017)* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://teflology-podcast.com/2017/12/20/tefl-interviews-36-reiko-yoshihara-jalt-2017/>

Hugh Starkey Interview

- Turner, M. W., Lowe, R. J., & Schaefer M. Y. (Producers). (2018, January 3). *TEFL Interviews 37: Hugh Starkey (JALT 2017)* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://teflology-podcast.com/2018/01/03/tefl-interviews-37-hugh-starkey-jalt-2017/>

Forum Discussion

Turner, M. W., Lowe, R. J., & Schaefer M. Y. (Producers). (2018, January 17). *TEFL Interviews 38: Forum Discussion (JALT 2017)* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://teflology-podcast.com/2018/01/17/tefl-interviews-39-forum-discussion-jalt-2017/>

Appendix B

Useful Resources

- Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics, and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/stream/democracyandedu00dewegoog#page/n5/mode/2up>
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