Looking Back, Thinking Forward: Literature in Language Teaching Forum

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This paper reports on a SIG forum at the JALT conference that featured six presentations on topics related to literature and creative writing in the language classroom. All of the presentations had practical applications and each section of this paper gives a short summary of the presentation and justification for the approaches used. The six projects described in this paper are: pandemic reading, using non-canonical literature, Japanese literature, poetry writing, translingual creative writing, and students publishing literary works. In the forum, the presenters reflected on the benefits of literature during the 2020 academic year, along with describing new and innovative practices for using literature for language learning. The forum themes were discussed further in the Q & A session at the end of the session, and the paper concludes with some reflections on these emerging themes.

本稿では、JALTのSIGフォーラムにおいて、言語クラスにおける文学と創作に関連するトピックについて6つのプレゼンテーションを行ったことについて、その内容を報告するものである。行われたすべてのプレゼンテーションは実用的なものであり、本論文の各セクションにおいて、発表の簡単な要約と使用されたアプローチの正当性を述べている。本稿で紹介するのは、パンデミック・リーディング、非正典文学の利用、日本文学、詩作、トランスリンガル創作、生徒による作品発表の6つのプロジェクトである。フォーラムでは、発表者が2020年度の文学の効用を振り返るとともに、文学を言語学習に活用するための新しい革新的な実践について説明した。フォーラムのテーマは、セッションの最後に行われた質疑応答でさらに議論され、本稿はこれらの新たなテーマについての考察で締めくくられている。

In this paper, six authors provide a summary of their presentations at the Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) SIG forum as part of the JALT annual International Conference on 13th November, 2021 from 1:25 p.m. to 2:55 p.m. The conference was conducted online using Zoom due to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. The presenters each responded to the conference theme of *Looking Back and Thinking Forward* to describe their teaching since 2020. Although all presenters referred to their choices of literature from a variety of perspectives, other themes relating more generally to the uses of literature in language learning contexts emerged from the presentations.

Literature in language learning has often been associated with learning culture, language, and personal development (Brumfit & Carter, 1986), with various activities being planned for the development of each element individually or jointly (Collie & Slater, 1987). Recent uses have moved beyond these three categories while recognising their continued relevance for course and lesson planning. Humanistic approaches to literature tend to

favour the view that personal development brings along a connection to culture and language, as required for second language (L2) or additional language (L+) learning. Over time there have been several different positions on the role of literature in language-based instruction (Carter, 2007; Hall, 2015; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000; Paran, 2008) and there is as yet no consensus on exactly how literature may be best used for language learning. The authors of this report support the assertion that more practitioner-based research and descriptions of pedagogical approaches will assist teachers and curriculum planners using literature in various contexts. Although literature may have become marginalised in some teaching contexts, a recent trend towards more favourable inclusion of literature appears to be emerging. Contemporary approaches to using literature for language learning have focused on revitalising the field using research-based approaches (Bloemert et al, 2019; Tsang, Paran, & Lau, 2020). Along with contemporary uses of literature for L+ learning, creative writing (CW) with language learners writing and producing their own work is receiving increased attention (Hanauer, 2012; Iida, 2017; Kamata, 2016). The authors of this paper take the position that literature in language learning contexts can offer engaging experiences for learners, from classroom discussions using literature to writing and publishing their own creative work. Following the presentations, there was a Q & A discussion with session participants and the presenters. The paper includes presentations in their order of appearance at the LiLT SIG forum.

Pandemic Reading in the Language Classroom: The Decameron Project

Tara McIlroy

This short talk approached the topic of pandemic reading by considering how new fiction emerging from the global pandemic may create opportunities for language learning. Pandemics have been part of Western literature since the *Iliad*, which featured a plague in the early part of the narrative (as discussed in Beard, 2020). How exactly pandemic reading during and after the COVID-19 pandemic may influence our future curriculum planning is yet to be determined. Pandemic reading is initially defined as fiction written during a pandemic, or a narrative using a pandemic as part of the story. The definition can be expanded to include reading we ourselves have been doing during this current pandemic. In this presentation the focus was the first type of pandemic reading, using one short story as an example. *The New York Times Decameron Project* (2020) is a collection of 29 short stories commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine*. The online version of the stories includes a multimodal illustrated cover and each story was also commissioned to receive accompanying artwork.

In this forum presentation, McIlroy explained that she read all of the short stories and selected one suitable for use in a language class. Like the original 14th century *Decameron* by Boccacio, the stories offer a snapshot of life in a pandemic, with stories written during the 2020 lockdown. From the introduction to the collection "the stories, in one way or another, are lifesaving" (Galchen, 2020, p. xvi). The presentation focused on some classroom activities based on one story from the collection, *Origin Story* by Matthew Baker. Baker's story is freely available under a Creative Commons license and can be found on the author's personal website (Baker, 2020). The story itself is set during a lockdown, in a fictional but easily recognisable family context. Surprisingly, *Origin Story* offers a positive view of family relationships, which may become closer given difficult situations. The short story provided opportunities for discussion about real-world events such as family life, but also led students to consider for themselves how we have all responded to the pandemic situation.

McIlroy went on to explain how course planners could consider using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which approaches literature as a part of language learning. Literature in CEFR can be seen in the three recently added scales relating to 1) reading as a leisure activity, 2) responding to literature expressing a personal response to creative texts, and 3) analysing and critiquing creative texts (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 51), as well as other scales related to understanding narratives and expression opinions about creative works. All three of these elements can be used in planning courses which have integrated skills such as reading and writing. Although not widely applied in different contexts yet, the notion of literary competences has recently emerged, which includes empathic competence, cultural and discursive competence, aesthetic competence, and interpretive competence (see Alter & Rathheiser, 2019). The connections between the CEFR descriptors and the model for literary competence could be explored in various contexts.

McIlroy additionally described how specific literature related CEFR descriptors may be integrated with other contemporary pedagogical approaches, including the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). For example, CLIL advocates using cognition, communication, context, and the all-connecting element of culture (the so-called 4Cs), all of which can be integrated into course planning when using descriptors from the CEFR Companion volume (Council of Europe, 2018, 2020). For supplementary materials in her university classes, McIlroy gathers various contemporary texts and excerpts for use as tools to stimulate discussion

and reflective writing. The final part of the talk described some pedagogical implications and suggestions for adapting materials for learners of different levels of proficiency.

Teaching Outside the Canon Inside Japan

Camilo Villanueva

Although Harold Bloom (1930–2019), the esteemed American literary critic, would disagree if he were alive today, literature is about teaching social justice. Grace Paley, the American short story writer and activist, was once quoted on the issue: "Literature, fiction, poetry, whatever, makes justice in the world. That's why it is almost always on the side of the underdog" (Lazar, 1993, p. 2). Social justice teaching is part of the social reconstruction curriculum ideology (Schiro, 2013). We tend to think that it is a relatively new phenomenon in education, but in fact, social justice teaching has had a strong influence on education in America over the last century, beginning in the early 1940s (Schiro, 2013). In this study, a class of junior high school-aged Japanese returnees were taught specially chosen books which illuminate the actual experiences of people considered as other, or as Paley would say, the underdog. The teaching context was a weekly, after-school English literature lesson. The purpose of this study was to determine if such texts encouraged student participation in social commentary. In this study, the methodological approach of autoethnography was used by both the teacher and the students. Ellis et al (2011) describe "autoethnography [as] an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)." Autoethnography has recently been characterized as a method to explore the "transnational space through which issues resulting from overlapping identities and histories emerged" (Ku, 2021, pp. 88–89) and as a "powerful way of creating new meanings and understandings" (Mirhosseini, 2018, p. 81).

The texts used included excerpts from a biography of Natsume Sōseki (Nathan, 2018) and *I Am a Cat* (Sōseki, 1906/2001). In addition, students read an account of a refugee from Africa (Uwiringiyimana & Pesta, 2017), a book dealing with the LGBTQ community (Slater, 2017), and one about an aspiring young inventor from Malawi (Kamkwamba & Mealer, 2010).

Data were gathered from autoethnographies, which were free-writing assignments that asked students to use critical thinking to probe the texts they read and to then write their opinions in a diary format. The participants gave their permission for data to be used for research purposes and research approval was gained from the institution. All names used were pseudonyms. Special emphasis was placed on how students personally related to the texts they read. How did they feel? Did they learn anything new about themselves or others from reading the texts? The teacher also wrote a diary and the junior high school students were interviewed by the researcher. The following is a summary of some of the emerging themes from the research.

The first emerging theme was students' preferences. One third-grade returnee reflected on *The 57 Bus* and noted how he liked it the most. He stated that the book made him think more about people's lives and that it changed his thinking. This was because what happened to the character was a real event. A second theme was student engagement with issues of inclusion. One 3rd-grade returnee reflected on *The 57 Bus* and meeting a member of the LGBTQ community afterwards. She stated that she hoped to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ in Japan so that everyone would be accepted. The teacher's diary seemed to align with the student voices, because the English teacher also wrote about how the material, though dark and tragic, created hope in the students and himself.

In conclusion, materials outside the canon can be useful in creating a dialogue between students, teachers, and others in society regarding sensitive issues. Students also liked reading such materials because they wanted to read about real lives and real events. This study reinforced that literature is best when it supports the underdog in society, as Grace Paley stated.

Strangely Familiar: Reading Lafcadio Hearn's Kwaidan (怪談) with Japanese Students

Li-hsin Tu

In this section, Tu discussed the reasons for using stories from *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things* by Lafcadio Hearn (1904/1971a) in university-level academic English classes in Japan. Furthermore, Tu shared ideas for activities and assignments that complement the *Kwaidan* text with the aim to improve students' academic reading and writing skills, as well as proposing possibilities for using the text in areas of creative writing.

Kwaidan (Hearn, 1904/1971a) is a collection of 17 ghost stories, or strange folk tales set in Japan, and a nonfiction study on insects. The book was first published in English in 1904, and two of the stories from the collection, "Hoichi the Earless" and "The Snow Woman" were made into the movie *Kwaidan* (1964) by Japanese film director Masaki

Kobayashi. Below are the reasons discussed in the presentation about why teachers of academic English should consider using *Kwaidan* for their reading and writing classes.

1. The digital version of the text is available online on Project Gutenberg as the US copyright of the book has expired, making *Kwaidan* an attractive choice. Teachers and learners can access the digital version or freely print out the text for classroom use.
2. The stories in the *Kwaidan* collection, though published in English, are Japanese stories that are set in ancient Japan, about Japanese characters, and written in descriptions that feel aesthetically Japanese. Reading these stories with students helps highlight the fact that English is a language and a tool for communication. It is not an intimidating foreign subject, and it is possible to be very Japanese in English.
3. *Kwaidan* offers several short stories of varying lengths, allowing teachers to choose texts according to the availability of time, lesson themes, and the proficiency level of the students. The shortest story in the book, "Oshidori," (Hearn, 1904/1971b) is less than 500 words long, and the longest story, "Hoichi the Earless," (Hearn, 1904/1971c) has more than 3,200 words.
4. These strange tales are somewhat familiar to the students. Most learners in Japan have heard about the characters or are somewhat familiar with the stories. It presents opportunities for a variety of pre-reading discussions and activities, such as having groups piece together what they know and construct a full story through negotiation and exchange. For post-reading activities, students can work on putting together alternative story endings, or answer "what if" questions, challenging the learners' creative writing muscles.
5. *Kwaidan* presents opportunities for text-to-text comparisons, in which students compare the text with an adaptation or a different story with similar themes. These comparisons can bring forth meaningful cross-culture discussions and different ideas for essay-writing assignments. The examples shared in the presentation include having students write a basic 5-paragraph essay critiquing the movie adaptation (1964) of "Hoichi the Earless" by comparing it to the original text, or having students write a short essay comparing "Oshidori" (Hearn, 1904/1971b) to "Little Hunters at the Lake" (Ural & Bassett, 2007), a retelling of a Turkish story with a similar theme and plotline.

Above all, these Japanese tales present opportunities for learners in Japan to reflect on the familiar culture and narrative tradition, critique the logic and choices of the characters, and bring the students' own experiences and knowledge to the discussion.

The Psychological Benefits of Creative Writing for L2 Students

Iain Maloney

In CW academic research, we often lose sight of why we fell in love with literature in the first place—its ability to transport us, to mirror the world back to us in an understandable form, to show us we are part of a community, or that differences are positive attributes. Literature is much more than simply a way to boost second language acquisition and raise cultural awareness—though of course it is these things too.

This was evident in 2020 when, as a result of the pandemic, all classes at this Japanese university were moved online, delivered via Zoom and Google Classroom. Remote learning posed a number of problems for the third-year CW programme (for details of the course, see Maloney, 2020), not least that the in-class syllabus was formulated around group work and peer review. Poetry, however, proved to be resilient, in part because the short, discrete nature of the texts lent themselves to screensharing and group discussion in breakout rooms, but also because poetry, with its emphasis on emotions over narrative, allowed the students to express many of their frustrations and fears. All work herein is shared with full consent and using pseudonyms.

Within different poetic forms—haiku, acrostics, found poetry, concrete poetry, and limericks—students were given free rein to write about any topic they wanted. Some students took the chance to comment on the situation with wry humour:

Keita:
Online class
put on a nice shirt and
pajama bottoms

Yuina:
because of online class
wake up just before
change only my top

While Keita shows humour, Yuina's poem shows a certain weariness. Keita seems more comfortable in his pyjamas; Yuina is mired in increasing apathy.

Yuina's concern about the effects remote learning was having on her mental health was echoed by other students:

Yume:
Online
more reports
less motivation

Nonoka on the other hand is clearly feeling the loneliness of the situation, focusing on the screen as a barrier between her and her friends:

Nonoka
We can't meet face to face
But see each other
Through a screen

Kyoko went further, moving beyond subtext into a full expression of her sadness:

Kyoko:
You are on screen
But the real you is somewhere else
I really miss you

Nagisa, however, concentrated her anger and sense of unfairness into a haiku protest:

Nagisa:
Online class
Cut off tuition
Instead cut off talking

In the end, however, some of them managed to find silver linings in the pandemic:

Nao:
Under the corona trouble
I reconfirm
Human relationships

Conclusion

During a time of momentous upheaval, creative writing, and poetry, in particular, gave them the opportunity to formulate and express their emotions. This in turn, through the necessity of sharing work for peer review, led to discussions about their feelings and experiences within the class. It was clear from the work and the discussions in class that this was something the students needed and appreciated.

When we talk about creative writing from the point of view of academic research, we are often making SLA arguments to justify its inclusion in the curriculum. While this is, of course, important, we should not forget why literature is important to us in the first place, whether as writers or readers. Literature gives us the tools and the forum to talk about emotions, opinions and existence, something that is often absent from our EFL classrooms.

Translingual and Multilingual Writing Practices in University Students' L2 Poetry

Jared Kubokawa

Kubokawa outlined a unique perspective on L1-L2 relations by discussing the use of translingual writing (TLW) and/or multilingual writing (MLW) approaches for linguistic, rhetorical, and compositional purposes in L2 writing. He claims that L2 poetry is an efficacious genre for utilizing TLW practices because: first, poets are allowed poetic license, i.e., L1 in L2 writing can be viewed as artistic nuance, and second, L2 writers may lack familiarity with genre expectations. However, free verse poetry contains few standard conventions, and thus, writers can express themselves freely exploiting both L1 and L2 resources.

The use of L1 in L2 classrooms is a ubiquitous issue. However, a multitude of methods exists through which educators can involve the L1 in L2 learning, especially in the Japanese context (Akiyoshi, 2017; Iida, 2017; Ochi, 2009). In support, Canagarajah (2020) views the use of the L1 in the L2 (in the form of TLW and MLW practices) as a resource rather than a deficiency. From this innovative framework, the presentation defined TLW/MLW as "writing in more than one language, or in a language other than a user's primary one" (Kellman, 2003, p. ix). Historically, TLW/MLW practices have an ancient pedigree and continued until the late-eighteenth century in Europe when, as Yildiz (2011) argued, the "monolingual paradigm" emerged (p. 2). Yildiz conceptualized the current state of multilingual practices as the *postmonolingual condition*. A more recent critical movement in academia entitled the multilingual turn has developed as a critique of monolingual ideologies in research and pedagogy (Ortega, 2013). Therefore, utilizing a multilingual/translingual approach to language pedagogy could offer an alternative stance for L2 writers—resourceful, rather than deficient—in their linguistic, rhetorical, compositional, and cultural breadth.

To illustrate an efficacious TLW approach to L2 literacy (second literacy), the linguistic phenomenon of *translingual onomatopoeia* (TLO) was presented. TLO is a multilingual literary effect that situates a text in a specific cultural context by utilizing an onomatopoeic phrase in a language that differs from the primary language of the text (Kubokawa, in press). In other words, TLO is the use of L1 onomatopoeia in an L2 poem. The TLO phenomena, by definition, requires two aspects: (1) the word or phrase needs to be onomatopoeic in nature; and, (2) the word or phrase needs to carry a translingual approach to its communicative purposes. Both the meaning of the TLO phrase and the various phonetic features encode cultural conceptions into the text. The writer relies on the reader's latent cultural knowledge to add depth of meaning and sound, thus, providing the text with an ethnolinguistic perspective.

For illustrative purposes, a student's poem was displayed and the student's initials were used. The participant gave informed consent, and the project was cleared with the university's institutional review board. In the poem, notice the Japanese TLO literary device utilized in the predominantly English language poem:

Summer Vacation by W. H.

When I woke up
Morning cicadas were singing
Mean, min min min min, mee...
I slammed the window shut

When I grabbed the pencil
to do my book report
Sweat broke out on my forehead
I turned on the air conditioner

When I finished my homework
Evening cicadas were singing
Kana, kana, ki ki ki ki...
I didn't realize it was growing dark

The TLO in line three of stanzas one and three provide two differing sounds for the cicada insect. The writer makes a distinction between the morning cicadas, "*Mean, min min min min, mee...*" and the evening "*Kana, kana, ki ki ki ki...*" This is done as a rhetorical strategy to allude to cultural meaning as well as a compositional strategy to show the passage of time within a juxtaposition. The cultural, rhetorical, and compositional outcomes from the TLO would have been different had the writer chosen to use the English onomatopoeia, e.g., chirp or buzz. The communication of this experience stems from the writer's multicultural and multi-linguistic perceptions and experiences. Further explorations can be seen in Kubokawa (in press).

Next, the presentation addressed three pedagogical implications of using TLW practices in L2 poetry writing:

1. L2 creative writers naturally and organically included translingual approaches in their texts and created the linguistic phenomenon of TLO without explicit instruction.
2. L2 poetry, as a genre, is ripe for exploring conceptions of translingual orientation as a pedagogical practice. L2 creative writing pedagogies can provide opportunities for

L2 writers to use their cultural and L1 literacy knowledge to develop second literacy.

3. As L2 creative writing is often underutilized in language teaching, there could be scope in this area. Specifically, L2 poetry seems an efficacious genre for learners to develop agency and identity as L2 users.

TLW approaches continue to explore the relationships between the L1 in the L2 and work to frustrate the *monolingual paradigm* (Yildiz, 2011). In L2 education, the L1 in the L2 is traditionally seen as interference e.g., negative transfer; however, in my view, the L1 directly contributes to the learning and development of the L2 and thus should be recognized, utilized, and developed along with the L2. In conclusion, in L2 learning. embracing the *multilingual turn* (Ortega, 2013) can invigorate applications of the L1 in the L2 and conceptualize the L1 as a resource, rather than a deficiency.

From Literature to Literary Publishing: Students Publishing Students' Creative Writing

Andrew Decker

Publishing can be a good place to start or an important next step for students, especially those interested in reading literature or producing creative writing projects. This section describes how publications written and published by students at universities abroad were used as examples of contemporary literature to create new student publications. Through project-based language learning, students reviewed, edited, and published their own work and the work of other students.

The students who contributed to these projects were in an elective, one-week, project-based course at a private university in Osaka that met for five hours per day for five days. It was first offered as one of three courses in Winter 2020 (face-to-face) and again as one of two courses in Summer 2021 (online). The students who chose this course were interested in creative writing. All students who contributed were interested in having their work published. In Summer 2021, the second time the course was offered, a link to the literary magazine published by the first class was included in the course description advertised to students.

At the start of each course, students reviewed examples of student literary magazines. In Winter 2020, examples of student literary magazines the teacher was familiar with from other universities were used. These included publications the teacher had contributed to as a student and those from a partner university in the US. The literary magazines used were edited by students, not teachers, and published only the work of students at their university, particularly *The Pearl* of Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA and *The Minor Bird* of Chatham University in Pittsburgh, PA. In Spring 2021, the magazine produced by the students in the Winter 2020 class was used. Then students reviewed the calls for submissions from these examples and drafted and shared their own call with other classes. The call for submissions asked for essays, poetry, or images, along with bios. This was done using shared documents, emails, and folders through Microsoft Office 365.

After the deadline, the submissions were reviewed. In Winter 2020, fifteen out of sixteen (94%) of the students in the other courses voluntarily submitted, and after peer review, everything that was submitted was accepted. In total, the three students in the course published the work of 15 other students in addition to their own creative writing (creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry), which they had workshopped together. In Spring 2021, the four students in the course received submissions from six other students but, after peer review, did not accept any and published only their own work. Finally, students edited the contributions and created the front and back matter, including the cover, table of contents, and bios. Like with the call for submissions, this was done using shared documents, using the other student literary magazines as examples. The final step of converting the individual documents into one PDF was done by the teacher at the end of the course and then shared with the contributors, administrators, and in advertisements.

The process of preparing work for publication includes many steps and skills that students may find useful in their future academic, professional, or creative careers, including both literature review and peer review. For students, the process may be more important than the final product. Sharing their work with the class throughout and with other classes afterward can add purpose and audience to tasks such as these, as well as provide opportunities for comparison and self-reflection. This section has introduced how, with minimal technology, it is possible to start sharing more student-produced and student-selected materials. Now is as good a time as any to start course archives of student work.

Conclusions: Looking Back, Thinking Forward

In this second year of JALT being online because of the pandemic, the 2021 LiLT SIG forum provided an opportunity for teachers working with literature in their language classrooms to describe their experiences. Many teachers using literature would agree that general linguistic proficiency in English is not all that is required to achieve successful

communication in a second language. At the current time in particular, these presenters showed how careful planning of language courses can help engage learners through text choice (McIlroy, Villanueva, Tu) or writing activities (Maloney, Kubokawa, Decker). Given the unusual changes of the past two years, it is inevitable that reading and writing with literature is going through changes also, and the future beyond the ongoing pandemic is yet to be determined. Although most of the talks referred to literary interventions in tertiary contexts, approaches may be applied to other contexts.

What was clear from the presentations and the themes of the discussions is that the pandemic has changed teaching and learning in various ways. Integrating technology, using creative writing for group cohesion, and building cooperative teamwork through literature projects were some of the themes emerging from the talks. Teachers working with literature seem particularly interested in encouraging student-centred approaches, such as working with learners to create their own literary works (and perhaps publish them). Teachers and curriculum planners are likely to be looking for ways to work with literature that engages and interests their learners even in these difficult times. At the time of writing this conference report, countries are still preoccupied with working through the difficulties of teaching while global news relating to the pandemic continues to affect travel, relationships, work environments, health, and related worries. Future areas of interest for LiLT SIG events are sure to further explore the opportunities for learning with literature and producing literary works with language learners.

Bio Data

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