

Perspectives

Journal Writing in College English Classes in Japan: Shifting the Focus from Language to Education

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Journal writing activities offer a number of educational benefits for Japanese college-level EFL students. This paper presents evidence suggesting that a broadening of focus beyond solely language-based concerns can benefit students' intellectual and personal growth, as well as their language development. These benefits do not accrue automatically, however, but depend on how journals are used in classes and on whether the students recognize their value.

この記事で筆者は、日記を書く活動が教育的に（知的な面でも人間的な面でも）多くの利点を持っていることを指摘し、日本の大学における英語の授業でこれらの利点を活用すべきであると主張する。日記を書くことを経験した学生のケースが根拠として提示され、言語について心配するのをやめることで学生は言語を発達させることができるばかりか、知的にも人間的にも利益があることが示される。しかしながら、これらの利点は自動的に生ずるものではなく、教室で日記をどのように使うか、学生がその価値を認めるかどうかにかかっている。

By the time Japanese students enter university, most have had enough drill, practice, and rote memorization in English to last a lifetime. Yet many, by choice or by necessity, find themselves in yet another English class. There they will probably continue to learn within a test-oriented curriculum not so different from what they experienced in high school.

While there is some evidence that the Ministry of Education-sanctioned high school English curriculum is, on the surface at least, becoming more communicative (Goold, Madeley, & Carter, 1993), skepticism among language educators working in Japan ranges from mild (Ellis,

1991) to extreme (Sheen, 1992). Ellis claims that change is difficult because of the importance currently attached to grammar in public examinations and the widespread use of Japanese as the language of classroom communication (p. 119). He suggests further that it is by no means obvious that communicative competence should be the goal of language instruction in Japan, at least not where school learners are concerned (p. 120). With a solid background of linguistic information, sociolinguistic formulae, and metalinguistic awareness at their command, Ellis argues, students should be able to activate their knowledge if and when they need to do so. Sheen (1993), on the other hand, suggests that students in Japan benefit more from a modified grammar-translation approach to English language instruction.

Both Ellis' and Sheen's approaches are linguistic in nature. Such considerations may be justified at the junior high and high school levels, particularly if we recognize that this type of instruction does not preclude other types. But they make little sense at the college level. Here, goals that complement linguistic ones can do far more for students than to give them a store of linguistic formulae for potential activation later. Elsewhere I've argued these additional goals are educational and language is viewed not only as part of one's culture and identity, but also as a tool to help students develop intellectually and personally (Casanave, 1992).

If we continue to focus nearly exclusively on language usage in college English classes in Japan, we are wasting a precious opportunity to help students develop critical thinking capabilities. By this I do not mean just acquiring information. As Alfred North Whitehead noted many years ago, "A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth" (1929/1967, p. 1). I mean here learning to observe, to recognize and solve problems, to ask questions, to recapture childhood curiosity, and to develop multiple perspectives. To achieve this, teachers should help liberate students from past constraints that may have stifled not only their English language development, but their intellectual development as well.

The constraints I am talking about are familiar to all of us, and are endemic not just to the traditional Japanese education system but to any system that is bogged down in bureaucracy and is thus resistant to change, and to any system that, forced to give students tests and grades, views education as only a process of transmitting and acquiring information.¹ A valuable refocusing of goals in the English class can capitalize on the *intellectual* efforts that students make for themselves, rather than just on the linguistic efforts they make for their teachers and examiners. Whether students will use English in their futures fades as an issue

in light of these broader goals. This paper suggests the use of English journal writing as a one tool for widening the focus of educational goals in the language classroom.

The Potential of Journal Writing

With ungraded journal writing as the tool and vehicle, students in English classes can explore their own thinking in ways they may have never done before. The fact that second or foreign language learners are doing this exploration in English demonstrates that language instruction can be contextualized within larger educational goals. The language educator who uses a tool such as journals does not neglect the development of language proficiency, because language is the medium by which students develop and express thoughts and explore the world around them. Such development cannot take place in isolation, but requires the collaborative efforts of peers and teachers—a community of learners, as educator John Dewey would have called it (in Fishman, 1993). It also requires content that goes well beyond the textbook exercise. As Mohan (1991) points out, content and language instruction go hand-in-hand. He notes, “Teachers should question language teaching that ignores the content of communication and content teaching that ignores the language of communication” (Mohan, 1991, p. 7). One of the language educator’s responsibilities in college language classes is thus to provide students with meaningful opportunities for some kind of intellectual engagement with ideas and issues along with their language practice. Journal writing can fruitfully be utilized for such opportunities.

Why journal writing? The small body of literature on journal writing in first and second languages supports the claim that risk-free (e.g., ungraded) journal writing done for an interested responder fosters reflectivity, engagement with subject matter, and depth of thought (Burnham, 1992; Casanave, 1992; Fulwiler, 1987; Peyton, 1990b; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Staton et al., 1988). In first language settings, journal writing in the form of “learning logs” has been used successfully for these purposes in language teacher preparation programs (Brinton, Holten, & Goodwin, 1993; Porter et al., 1990) as well as in other disciplines in the humanities and sciences (Fulwiler, 1987). In second or foreign language settings, with students in elementary school (Kitagawa, 1989; Peyton, 1990a; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989), in college English classes (Casanave, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Green & Green, 1993; Spack Sadow, 1983; Thomas, 1993) and French classes (Sandler, 1987), as well as in classes for the deaf (Albertini, 1990; Meath-Lang,

1990; Walworth, 1990), journal writing is associated not only with engagement with topics and issues and increased willingness to experiment, but also with increased levels of linguistic proficiency.

In some cases, the journal is a dialogue journal, in which students and teachers carry on a balanced written discussion over the school term (Kitagawa & Kitagawa, 1987; Peyton, 1990a; Staton, 1987; Staton, et al., 1988) or in which students write to each other (Green & Green, 1993). In other cases, teachers respond less fully to students' journals, but still communicate directly with students through feedback consisting of written observations, questions, and commentary (Harrison, 1993; Simons, 1993). Such journal writing activities involves students and teachers in a genuine communicative exchange.

However, it is not possible to make unqualified sweeping claims for the positive influences of journal writing (or any kind of writing) on students' language and thinking without considering mitigating factors (Langer & Applebee, 1987; Reyes, 1991). Individuals vary greatly in their responses to journal writing tasks (Lucas, 1990, 1992) and in the linguistic changes they demonstrate (Casanave, 1993a; Hancock, 1993; Peyton, 1990a). Moreover, the quality of people's writing and the influence of writing on their thinking have been shown to depend on factors such as topic knowledge (Langer, 1984) and how writing functions in different contexts (Cole & Griffin, 1980; Scribner, 1977; Scribner & Cole, 1978).

Despite this diversity of response and purpose, journals are claimed to be "the most comprehensive writing assignments available" (Fulwiler, 1989, p. 149). From the teacher's perspective, they are a window into the intellectual and linguistic growth of students. From a student's perspective, when used with a clear and meaningful purpose, they are tools for helping students "make connections between feeling and thinking, writing and acting, and going to school and living their lives" (Burnham, 1992, p. 508).

For journal writing to contribute to educational goals, I suggest that the following four conditions must be met: students need to have something to say and a reason for saying it; they need to be able to write in a risk-free environment, without restrictions as to format or grammatical accuracy; and they need to receive substantive comments back from interested readers (teachers and peers). Finally, for the journal writing activity to be most effective, students must also be aware of these potential benefits, in order to become active participants in their own learning. Students who do not understand the purpose of this kind of nontraditional language class activity will inevitably feel they are wasting their time.

The Students and the Setting

The work that I report on in this paper draws on the reflections of students themselves as they look back on several semesters of required journal writing in English classes. At the end of each semester, students wrote a "journal on journal writing" and it is these documents that constitute the data for the study, which is part of a larger three-year project.

Students in our university who choose to study English take a three-semester intensive course consisting of about eight class hours a week, taught by three different teachers. Aside from "returnees" who have spent time overseas, most students are products of entrance exam oriented English classes and have never written more than a few consecutive sentences expressing their own thoughts. Many have not written their own ideas freely, even in Japanese, and lack experience with expressive writing (Kitagawa & Kitagawa, 1987). According to their self-reports, most of their previous writing practice in Japanese and in English revolved around preparation for entrance exam essays in which they adhered to rules, formulae, and predetermined content.

Extracts from the semester-end journals written by two groups of just over 30 students in the fall semester of 1993 will now be presented and discussed. One intermediate group, designated EK (TOEFL scores in mid to high 400s), had just finished their three-semester English requirement. The second group, EM (returnee and advanced students with TOEFL scores above 520), had just finished the first of their three semesters. In both classes, the main content for the core classes that I taught came from films and a general theme guided the choice of films and film-related activities. The theme for EK was "The Human Dilemma." For EM, it was "Cross-Cultural Issues." Both themes were broad enough to allow us to view a variety of appropriate films and to find a rich array of issues to write and talk about.

The third-semester EK students wrote journals once every two weeks; the first semester EM students wrote every week. All students were required to write on each film that we viewed (four in each class). They could write on any topic they wanted for the remaining journals. Although there were no fixed requirements for length, the guidelines explained that journals should be long enough to allow students to look into one issue in some detail. The length thus varied from about 250 words to 600 words in both classes. Students had no risk of failing as long as they turned in something. The EM students also wrote several formal essays in response to the films. These were revised and graded. Both classes prepared final whole-group presentations consisting of a summary, analysis, and critique of a film of their choice.

I encouraged students to use their journals as a way to prepare for presentations. I responded to each journal and returned the journals within a week, marking a few language errors, suggesting words or phrases, but primarily writing substantive comments on passages I found interesting, confusing, or challenging to my own way of thinking. As mentioned, in their final journal students talked about their journal writing experience.

Having Something to Say and a Reason for Saying It

Having something to say and a reason for saying it go hand in hand. Regrettably, meaningful purposes for school-based writing are continually undermined by the need to test, rank, and grade. Applebee (1984) notes that school writing in the United States tends to focus on sentence-level language and recital of information that someone else—not the student—has already explored and organized. Extended writing tends to be done in examination settings, where students write in order to get a grade. Similarly, when students begin studying English in our classes, they typically view the required work, such as journal writing, as a necessary evil that will secure them a final grade. This is not a meaningful reason for saying anything.

Yet, discovering something about oneself and learning how to express one's discoveries effectively are two important interrelated goals that students can strive for in an education-oriented language class. Journal writing can be used as a tool to reach those goals, but only if the writers have something to say. As Langer (1984) demonstrated with her study of the relationship between writing and topic knowledge, 10th-grade students whose knowledge of a topic was either deep and well-organized or broad and less well organized both wrote higher quality essays than students with little knowledge of a topic. Of course, this finding is only reasonable. Nevertheless, many traditional foreign language skill activities involve little meaningful content, or content that is so distant from students' lives that students have nothing to say about it that is interesting or relevant to them.

Supplying relevant and high-interest content is the primary reason for using films as a major part of the content in some of our English classes, and this is also why we generally use films with Japanese subtitles. By doing so, we ensure that students at all proficiency levels understand the ideas and issues in the films, even if they cannot understand the spoken English or do not read carefully the English film reviews, script segments, or handouts we provide. When we watch films that are subtitled in Japanese, however, students must be helped to

understand that the point of viewing films is not to learn the English dialogue (although this is a valuable activity in another kind of class). It is to give all of us common issues to talk and write about in English.

In EM class, for instance, we viewed several films that, on the surface, students related to purely as entertainment, or as culturally so distant from their lives that connections seemed difficult to forge (e.g., *Do the Right Thing*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *Milagro Beanfield War*²). Identifying relevant issues took time, but meanwhile, students could still talk with interest about the story, the conflicts among the characters, the prejudice that exists in America, and so on. Gradually, through discussion and responses to their journals, they were able to find issues in their own lives to make them wonder about Japan's attitude toward the handicapped, prejudice within Japan, or what their own reactions might be if they were in a situation depicted in the film.

EK students, in spite of their lower proficiency level, had practiced this kind of thinking for three semesters. While their journals were grammatically much less accurate, they showed as much insight as the EM students. Here is what one EK student had to say:

In writing journals I can find the theme and problems [in films], think about what the director wanted to say and what the cause or solution of the problem are. It makes the film more and more interesting. Films have too many topics. The more deeply we think about them, the more we can find the topics. And by discussing it with classmates we can find more topics. Because each classmate has each point of view. (YD, EK, 1/94)

From this and similar comments, we can see how the journal writing activity itself, as well as discussion with classmates, generated additional topics for students to think and write about. Once students recognized the wealth of topics available from films, they rarely had to struggle to find something to say, as they sometimes did with free topics.

Another student captured the fundamental importance of having something to say, noting that this need is not restricted to writing in a foreign language, but applies even when we write in our L1. In a journal written originally in Japanese he said:

I don't think it's a big problem what language to use to express one's ideas. Japanese is not necessarily the easier language to write things in. When I don't have anything to write about, or when I'm not conscious of issues in general, my mother tongue will not always help me. On the other hand, if I'm sufficiently issue conscious, English is not a big problem. (HY, EG, Japan Jon J Wrtg, 7/92)

To conclude this section, I quote from the journal of a student who quite clearly had a meaningful purpose for communicating about the analysis and critique of films. He expressed the view that this kind of analytical activity did not belong in English class. Using his journals as a medium with which to carry on an in-depth intellectual discussion, he

argued that people are not capable of analyzing anything adequately if they have not experienced it themselves:

In order to analyze or criticize artificial things (this means things which was made by people's hands), we are necessary to experience the act of making in the same way to some extent. That process mean not only to know how things come to complete, but to know consciousness to the making by its experience... Therefore, a journal writing about the film was also not suitable for [learning English]. (RK, EK, 1/94)

It is worth noting that this student could not have expressed such a sophisticated argument in English at the beginning of the academic year. Journal writing provided the vehicle for his ongoing intellectual arguments, and, hence, for the development of both his English and his critical thinking skills. He had something to say and a reason for saying it.

Writing in a Risk-Free Environment

After the first week of class, a new freshman EM student described in familiar detail the torture of being forced to write in school:

Some people can develop their ability when they are forced to do something, but some people can't. In my case, I feel a lot of pressure and my effort is in vain. As I was a schoolgirl, for me writing was a composition to get grade... I tried to write something smart, but I couldn't write freely. That's because I couldn't relax. My idea was not a free and easy style. My composition wasn't good at all. That made me hate writing. (SW, EM, 1/94)

Most students, however, lost this type of dread, and began discovering ways they could begin taking risks with their thinking. This is how one freshman EM student phrased it in her final journal:

It was very good for me that journal writing is all right to write anything and do not have worry about it's conclusion. In that way, I could start writing from one question which I had and as I continue writing, I sometimes come to another way of thinking or another clue which led me to final conclusion. And if I found two possibility of analysing for one issue, and even if those are still weak to write on an essay, I could discuss both them on journals. (YA, EM, 1/94)

Another freshman expressed surprise and satisfaction that "we were allowed to write our own thought as our own." Still another noted how much more comfortable it was to write journals than essays, since "you don't need to use big words and you don't need to be very nervous about grammatical mistakes." Further student views on this aspect of journal writing are reported in Casanave (1993a).

Another important aspect of journal writing is the beneficial effect which preliminary work in relatively risk-free environment has on subsequent, more formal graded assignments. This consideration has also been dis-

cussed by other researchers (Vanett & Jurich, 1990). As the freshmen students in EM class discovered, risk-free journal writing allowed them to examine a variety of ideas and angles on the same topic, and to develop some of those ideas into the required essays. Formal essay writing turned out to be less risky than it might otherwise have been because of the extensive thinking and writing that had come before it.

Writers who are not worried about grammar, spelling, and organization are free to experiment with language and to explore ideas in ways they have not done before. From the language learning perspective, students learn the "fine art of making mistakes" (Sandler, 1987). Making mistakes and benefiting from them, notes Sandler, "is even more vital to the learning of the second tongue than to the development of the mother tongue" because it teaches students to "experiment fearlessly, to develop their abilities to correct their mistakes while learning from them" (p. 313). From the intellectual perspective, as Fulwiler (1987) points out, in all disciplines, journals written in a non-threatening environment are useful pedagogical tools where "critical independent thought, speculation, or exploration is important" (p. 1). In short, once students become convinced they have permission to make mistakes, they are ready to begin their education.

Communicating with Interested Interlocutors

What can be done with a journal after it is written? Kept to oneself, such a journal may still have some positive influences on the writer's thinking (e.g., many people keep private diaries or journals from which they benefit greatly). But in the language class with an educational focus, journals are meant to be shared—not just with teachers, but also with other students.

In my experience, the class activity most widely enjoyed at all proficiency levels has been the small-group journal reading and discussion—an activity that can be conducted successfully even in large classes. One freshman EM student noted that by "sharing our mind," ideas that had been vague and ill-formed become clear. Several of the third semester students lamented the fact that we had little time that semester to share journals (I met them only once a week), since learning the opinions of other students had been so rewarding during the previous two semesters. Their classmates were real and interested communication partners, and those who mentioned this aspect of journal writing uniformly remarked on how interesting it had been to discover that their otherwise silent classmates had such different points of view about the same top-

ics. Such journal-based discussions also helped students understand and develop their own thinking about the events, themes, and issues in the films. For example, one student from EK found writing on the topic of films to be difficult "because feeling, emotion, passion, sentiment and else of charactors were hard to change to words even in Japanese and more English" (KH, EK, 1/94).

Other students recognized from the kinds of comments I made in their journals that I, too, was a genuine and interested reader, sharing my own ideas and wanting clarifications of and reasons for theirs. Looking back on three semesters of journal writing, an EK student said:

Journal writing was very hard work for me, but I like to write them and I was looking forward to accepting my returned journal because Dr. C. made some comments on journals every week. I think one of the most important advantage of journal writing is that we can know another people's point of view and weak point of our idea by teacher's comments on our journals. (EM, EK, 1/94)

A freshman EM student wrote in her final journal that "every time I was interested in reading your comments about my ideas" (YA, EM, 1/94). Another who noted that he, too, "always looked forward to seeing the comments," added that he had never experienced someone actually reading and commenting on his papers, "including the three years term in the United States" (RN, EM, 1/94).

If there are no real readers, some of the primary educational benefits of journal writing, both personal and intellectual, are undermined. To function as tools of educational growth, journals need to be shared.

Recognizing the Benefits

The most effective learning takes place when learners participate willingly in class activities and tasks, convinced that what they are doing will contribute to their learning. Students who participate with enthusiasm help spread that enthusiasm throughout a class, adding to the liveliness of discussions, and helping themselves and others pursue tasks in depth that they might otherwise engage in half-heartedly. This is the ideal, of course, which rarely characterizes an entire class of thirty or more students. But it is a goal toward which we can strive by regularly pointing out to students where and how class activities are helping them develop their language and thinking.

Ultimately, this discovery is gained by students themselves as they write. Many students commented on ways in which they perceive that journal writing did or did not benefit them. One of the areas that many student remarked on concerned aspects of language, even though we

usually do not teach discrete language points. I suggest to students repeatedly every semester how they can use their readings, notes from class discussions, and teacher feedback as sources of vocabulary and grammar, as the following first semester EM student apparently did:

I admit that there are some merits in journal writing. It gives me an opportunity to think and learn vocabulary and expression in English a little. I learned words and expression such as "conflict", "dispute", "prejudice", "discriminate against", "transformation" by using them in my journals (SW, EM, 1/94)

But many students are not easily weaned from the transmission model of learning, and even over time, some are still unsure how the arduous activity of weekly journal writing benefits them. At the end of the first semester, a returnee student wrote:

I liked [journal writing] because it made me think of things that I used to not think about, such as conflicts, discriminations, and human relationships....But there is one thing that I'm afraid of. That is, I don't think [journal writing helped my English get much better....Maybe I'm not trying hard enough. If I had used a dictionary more often and tried to use some words that I don't usually use, that might have widened my vocabulary knowledge.... (YU, EM, 1/94)

This student is beginning to recognize the need to take an active role in the learning experience.

Additionally, students at all levels frequently reported that the process of writing became easier and quicker. A journal that took several hours to write at the beginning of the semester, for example, might take only an hour at the end.

While the issue of language understandably concerned students, the real surprises for them came in other areas that have to do with thinking and self-discovery. The following comment is typical in its focus on the way journal writing opens students' eyes to the very ordinary things around them:

First, I learned that when you try to write, it makes you think about things more deeply. Living in daily life, I don't think about things much. I didn't even think much after seeing a movie. I just thought about if it was a good movie or not and didn't think about the reason of that decision. So after discussing about movies in class and writing journals, I was in great shock when I found out that there was a lot to think about after seeing a movie. (MH, EM, 1/94)

Another EM freshman was one of several who recognized that the journal writing activity can help writers develop the ability to view an issue from multiple perspectives:

After finishing writing journals everytime, I start thinking more deeply about what is needed to support the idea and whether there are other possible opinions by someone who is looking at the idea from different point of view. I learned to think about one topic from more than one point of view by writing down my opinions and its reasons. (MY, EM, 1/94)

The importance of this process cannot be underestimated. The ability to see issues from several viewpoints characterizes the person who is continuing to grow intellectually. Other intellectual benefits that students recognized included ways in which journal writing helped students become more critical thinkers. This benefit accrues, as an EK student noted, as the ideas "become clearer and concreated enough and easier to understand for yourselves" in turning ideas into sentences (MK, EK, 1/94).

The students also reported personal as well as intellectual benefits. The following EM student became aware of how his journal writing had helped him recognize his own feelings:

I went through all the journals I have written so far. Then I recognized something. By reading my journals, I recognized that I could have developed something about myself from them. My feelings were hidden inside the journals that I had been writing. Take these things into consideration, I wrote new ones. Then again, I recognized that I could see myself through writing journals. Actually, I believe that journal writing is aimed to search oneself. (YM, EM, 1/94)

Expressed in a variety of ways in their journals, this kind of self-discovery occurred for many students throughout the three-semester English sequence.

Not everyone was satisfied with this type of English instruction, as one would expect in any group of thirty people. Three students in the EK class had strong criticisms of aspects of the nontraditional English instruction, comparing instruction in the English classes to that in the other foreign language classes (all beginning level), where lessons were textbook-based and had a clear progression from A to Z, and finding our less linguistically focused instruction wanting. One student who continued to view films as material for learning the English that was spoken in them remarked that

... it is interesting to watch movies. But it is useless to the students studying English by the present way. Because all movies had been superimposed [subtitled]. Almost all the students wouldn't hear lines in English but see the translations in Japanese. So there was no difference between it and watching movies in a theater. It only gave topics for writing journals. (KS, EK, 1/94)

As it was intended to do. But as our investment in video technology increases, we will be able to use closed caption more often, as a way to provide both English language and content at the same time (Vanderplank, 1993). Nevertheless, in classes that are committed to educational goals, we need to take care that linguistic concerns do not undermine these goals, but rather contribute to them.

In general, most students whose opinions I have collected indicated that they believe their journal writing influenced them in positive ways. First, they comment that the writing acts like a discovery process for

them, helping them recognize and formulate their thoughts—a well-known phenomenon articulated by Zamel (1982) some time ago. Second, third semester students in particular become aware that journal writing helps them take on a new perspective in a variety of areas and to develop an attitude of inquiry and observation that enriches their whole college experience. One student noted that thinking skills are not subject-specific: “Even though the language is different between Japanese and English . . . practicing to think deeply and analyzing topics is common to every subject we take in university” (KF, ES, Engl J on J Wrtg, 1/92).

Finally, most students come to recognize that there are far more interesting and longer-lasting reasons for writing than getting a grade. Expressed in various ways, the students suggest that the journal writing helped them know themselves, their classmates, and their surroundings in more perceptive and elaborated ways.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by mentioning the “fluency first” approach described by MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991), an approach to language education that is compatible with the one I espouse here. In her arguments supporting fluency-first, whole language approach to first and second language and literacy acquisition, MacGowan-Gilhooly follows the claims of learning theorists such as Vygotsky and Britton that “lasting learning, intellectual growth, and language are inextricably connected” (p. 79). She reviews the evidence suggesting that such goals can best be reached by providing opportunities for students to immerse themselves in reading, writing, talking (and, I would add, film-viewing) in an anxiety-free environment. Journal writing in response to meaningful content and all of the collaborative and communicative activities that can be designed to go along with journal writing, is one way to provide students with such opportunities.

MacGowan-Gilhooly notes that most of the college students of English as a Second Language with whom she worked recognized and were satisfied with their linguistic and intellectual growth, particularly as evidenced in their writing. Yet, as is the case with our students, some criticized the approach for not focusing enough on grammar or for asking them to write too many journals in spite of recognizing that they had greater progress with this approach than with a more traditional approach. For a fluency-based, “educational” approach to work, it is necessary to include not only an abundance of risk-free language activities, but also ongoing learner training.

One of our challenges as language teachers is to help students recognize how activities such as journal writing benefit them. In my own classes, perhaps by sharing some of the third semester students' final journals with the incoming freshmen, I can hasten this awareness. Nevertheless, students must experience the benefits first-hand.

On Language, Learners, and Educational Experiences: Shifting the focus of English instruction in college classes from language to education does not mean neglecting language. On the contrary, it means delving into language in ways that cannot be done if we view language only as an object of study rather than as a tool and a medium for pursuing educational goals. Through language we develop and clarify ideas; we represent thought to ourselves and others; we find previously unimagined worlds are opened up to us, and we peek inside the minds of people unlike ourselves. Without language, we cannot pursue educational goals.

In explaining and demonstrating to students how shifting the focus of a language class from linguistic to educational activities will contribute to linguistic growth as much as it will to intellectual and personal development, we need to point out the value of pursuing educational goals in the medium of a foreign language. We can justify our pursuit in the name of "internationalization," of course, but terms like "internationalization" and "global society" sometimes have little concrete meaning or relevance to individual learners.

More valuable, I believe, is an approach that puts learners at the center of their own learning. Our message to our students can be: By pursuing educational goals in the medium of a foreign language, your eyes will see your own society in new ways, your mind will understand your native language in new ways, you will see other languages and cultures in new ways, and your heart will reflect on itself in new ways, and your increasingly fluent communication skills will help you build and share this knowledge with a great diversity of individuals both within and outside your own country.

If this seems like a lot to ask from a language class, it is. But these goals are also what make college level language teaching worth the effort that teachers and students expend in their collaborative pursuit—not just of grammatical expertise in a foreign language, but of knowledge and understanding of self and others.

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Notes

1. For an insightful discussion of the different educational expectations of Western and Asian educators, see Ballard and Clanchy (1991).

2. See Mejia, Xiao & Pasternak (1992) for related readings and suggestions for using some of these films.

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