The Language Teacher

https://jalt-publications.org/tlt

Feature Article

TLT Interviews

My Share

JALT Praxis

JALT THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING 全国語学教育学会

The Japan Association for Language Teaching

Volume 46, Number 2 • March / April 2022

ISSN 0289-7938 • ¥1,900 • *TLT* uses recycled paper

JALT Publications

MARCH / APRIL 2022 • Vol. 46, No.2

Contents

JALT Publications Online

Material from *The Language Teacher* (TLT) and *JALT Journal* (JJ) published in the last six months requires an access password. These passwords are only available to current JALT members. To access the latest issues of *TLT* and *JJ*:

https://jalt.org/main/publications

To explore our unrestricted archives:

https://jalt-publications.org

In this month's issue . . .

Welcome to the March/April 2022 issue of *The Language Teacher*. My name is Bern Mulvey. As some of you may know, Nicole Gallagher is taking a well-earned break from *TLT* after the recent birth of her child. Now, I will be attempting the impossible task of filling her shoes as Co-editor. About me: I have been an active member of JALT since 1997, and during this time have served in various capacities—including as Co-editor of *ON CUE* from 1999-2000, as a Guest Editor of *ON CUE* in 2017, and as an Editorial Advisory Board member for *TLT* since 2000. This said, I obviously still have a lot to learn. Fortunately, Paul Lyddon and Theron Muller have been extremely patient, while Nicole continues to advise as well. Many thanks to all three of them.

This issue includes two Feature Articles, both touching on the topic of informal language learning. In the first article, **Chris Edelman**, **Peter Ferguson**, **Robert McClung**, **Christopher Hellman**, and **Andrew Dowden** survey first- and second-year Japanese university students to measure the extent of their volitional exposure to English-language media outside the classroom.

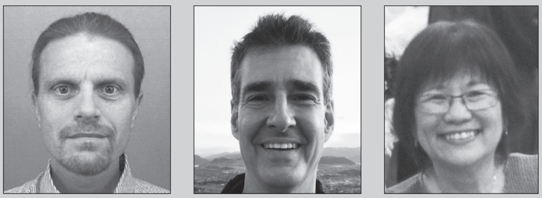
In the second Feature Article, **Gilbert Dizon** analyzes posting practices on an L2 Japanese subreddit to identify common language-learning behaviors among its members, with a number of implications for L2 education.

In addition to these two articles, this issue includes an interview with Charlene Polio by **Paul Tanner** and another with Nicholas Rhea by **Matthew Nall**. Don't forget to check out our many regular JALT Praxis columns, such as My Share, TLT Wired, Book Reviews, Teaching Assistance, Writers' Workshop, and SIG Focus, as well.

Finally, please let me again thank the content authors, reviewers, copyeditors, proofreaders, translators, and all the many other TLT volunteer contributors, without whose time and energy this publication would not be possible. To all our readers, I hope you enjoy the issue and find it useful.

Bern Mulvey, TLT *Co-editor*

Continued over



TLT Editors: Paul Lyddon, Bern Mulvey
TLT Japanese Language Editor: Toshiko Sugino

The JALT Peer Support Group (PSG) aims to collaboratively assist writers in working through the writing process in order to develop their manuscripts to a (hopefully) publishable level. Our experienced Peer Readers will do their best to provide you with feedback and suggestions to improve content, clarity, and organization. However, they do not usually edit for grammar, punctuation, etc. as part of the process.

Submitting a Paper for Review

Please visit https://jalt-publications.org/contact to start the process. Once a paper is submitted, it may take a month or more for two rounds of feedback.

Becoming a PSG Peer Reader

PSG is always recruiting new Peer Readers! Benefits include: improving your writing skills, learning more about the academic publishing process, networking, and providing a valuable service to the academic community.

Please contact PSG at jaltpubs.peer.group@jalt.org to find out about becoming a Peer Reader.

Visited TLT's website recently?
https://jalt-publications.org/tlt

JALT's Mission

JALT promotes excellence in language learning, teaching, and research by providing opportunities for those involved in language education to meet, share, and collaborate.

使命（ミッション・ステートメント）全国語学教育学会は言語教育関係者が交流・共有・協働する機会を提供し、言語学習、教育、及び調査研究の発展に寄与します。

O22年3月/ 4月号の*TLT*へようこそ。私はBern Mulveyと申します。ご存知かと思いますが、長らく*TLT*に貢献してきたNicole Gallagherは骨休めの育児休暇に入りました。そこで私が共同編集者として彼女の後を継がせていただくことになりました。私につきましては、1997年からJALTで活動の場を広げ、1999-2000年はON CUEの共同編集者、2017年は客員編集者、2000年からは査読者の一人としてTLTのさまざまな業務に携わってきました。申し上げるまでもなく、まだ学ぶべきことがたくさんございますが、幸いなことに、Nicoleはもちろん、現編集長のPaul LyddonとTheron Mullerも非常に辛抱強く助言をし続けて下さっています。この場をお借りして、お礼を申し上げます。

本号のFeature Articleは、二つとも授業外の言語学習というトピックに触れています。最初のFAでは、Chris Edelman, Peter Ferguson, Robert McClung, Christopher Hellman および Andrew Dowdenが、日本の大学1年生と2年生を対象に、どのくらいの頻度で自ら教室外での英語メディアに触れているのかを測定しました。

二編目のFAでは、Gilbert　Dizonが、メンバー間の共通の言語学習行動を特定するため、L2日本語サブレディットへの投稿の実際について分析しました。L2教育への応用法についても数多く提案しています。

これら2本の論文に加えて、本号ではPaul Tannerによる Charlene Polioへのインタビューとさらに Matthew NallによるNicholas Rheaへのインタビューも掲載しています。My Share, *TLT* Wired, Book Reviews, Teaching Assistance, Writers' Workshop, SIG Focusなど、通常のJALT Praxis columnsもどうぞお忘れなく。

最後に、著者、査読者、編集者、校正者、翻訳者、さらに多くの*TLT*ボランティアの方々に改めてお礼を申し上げます。皆さまのご尽力がなければ、本号は出版できなかったことでしょう。読者の皆さま、本号をお楽しみになり、お役に立てますことを願っております。

Bern Mulvey, TLT *Co-editor*

— Obituary —

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts that Matsuyama JALT is sharing the sad news of the passing of our great friend and colleague **Kiyoshi Shioiri**, Matsuyama JALT's president. He had been hospitalized following a severe stroke on December 27 and passed away in the early hours of January 2. Shioiri-sensei was one of the founding members of Matsuyama JALT and had served as president for many years. We are deeply sorry for the loss of this kind, thoughtful, and gentle man who touched the lives of his many students and colleagues over the years. He will be deeply missed.

Media as Input: Exploring Student Use of English-Language Media Outside the Classroom

Christopher Edelman
Kwansei Gakuin University
Peter Ferguson
Kindai University
Robert McClung
Kyoto University of Foreign Studies
Christopher Hellman
Ritsumeikan University
Andrew Dowden
Ritsumeikan University
https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT46.2-1

This exploratory study investigated first- and second-year Japanese university students' volitional exposure to English-language media outside the classroom. Survey data were collected from 1,130 students at eight universities in the fall of 2018. The results showed that overall student exposure to English-language media outside the classroom was very limited and that many of the available media resources were used primarily in Japanese. These findings suggest that most Japanese university students are not making the most of the English-language resources available to them outside of class. In short, despite an abundance of media available in English, many Japanese university students do not actively engage with these media in their free time.

この探索的研究は、日本の大学1年生と2年生が教室以外でどれほどの頻度で自ら英語メディアへ触れているかについての研究である。調査は２０１８年秋に８つの大学の学生に対して行われ、1130人からデータが得られた。本調査の結果、学生の英語授業外での英語への関わりは概して非常に限られており、利用可能なメディアリソースの多くは日本語を優先して使用されていたことが明らかとなった。これらの調査結果は、ほとんどの日本の大学生が授業外で利用できる英語のリソースを最大限に活用していないことを示唆している。要するに、利用可能な英語メディアが豊富であるにもかかわらず、多くの学生は余暇に英語メディアと積極的に関わっていないことがわかった。

For at least the past decade, media technology has been an integral part of Japanese life. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, by 2012, roughly 95% of the Japanese population reported owning some type of mobile phone. In that same year, Kondo et al. (2012) found a correlation between Japanese university students' mobile technology use and level of interest in their academic studies. Integration and use of technology have only increased since then. In 2018, roughly 80% of the total Japanese population over the age of six reported using the internet (Statistics Bureau, 2019). The proliferation of smartphones, internet access, and media platforms with multilingual content has made student exposure to English outside the classroom more accessible than ever before. This has led to a number of studies examining the use of technology for language acquisition both inside and outside English language classrooms in Japan (e.g., Gobel & Kano, 2014; Hulse, 2018; Obari et al., 2008; Stockwell & Liu, 2015; Thornton & Houser, 2005).

Among these studies of technology in language learning, some have focused specifically on the use of media. As one example, a study by Thornton and Houser (2005) utilized 3G technology to have Japanese university students learn English idioms from videos. These researchers found that university students evaluated the use of mobile technology in English class positively. Of course, this type of mobile-sssisted language learning (MALL), as it is called, is not without its drawbacks. For instance, Lu (2008) and Azabdaftari and Mozaheb (2012) have noted negative student comments concerning MALL, specifically with regard to screen size, device cost, and internet access speed in the absence of Wi-Fi. Nevertheless, the course evaluations of Kondo et al. (2012) showed students who used mobile technology to be more interested in their studies because of the mobility and accessibility their devices provided throughout their day-to-day activities.

Of course, most media resources are designed not for education but for entertainment, and the continual creation of new platforms and content for this latter purpose has reached the point where anyone connected to the internet now has access to free media services such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as paid ones such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu. With the increased quantity of English media from all over the world now easily available through mobile technology, one might imagine that many Japanese university students have greater exposure to English in their free time, but whether Japanese university students are really taking advantage of this new opportunity is anything but a foregone conclusion.

Engagement with a foreign language outside the language classroom is understood to be an important component of successful language acquisition. According to Sundqvist (2011), in Sweden, there is a popular assumption that the majority of English acquisition occurs outside, rather than inside, the classroom. Sundqvist noted that, by age nine, students "usually already know some English as many of them have encountered the language in their spare time, for example through music, television, the internet, or other forms of media" (p. 106).

However, to date, there seems to be no existing large-scale investigation into Japanese university students' habits of English-language media use outside the classroom. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to explore this matter, specifically with regard to the media of television, movies, printed works, and music.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How often do Japanese university students voluntarily engage in various types of activities involving Japanese- and English-language media use outside the classroom?
2. How often do Japanese university students voluntarily engage in out-of-class use of various Japanese- and English-language media resources?

Methodology

A total of 1,130 students from eight private and public universities throughout the Kansai area completed a 30-item survey. All respondents were first- or second-year non-English majors enrolled in compulsory general English classes representing a wide range of English proficiencies. The surveys were distributed and collected face-to-face during a single class meeting. In total, 53 classes were involved in the study.

Instrument

The survey (see Appendix) had two sections: media *activities* and media *resources*. The media *activities* section included 12 questions regarding frequency of engagement in certain media activities, namely watching movies, watching TV, reading books, and listening to music. Each question began with the stem "How often do you" followed by a specific activity (e.g., watch movies in English, read books in English). Those concerning movies and television shows targeted four different types of language input: English audio only, English audio with Japanese subtitles, English audio with English subtitles, and Japanese audio only. The activity of reading was divided into reading books in Japanese or English. Similarly, the activity of listening to music was separated into listening to music with Japanese lyrics or English lyrics.

The 18-item media *resources* section also included questions of frequency but focused on use of specific technologies (e.g., Kindle, television) and applications or internet services (e.g., Amazon, Hulu, Netflix). Moreover, this section distinguished frequency of use by language, that is, Japanese vs. English. Frequency response options for both sections of the survey were given on a 6-point Likert scale: 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (not much), 4 (sometimes), 5 (often), and 6 (always).

Procedure

The survey was administered during the first two weeks of the fall semester of 2018. The students were assured that their participation was completely voluntary and that it would have no effect on their grades. They were then told that the questions referred to activities unrelated to school assignments and involving personal use in private time. The survey instructions were written in Japanese to ensure participant understanding. The allotted time to complete the survey was 10 minutes. Upon completion, all papers were collected by the instructors. Participants were not allowed to modify their answers or compare them with those of their peers.

Analysis and Results

After data from incomplete surveys and those exhibiting obviously erroneous response patterns (e.g., scores of 1 for every item) were excluded, the remainder were entered into Microsoft Excel and then transferred into JASP version 0.10.3 for analysis. The media activities and resources were analyzed separately.

Media Activities

The mean frequency scores and percentages of responses in each frequency category for media activities are given in Table 1, where figures in bold indicate the mode responses. In the category of movies, the most frequently watched were Japanese movies (M = 3.7) and English movies with Japanese subtitles (M = 3.27). By comparison, the frequencies of viewing English movies with English subtitles (M = 1.66) and English movies without subtitles (M = 1.6) were far lower. Television showed a similar pattern. The most frequently watched programs were Japanese TV shows (M = 4.61), followed by English TV shows with Japanese subtitles (M = 2.17). English TV shows with and without English subtitles came in far behind at nearly identical mean frequencies of 1.56 and 1.58, respectively.

Media Resources

The mean frequency scores and percentages of responses in each frequency category for media resources are given in Table 2, where figures in bold once again indicate the mode responses. In Japanese, the most frequently used resources were YouTube (M = 5.25), television (M = 4.77), Twitter (M = 4.6), and Instagram (M = 4.2). Most frequently used in English was YouTube (M = 2.34), the only resource with a mean frequency score above 2.

Discussion

With regard to the first research question, concerning the frequency of volitional exposure to Japanese- and English-language media outside the classroom, the inclusion of Japanese was necessary to establish the degree to which students engaged in any of the targeted media activities at all (i.e., apart from any language learning-related motives). As expected, in every category (i.e., movies, television, books, and music), media use was more frequent in Japanese than in English.

In the category of movies, over 52% of participants responded that they *sometimes* watch Japanese movies, with an additional 17% stating they *often* or *always* watch them. Only 13% reported *rarely* or *never* watching movies in Japanese. For English, however, the answers were starkly different. Although, as with Japanese movies, 17% of respondents indicated *often* or *always* watching English movies with subtitles in Japanese, when it came to English movies with subtitles in English or with no subtitles at all, roughly 60% of participants reported *never* watching either, and an additional 22% of participants indicated *rarely* watching them.

Table 1

Frequencies of Media Activities

				Frequency (%)					
	M	*SEM*	*SD*	Never	Rarely	Not Much	Sometimes	Often	Always
Japanese Movies	3.70	.03	.97	2.21	11.68	17.17	**52.12**	16.02	0.80
English Movies w/o subtitles	1.60	.03	.91	**61.85**	23.54	8.67	5.13	0.71	0.09
English Movies w/ Japanese subtitles	3.27	.04	1.32	10.62	22.21	17.17	**32.56**	14.87	2.57
English Movies w/ English subtitles	1.66	.03	1.00	**60.79**	22.39	8.94	6.02	1.68	0.18
Japanese TV Shows	4.61	.04	1.21	1.42	5.49	11.06	19.56	**37.79**	24.69
English TV Shows w/o subtitles	1.58	.03	.95	**65.31**	19.47	8.76	5.04	1.24	0.18
English TV Shows w/Japanese subtitles	2.17	.04	1.25	**40.44**	27.96	11.15	16.11	3.63	0.71
English TV Shows w/English subtitles	1.56	.03	.94	**66.01**	19.73	7.52	5.57	0.88	0.27
Japanese Books	3.37	.04	1.31	9.11	18.94	20.35	**32.83**	14.60	4.16
English Books	1.68	.03	1.02	**60.08**	22.39	9.29	6.28	1.77	0.18
Japanese Music	5.22	.03	1.07	0.80	3.36	3.54	10.44	29.47	**52.39**
English Music	4.20	.04	1.35	3.89	9.91	10.00	**34.33**	21.95	19.91

N = 1130

In other words, over 80% of participants *rarely* or *never* watch English movies unless they have Japanese subtitles. By contrast, a combined total of less than 3% of participants claimed *often* or *always* to watch English movies without Japanese subtitles, which equates to just nine students out of a total sample size of 1,130. These findings show that while Japanese university students may frequently watch movies, the vast majority of the foreign films they see are either dubbed into Japanese or include Japanese subtitles. (In the survey, the question about watching movies in Japanese is phrased to mean watching movies that are in the Japanese language, which includes foreign-made films that are dubbed into Japanese.) The degree to which university students watching movies with English audio actually pay attention to it is a question for future study.

In the category of television, although almost all of the students reported a high frequency of Japanese TV viewership, the majority (85.74%) claimed to *rarely* or *never* watch English-language television programs with English subtitles, and 84.78% indicated *rarely* or *never* watching them without. This low reported frequency may stem from relatively limited availability, as English-language television programs with English subtitles are most often only

Table 2

Frequencies of Media Resource Uses

				Frequency (%)					
	M	*SEM*	*SD*	Never	Rarely	Not Much	Sometimes	Often	Always
Paid services									
PRIME (J)	2.79	0.06	1.84	**44.51**	7.08	6.11	18.49	14.78	9.03
PRIME (E)	1.4	0.03	1.08	**85.48**	3.63	2.12	4.42	3.01	1.33
HULU (J)	1.34	0.03	1	**86.45**	4.34	2.21	3.72	1.95	1.33
HULU (E)	1.12	0.02	0.6	**95.39**	1.42	0.97	1.15	0.62	0.44
NETFLIX (J)	1.57	0.04	1.33	**81.32**	3.81	2.65	4.96	3.45	3.81
NETFLIX (E)	1.27	0.03	0.94	**90.7**	2.04	1.33	2.83	1.59	1.5
APPLE TV (J)	2.73	0.03	1.95	**47.25**	9.38	6.73	11.68	9.82	15.13
APPLE TV (E)	1.61	0.05	1.32	**78.4**	4.78	3.98	6.46	3.1	3.27
Free services									
Twitter (J)	4.6	0.05	1.71	11.59	4.87	5.22	12.92	20.8	44.6
Twitter (E)	1.62	0.04	1.16	**71.5**	11.06	7.08	6.81	1.77	1.77
Instagram (J)	4.2	0.06	2.1	24.78	4.42	3.01	7.26	14.42	46.1
Instagram (E)	1.75	0.04	1.34	**70.08**	8.05	6.9	9.03	3.36	2.57
Facebook (J)	1.54	0.03	1.12	**75.13**	10.18	6.46	4.34	2.12	1.77
Facebook (E)	1.19	0.02	0.73	**91.23**	3.81	1.15	2.39	0.97	0.44
YouTube (J)	5.25	0.06	0.99	1.06	1.68	1.95	12.65	31.59	51.06
YouTube (E)	2.34	0.04	1.54	**48.4**	11.77	10.62	19.03	7.26	2.92
Home TV (J)	4.77	0.04	1.4	3.89	6.55	6.19	15.84	27.34	40.17
Home TV (E)	1.48	0.03	0.96	**74.15**	12.48	6.55	5.13	1.33	0.35
Radio (J)	1.89	0.04	1.39	**63.54**	11.86	6.46	10.8	5.04	2.3
Radio (E)	1.09	0.01	0.47	**95.48**	2.39	0.97	0.62	0.27	0.27
Kindle (J)	1.17	0.02	0.65	**91.32**	4.07	1.42	2.39	0.62	0.18
Kindle (E)	1.04	0.01	0.28	**97.87**	1.15	0.53	0.35	0.09	0

N = 1130, J = Japanese language, E = English language found on subscription-based streaming services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. In any case, the university students in this study reported little free-time viewing of English-language television.

Qualified as being done as an extracurricular pleasure activity, engagement in reading was much less frequent than watching movies or television, even in Japanese, at least in terms of books. When extended to include digital media as well, however, as Table 2 shows, over 65% of participants reported *often* or *always* using Twitter in Japanese. In English, by contrast, 11% reported using it only *rarely*, with over 70% *never at all*. It may be the case that the participants in this study are following individuals or groups that are Japanese or based in Japan and perhaps lack interest in foreign media, celebrities, and events, but further investigation would be needed to confirm this speculation.

Of the four types of media activity examined in this study, listening to music had the highest mean frequencies, with listening to Japanese music the highest of all (M = 5.22) and the only activity in the entire survey for which the majority of participants (52.39%) chose the frequency option *always*. In fact, over 92% of the participants claimed to listen to Japanese music at least *sometimes*. The participants reported frequently listening to music regardless of language, with 34% of participants claiming to listen to music in English *sometimes*, almost 22% *often*, and nearly another 20% *always*. Summing these three response categories results in roughly 75%, a greater proportion than for any other English-related activity included in the study. However, whether or not students are paying close attention to the lyrics of the music is unclear. It is also unclear whether the music they are listening to is exclusively in English. As many Japanese artists mix English words and phrases into their songs, participants could have interpreted this type of music as being in English.

The second research question targeted the frequency of media resource use in Japanese and in English. As expected, no media resources were used more often in English than in Japanese. In fact, the mean frequency scores for English-language media resource use across the board were very low, ranging from 1.04 (Kindle) to 1.75 (Instagram). More than 70% of respondents reported *never* using any of the listed resources in English. Nearly 50% reported *never* accessing English-language content on YouTube.

In both Japanese and English, four resources were used by very few participants, namely Hulu, Netflix, Kindle, and radio. Although this study did not investigate the types of devices participants used (e.g., smartphones, tablets, desktop computers), it included television and radio because many different English-language programs are available on both. Overall, the reported frequency of subscription-based streaming service use was almost negligible, with the noteworthy exceptions of Amazon Prime and Apple TV. More popular were the free-of-charge services, perhaps because of limited student budgets. One possible reason for the relative popularity of Amazon Prime and Apple TV as compared to the other paid services might be their availability. Amazon Prime offers a student discount, with the same benefits as regular membership for only a few hundred yen per month. Additionally, Apple TV has long run promotions offering a free year of service with the purchase of an iPhone. Although reported usage for many media resources was low, it should be remembered that the data presented here were collected in 2018. As such, actual patterns of media resource use could very well have changed since then.

Conclusion

The present study surveyed the habits of first- and second-year students with regard to English-language media use outside the classroom. The mode responses and mean frequency scores indicated that the majority of Japanese university students in this study spent very little out-of-class time engaging with media resources in English. This finding suggests that the increased availability of these resources afforded by the normalization of mobile technologies has not resulted in their regular utilization, even when they are free of charge.

Exactly why more students are not taking advantage of these resources more frequently is a question for future study. However, given the potential value of additional language exposure outside the classroom, English teachers may want to begin incorporating more multimedia activities into their lessons so as to normalize student use of English-language media and, thus, facilitate its adoption in students' daily lives.

Japan has recently seen a surge of interest in self-access centers, with many universities investing large sums into such facilities to maintain a competitive edge. However, as the results of the present study suggest, with student use of these self-access centers often being optional, only a minority of students might actually take advantage of them. As such, teachers and administrators might want to re-think their attitudes and policies regarding these facilities so as to increase their active utilization as well as promote the recreational use of English-language media more generally.

To conclude, a few limitations of the present study bear mentioning. First, although this study has provided a general overview of Japanese university student behaviors with regard to frequency of English-language media exposure, further investigation is needed to better understand the motivations, foci, and end results related to these behaviors. Another notable limitation is that the frequency response options included in the data collection instrument used here (e.g., *often*, *sometimes*) were broad and, thus, subject to interpretation. An improvement for future study would be to use more specific frequencies (e.g., *once a day*, *twice a week*). Finally, the data presented here were collected before the start of the coronavirus pandemic and its eventual effects on Japanese society. As many Japanese university classes are now conducted at least partly online, it is very possible that student usage of media and technology have changed. However, whether this has resulted in greater acceptance and integration of technology—or the opposite—is a question for future study.

References

Azabdaftari, B., & Mozaheb, A. M. (2012). Comparing vocabulary learning of EFL learning by using two different strategies: Mobile learning vs. flashcards. *EUROCALL Review*, *20*(2), 48–59. https://doi.org/10.4995/eurocall.2012.11377

Gobel, P., & Kano, M. (2014). Mobile natives: Japanese university students' use of digital technology. In J. B. Son (Ed.), *Computer-assisted language learning: Learners, teachers and tools* (pp. 21–46). Cambridge Scholars.

Hulse, R. (2018). The use of smartphones as an educational tool in the EFL classroom. *The Centre for the Study of English Language Teaching Journal, 6*, 93-138. http://repository.fukujo.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11470/741/1/218827622018093138.pdf

Kondo, M., Ishikawa, Y., Smith, C., Sakamoto, K., Shimomura, H., & Wada, N. (2012). Mobile assisted language learning in university EFL courses in Japan: Developing attitudes and skills for self-regulated learning. *ReCALL*, *24*(2), 169–187. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344012000055

Lu, M. (2008). Effectiveness of vocabulary learning via mobile phone. *Journal of Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *24*, 515–525. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2008.00289.x

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. (2012). *Information and communication in Japan* [White paper]. http://www.soumu.go.jp/johotsusintokei/whitepaper/eng/WP2012/2012-outline.pdf.

Obari, H., Goda, Y., Shimoyama, Y., & Kimura, M. (2008). Mobile technologies and language learning in Japan. In T. Koyama, J. Noguchi, Y. Yoshinari, & A. Iwasaki (Eds), *WorldCALL2008 Proceedings* (pp. 201–204). Fukuoka, Japan.

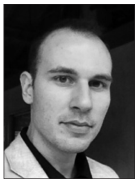
Statistics Bureau. (2019). Statistical handbook of Japan 2019. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan. https://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/index.html

Stockwell, G., & Liu, Y. C. (2015). Engaging in mobile phone-based activities for learning vocabulary: An investigation in Japan and Taiwan. *Calico Journal*, *32*(2). https://doi: 10.1558/cj.v32i2.25000

Sundqvist, P. (2011). A possible path to progress: Out-of-school English language learners in Sweden. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom: The theory and practice of informal language learning and teaching* (pp. 106–118). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi:10.1057/9780230306790

Thornton, P., & Houser, C. (2005). Using mobile phones in English education in Japan. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning,* (21) 217–228. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2005.00129.x

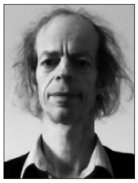
Chris Edelman is a PhD candidate at Temple University. He is currently a lecturer at Kwansei Gakuin University.



Peter Ferguson is a PhD candidate at Temple University. He is currently an associate professor at Kindai University.

Robert McClung holds an EdD from Walden University. He is currently an associate professor at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

Christopher Hellman has taught English in Japan for over 20 years. He is currently a permanent lecturer at Ritsumeikan University.



Andrew Dowden has taught English in Japan for over 15 years. He is currently a lecturer at Ritsumeikan University.

Appendix

The appendix, containing the survey questions referred to within the article, is available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/

FEATURE ARTICLE

Informal Language Learning Through an Online Community: A Netnography-Based Analysis of an L2 Japanese Subreddit

Gilbert Dizon
Himeji Dokkyo University
https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT46.2-2

Studies in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tend to focus on L2 English, giving relatively less attention to other foreign languages (see S.-M. Lee, 2019; Shadiev et al., 2017). Moreover, few studies have examined the use of the popular online forum Reddit to promote language learning. To address these gaps in the research, this study examined an L2 Japanese subreddit to identify common language-learning behaviors among its members. Combining the netnography approach of Kozinets (2010) and the analytical framework of Isbell (2018), the study found that these subreddit members primarily used the online forum in three ways: 1) to discuss L2 graphological knowledge, 2) to share L2 learning experiences, and 3) to suggest L2 learning resources. However, use of the target language was rare, with 83% of the analyzed comments being solely in English. These results suggest implications for informal L2 Japanese learning and highlight the potential of online communities for fostering L2 learning and engagement.

CALL分野の研究においては、第二言語としての英語学習に焦点が当てられることが多く、その他の外国語が注目されることは比較的少ない（Lee 2019、Shadiev et al. 2017参照）。また、ソーシャルニュースサイトRedditがその人気の高さにもかかわらず、その語学学習目的での使用について調査した研究はほとんどない。そこで本研究では、Redditにおける一般的な語学学習行動について理解するため、第二言語としての日本語をテーマにしたsubreddit（Reddit内の交流のためのフォーラム）を調査した。Kozinets (2010) のネトノグラフィの手法とIsbell (2018) の枠組みを組み合わせて分析した結果、オンラインコミュニティのメンバーはこのsubredditを、(1) 目標言語（日本語）の表記法についての議論、(2) 学習体験の共有、(3) 学習教材の提案、という3つの用途で使用していることが明らかになった。しかし学習の目標言語である日本語を使用することはまれで、分析したコンテンツの83%は英語のみで書かれていた。この調査結果は、授業外日本語学習への影響を示唆し、第二言語学習への取り組みを促進させるオンラインコミュニティの可能性を浮き彫りしている。

Although most second language (L2) research has focused on formal language learning, that is, learning that occurs within the context of the classroom (Richards, 2015), informal language learning is equally important (e.g., De Wilde et al., 2020; J. S. Lee, 2019; Sundqvist, 2019). Informal learning can be defined as "the sum of activities that comprise the time individuals are not in the formal classroom in the presence of a teacher" (Gerber et al., 2001, p. 570). The ubiquity of technology in everyday life has made informal language learning a common social practice. For instance, research has shown that gaming (Sundqvist, 2019), mobile devices (Chen, 2013), social media (Alm, 2015), and video streaming (Wang & Chen, 2019) have all had a substantial impact on informal L2 learning. Within the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), another area of interest with regard to informal language learning has been online communities. Similar to their traditional counterparts, online communities have a common interest or goal, foster a high level of engagement, and share cultural norms, such as behavior, rules, and/or rituals (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2011). However, systematic reviews of the literature related to mobile-assisted language learning (Shadiev et al., 2017), context-aware technology-enhanced language learning (S.-M. Lee, 2019), technology-mediated vocabulary learning (Elgort, 2017), and Web 2.0 technologies (Wang & Vásquez, 2012) indicate that CALL until now has largely focused on the learning of English. In other words, the learning of other foreign languages has garnered far less attention in CALL research. Thus, the goal of the present study was to analyze an L2 Japanese online community and identify the ways in which its members used it for informal language learning. Specifically, taking the netnography approach of Kozinets (2010), otherwise known as a virtual or online ethnography, the study sought to better understand the online community by analyzing the kinds of activities its members engaged in and the language they used in Japanese language-focused interactions.

Literature Review

Informal Language Learning Through CALL

Recent research on informal language learning has highlighted the potential of technology to enhance the learning process. Sundqvist (2019), for example, investigated the correlation between out-of-class gaming and L2 English vocabulary acquisition. According to the results of that study, which involved over 1,300 L2 English learners, there was a clear link between gaming and L2 English vocabulary knowledge. In a study examining the Facebook practices of university L2 students, Alm (2015) found that advanced language learners benefited most from social media interactions in the target language, thus demonstrating the impact of proficiency in informal language learning. J. S. Lee (2019) conducted a study looking at the informal digital learning experiences of L2 English learners and found that the quantity and diversity of their practices played significant roles in the language learning process. Specifically, Lee found that those who engaged in informal digital learning more frequently had higher levels of L2 enjoyment and confidence. Additional results of this study showed that diversity in digital language learning practices was significantly predictive of speaking ability, productive vocabulary knowledge, learner anxiety, and TOEIC scores. These findings suggest that technology-mediated informal language learning has an influence not only on affective factors but also on L2 ability. Through the use of surveys, Chen (2013) concluded that L2 English students had positive perceptions concerning the use of tablets for informal L2 learning. In particular, the participants had favorable attitudes toward the usability, effectiveness, and satisfaction of using tablets for L2 learning in informal settings, thereby illustrating the positive views learners generally have toward the use of technology for informal language learning. Wang and Chen (2019) interviewed L2 English students who frequently watched English-language learning YouTube videos and had some interesting findings. On the one hand, the participants enjoyed using YouTube to learn English and thought it to be a more flexible and interactive language-learning method as compared to school-based approaches. On the other hand, they did not feel YouTube was a particularly effective way to study L2 English as compared to classroom-based instruction, as formal language learning typically involves carefully selected teaching materials and structured language-learning activities. These results highlight the affordances and limitations of technology use for the purpose of informal language learning. Lastly, in another study analyzing an online L2 learning community, Isbell (2018) found that members of a subreddit focused on L2 Korean demonstrated highly interactive patterns of learning through learner-initiated questions and detailed follow-up responses. The study analysis also revealed a clear division of labor between expert and novice learners; that is, native speakers and advanced learners responded to the most difficult queries while simple questions were addressed by less proficient learners. However, members of the online community made little use of the target language, instead primarily using English to interact with the other L2 Korean learners. Specifically, Isbell found that over 90% of the written text in the study analysis was in English. Similar to Wang and Chen (2019), this finding shows that there are some trade-offs when using technology for informal language learning, namely limited target language use and development.

Research questions

The studies detailed above highlight some of the unique affordances of using CALL for informal language learning. Nonetheless, there are still other areas that need to be addressed. First and foremost, studies in the CALL literature (e.g., Elgort, 2017; S.-M. Lee, 2019; Shadiev et al., 2017; Wang & Vásquez, 2012) predominantly involve L2 English. Consequently, there is a need to determine whether technology can support informal language learning in other foreign languages. Furthermore, despite Reddit's being one of the world's most visited websites (Alexa, 2020), research on Reddit in connection with L2 learning is scarce. In fact, to date, only Isbell (2018) seems to have examined Reddit in the context of foreign language learning. Lastly, while Thorne et al. (2009) claim that online communities provide spaces for interaction in the target language, Isbell (2018) suggests that interactions in L2-focused online communities are conducted primarily in the members' native language and/or the predominant shared language; thus, more research is needed to better understand language use in L2 online communities. Using a netnography-based research design similar to that of Isbell (2018), the present study sought to understand the types of behaviors that are common among members of a Reddit-based online community focused on L2 learning. Specifically, the study addressed the following two research questions:

1. What activities do r/LearnJapanese subreddit members use to promote L2 learning through the online community?
2. What languages do r/LearnJapanese subreddit members use in Japanese language-focused interactions?

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized an ethnographic research design to analyze how r/LearnJapanese subreddit members leveraged the online community for informal L2 learning. To be specific, the netnography framework developed by Kozinets (2010) was used. According to Kozinets (2010), a netnography is "a specialized form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer-mediated contingencies of today's social worlds" (p. 1). While similar to other ethnographic research in focusing on detailed observations of a community to obtain a greater understanding of its culture, a netnography is conducted exclusively online (Kozinets, 2010). Another important distinction between in-person ethnographic research and netnography-based research is that participation in an online community can be exhibited in ways that are unique to virtual environments (Kulavuz-Onal, 2015). For instance, participation in an online community can include original posts and replies. However, passive engagement, such as upvoting, downvoting, or reading, can also be considered a form of participation. Although this kind of participation, commonly referred to as "lurking," sometimes has a negative connotation (van Mierlo, 2014), as Ruthotto et al., (2020) assert, it can also be seen as a legitimate form of participation: "Lurking reflects a different learning style, where students choose to participate in a less formal, quieter way, yet may still engage deeply with learning materials and discussions" (p. 3). In this vein, the researcher joined the r/LearnJapanese subreddit and passively participated by regularly frequenting the online community to gain an understanding of its shared culture and behavioral patterns.

As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), ethnographic research focuses on the "values, behaviors, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group" (p. 90). In the context of the current study, only two of these were addressed: behavior and language. To this end, the top 100 posts from the online community within a one-year period were analyzed to gain knowledge about its members' common types of behavior. In addition, comments from 10 randomly selected Japanese language-focused posts, namely posts that related to specific aspects of the Japanese language, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or graphology, were examined to better understand the communal role of language. Only such explicitly language knowledge-related posts were designated for analysis, as these were more likely to include the use of L2 Japanese than ones focusing on study tips, language study experience, or other aspects of L2 learning. The comments from these posts were analyzed with respect to the specific languages used (English, Japanese, or both) as well as the number of words written in each language.

r/LearnJapanese Subreddit

Reddit is a website that hosts online forums, the majority of which consist of interest-based online communities called subreddits. The current study examined the r/LearnJapanese subreddit. As of September 2020, it had over 296,000 members, making it one of the largest online communities of L2 learners on all of Reddit. (For comparison, the primary L2 Spanish, L2 Chinese, and L2 Korean subreddits then had 126,000; 89,000; and 83,000 members, respectively.)

As mentioned previously, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2011) identify online communities as having three common traits: 1) a shared interest, 2) high levels of engagement, and 3) common cultural elements. The r/LearnJapanese subreddit clearly exhibits all three of these characteristics. First, its members share a common interest, namely in the Japanese language and culture. Next, their high levels of engagement are evidenced by the number of daily posts (typically 20-30 per day) and the fact that popular posts often receive more than 200 comments and 1000 upvotes. Additionally, although actively posting and commenting members make up only a small proportion of the overall community, the number of posts and comments during a given time period does not take into account lurking, another form of engagement (Ruthotto et al., 2020). Lastly, the community has shared cultural elements. For instance, the subreddit has a list of rules that are displayed prominently on the site (e.g., no trolling or hostile behavior, no posting of copyrighted content). The community members also share common behaviors, which will be made evident in the analysis and discussion below.

Data Collection and Analysis

Due to the large number of posts the r/LearnJapanese subreddit receives, only the top 100 posts within a one-year time period (April 13, 2019 – April 12, 2020) were analyzed. Top posts were defined as those receiving the greatest number of upvotes minus downvotes during this time period, indicating that they were of the most value to other members of the community and suggesting that they might provide the most representative snapshot of model community behavior. Key details about each post, namely the date, title, and name of the poster, were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. The posts were also coded and analyzed according to a set of criteria developed by Isbell (2018) to better discern the most common types of member activities. Each post was coded under one of the following categories: 1) language knowledge, 2) language practice, 3) learning discussion, or 4) translation request. As noted earlier, language knowledge referred to posts directly relating to various aspects of the Japanese language. Posts coded under language practice were those either sharing or requesting L2 learning resources, such as mobile apps related to language learning or L2 Japanese YouTube channels. Learning discussion posts were those describing study tips, L2 learning experiences, or stories related to L2 motivation. While part of the analytical framework, translation requests (either from the learner's L1 into Japanese or vice versa) did not appear in any of the posts analyzed, most likely due to the fact that specific types of translation requests were prohibited by the community.

After the initial coding, secondary coding was conducted to more accurately reflect the content of each post (see Appendix for full analytical framework). As mentioned previously, comments from 10 posts were chosen for additional analysis to gain deeper insight into how language is used in the online community. These posts were selected at random using a random number generator at random.org. Comments from these posts were analyzed in terms of the language(s) used and the number of words written in each language.

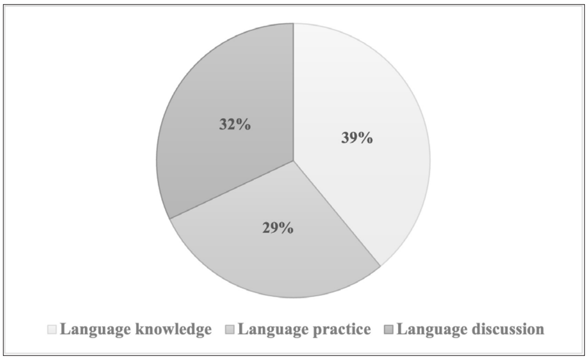
Results and Discussion

RQ1: What activities do r/LearnJapanese subreddit members use to promote L2 learning through the online community?

Out of the top 100 posts that were made in the r/LearnJapanese subreddit between April 13, 2019, and April 12, 2020, only 17 of them were created by the same member or user. The remaining 83 were all made by different users, which indicates that contributions to the online community are made by a variety of members and not just a select few. As shown in Figure 1, the posts were fairly evenly distributed among the three primary codes, with language knowledge being the most common (39%), followed by language discussion (32%), and language practice (29%). These findings resonate with Isbell's (2018) research, wherein language knowledge was the most common type of post in an L2 Korean subreddit.

Figure 1

Breakdown of the Top 100 Posts on the r/Learn Japanese Subreddit



Among the 39 posts coded under language knowledge, those sub-categorized under graphology (21) and vocabulary (8) made up nearly three-quarters of the total. Example posts coded under this category included "The most frequent 777 kanji give you 90% coverage" (graphology), "Visualizing Zipf's Law in Japanese Kanji" (graphology), and "25 Japanese Words You Can Use in Every Day [sic] Conversation (Abroad in Japan)" (vocabulary). The graphology finding is not surprising, given that L2 learners of Japanese often struggle with learning its three separate writing systems. In fact, Everson (2011) posits that a character-based writing system such as Japanese "presents special challenges for learners whose L1 employs the Roman alphabet" (p. 251), which is significant since the primary language used on the subreddit is English. Similarly, vocabulary plays a particularly important role in learning L2 Japanese. According to Koda (1989) and Komori, Mikuni, and Kondoh (2004), as compared to the typical 30% demonstrated in Bernhardt's (2005) compensatory model, vocabulary knowledge accounts for a much larger percentage of the variance in L2 reading proficiency. The difficulties involving these two aspects of L2 Japanese learning (graphology and vocabulary) may have contributed to the high number of upvotes among members of the subreddit for posts related to these topics.

Most language discussion posts were related to learning experience, which accounted for 23 out of the 32 coded under this theme. Examples post titles in this sub-category included "Since I don't have anyone to share this with: I finally reached my years-long goal of being able to play video games in Japanese!" and "私は日本語能力試験4級に合格しました！I passed the JLPT N4!!" The second most common language discussion posts related to study tips, such as "WARNING: Being able to enjoy anime, manga and games in Japanese is a much bigger task than you probably imagine (Advice for beginners)," of which there were eight. These posts highlight members' use of the online community to share their language achievements with others, suggesting that the subreddit was not merely a space for L2 learning but also an outlet for expressing relevant feelings and experiences. The abundance of study tip posts testifies to the supportive nature of the online community in that members took the time to share L2 learning advice so that others could learn from their experiences.

Lastly, the language practice posts most commonly included offers, such as the recommendation of language learning apps or helpful YouTube channels, which made up the majority (26 out of 29) of the entries coded under this category. Example offer posts included "For the people stuck at low intermediate. 日本語の森[*nihongo no mori*]a japanese learning channel fully in japanese" and "Genki Vocab apps on iOS and Android are free for a limited time." The popularity of these posts further illustrates the solidarity and reciprocity among members of the subreddit. In other words, the high level of engagement found in these posts suggests that members of the online community were eager to support each other in their L2 learning, and in turn, those who shared these resources were given positive feedback in the form of upvotes. The remaining three posts coded under language practice related to specific L2 Japanese requests, such as a post entitled "Looking for interesting Japanese concepts/phrases." One explanation for the relative rarity of these types of posts is that members of the community already share an abundance of resources; thus, requests related to topics that have been previously covered are seldom needed.

RQ2: What languages do r/LearnJapanese subreddit members use in Japanese language-focused interactions?

As shown in Table 1, the majority of comments were written exclusively in English, accounting for 83% of the total number analyzed. Next most common were those utilizing both English and Japanese (13.9%). Japanese-only comments made up but a small percentage (3.1%). Word counts in each language followed the same trend; that is, the proportion of English eclipsed that of Japanese, 95.2% to 4.8%. These results are in line with the findings of Isbell (2018), who also found that L2 learners predominately used English as a mediating tool to study the target language in online communities. A possible explanation for the limited use of the target language is that the majority of active members within L2-focused online communities are those of beginner-level proficiency. This notion is supported by a comment from an r/LearnJapanese subreddit member in one of the analyzed discussion threads:

> I think certain people don't understand that a subreddit is a place where people constantly come and go. It's not like a classroom where you stay with the same people and have more or less the same progress. The majority of posts here will always be from absolute beginners, and that's how it should be.

Table 1

Language-Focused Analysis of Member Comments

	English-only comments	Japanese-only comments	English/Japanese comments	English words	Japanese words
Post 1	47	17	3	1,443	160
Post 2	207	1	17	12,470	164
Post 3	153	6	25	6,459	350
Post 4	76	0	16	2,132	67
Post 5	85	0	9	3,321	34
Post 6	47	5	27	1,367	378
Post 7	101	1	16	2,268	82
Post 8	94	2	9	2,731	119
Post 9	37	2	26	1,414	334
Post 10	117	2	13	2,647	124
Total	964	36	161	36,252	1,812

Conclusion

As technology becomes more and more interwoven into the fabric of everyday life, so does the need to examine technologies that can be used for informal language learning purposes. This is particularly true for foreign languages other than English, as is evidenced by their underrepresentation in the CALL literature. As such, using the netnography-based framework developed by Isbell (2018), the present study analyzed an L2 Japanese subreddit to evaluate common behaviors among its members. The findings showed that posts related to Japanese language knowledge received the most attention within the online community, thus suggesting that members of the subreddit use the community to gain useful knowledge about the target language, namely graphology and vocabulary, two known areas of difficulty for L2 Japanese learners (Everson, 2011; Koda, 1989; Komori, Mikuni, & Kondoh, 2004). Posts related to learning experience and the sharing of L2 resources were also popular, accounting for 23% and 26%, respectively, of those analyzed, implying that the subreddit meets a social and emotional need (i.e., to share L2 experiences and achievements) as well as an intellectual one (i.e., for L2 learning). Furthermore, other findings revealed that target language use was rare, with active community members using mainly English to discuss different aspects of Japanese. These results suggest that the majority of them may be novice language learners rather than advanced.

Based on the results of the study, a number of inferences with pedagogical implications can be made. The first is that L2-focused online communities such r/LearnJapanese abound with rich practices and behaviors that promote learning of the target language and culture. Another is that online communities can serve dual purposes as a space not only for obtaining L2 knowledge but also for sharing learning experiences with other learners. Additionally, even in formal instructional settings, the r/LearnJapanese subreddit could be recommended to L2 Japanese students who have few opportunities to interact with other Japanese users, such as those in contexts outside of Japan, whose interactions in Japanese may be limited to within the classroom. Moreover, the subreddit could also be beneficial for students who have completed formal language instruction and are no longer taking classes, as it would allow them to maintain their L2 ability or continue their learning. These suggestions can also be applied to other L2s, as Reddit is home to many online communities focused on the learning of foreign languages.

While the results of this study highlight how online communities can promote L2 learning among their members, several limitations also need to be mentioned. First, no actual L2 learning gains were measured; the data presented here simply show how the L2 learning process can be enhanced through membership in an online community. Thus, it would be wise to conduct a study examining the relationship between L2 learning outcomes and participation in online communities, much like other studies on technology-mediated informal language learning (e.g., J. S. Lee, 2019; Sundqvist, 2019). Additionally, this research was conducted primarily from an etic perspective; that is, the data analysis was based on observations alone, with no direct interaction between the researcher and the community members. As such, it would be informative to hear from members of the subreddit themselves through forum discussions, surveys, or even interviews, much like in Isbell's (2018) study, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the online community and its members.

References

Alexa. (2020, September 17). *The top 500 sites on the web*. Alexa. https://www.alexa.com/topsites

Alm, A. (2015). Facebook for informal language learning. *EUROCALL Review*, *23*(2), 3–18. https://doi.org/10.4995/eurocall.2015.4665

Bernhardt, E. B. (2005). Progress and procrastination in second language reading. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *25*, 133–150. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190505000073

Chen, X.-B. (2013). Tablets for informal language learning: student usage and attitudes. *Language Learning & Technology*, *17*(1), 20-36. http://dx.doi.org/10125/24503

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

De Wilde, V., Brysbaert, M., Eyckmans, J. (2020). Learning English through out-of-school exposure. Which levels of language proficiency are attained and which types of input are important? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *23*, 171–185. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728918001062

Elgort, I. (2017). Technology-mediated second language vocabulary development: A review of trends in research methodology. *CALICO Journal*, *35*(1), 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.34554

Everson, M. E. (2011). Best practices in teaching logographic and non-roman writing systems to L2 learners. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *31*, 249–274. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000171

Gerber, B. L., Marek, E. A., & Cavallo, A. M. L. (2001). Development of an informal learning opportunities assay. *International Journal of Science Education*, *23*(6), 569–583. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500690116959

Isbell, D. R. (2018). Online informal language learning: Insights from a Korean learning community. *Language Learning & Technology*, *22*(3), 82–102. https://doi.org/10125/44658

Koda, K. (1989). The effects of transferred vocabulary knowledge on the development of L2 reading proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, *22,* 529–542. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1989.tb02780.x

Komori, K., Mikuni, J., & Kondoh, A. (2004). What percentage of known words in a text facilitates reading comprehension? A case study for exploration of the threshold of known words coverage. *Journal of Japanese Language Teaching*, *120*, 83-91.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. SAGE.

Kulavuz-Onal, D. (2015). Using netnography to explore the culture of online language teaching communities. *CALICO Journal*, *32*(3). 426-448. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v32i3.26636

Lee, J. S. (2019). Quantity and diversity of informal digital learning of English. *Language Learning & Technology*, *23*(1), 114–126. https://doi.org/10125/44675

Lee, S.-M. (2019): A systematic review of context-aware technology use in foreign language learning, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1688836

Richards, J. C. (2015). The changing face of language learning: Learning beyond the classroom. *RELC Journal*, *46*(1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688214561621

Ruthotto, I., Kreth, Q., Stevens, J., Clare, T, & Melkers, J. (2020). Lurking and participation in the virtual classroom: The effects of gender, race, and age among graduate students in computer science. *Computers & Education*, *151*, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103854

Shadiev, R., Hwang, W. Y., & Huang, Y. M. (2017). Review of research on mobile language learning in authentic environments. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *30*(3-4), 284-303. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2017.1308383

Sundqvist, P. (2019). Commercial-off-the-shelf games in the digital wild and L2 learner vocabulary. *Language Learning & Technology*, *23*(1), 87–113. https://doi.org/10125/44674

Sunstein, B. S., & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2011). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research* (4th ed.). Macmillan.

Thorne, S. L., Black, R. W., & Sykes, J. M. (2009). Second language use, socialization, and learning in Internet interest communities and online gaming. *The Modern Language Journal*, *93*, 802–821. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00974.x

van Mierlo, T. (2014). The 1% rule in four digital health social networks: An observational study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *16*(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.2966.

Wang, H.-C., & Chen, C. W.-Y. (2019). Learning English from YouTubers: English L2 learners' self-regulated language learning on YouTube. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *14*(4), 333-346. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1607356

Wang, S., & Vásquez, C. (2012). Web 2.0 and second language learning: What does the research tell us? *CALICO Journal*, *29*(3), 412–430. https://doi.org/10.11139/cj.29.3.412-430

Gilbert Dizon is an associate professor at Himeji Dokkyo University, Japan and a doctoral student in the Department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education at Indiana University. His research interests lie in computer-assisted language learning, specifically, technology-mediated informal language learning and the use of artificial intelligence in language education.

Appendix

Analytical framework used for coding (Isbell, 2018)

1) Language Knowledge

A. Requests
B. Shares
iii. Grammar
iv. Vocabulary
v. Pragmatics
vi. Pronunciation
vii. Graphology
viii. Discourse
ix. Culture
x. General
xi. Misc.

2) Language Practice

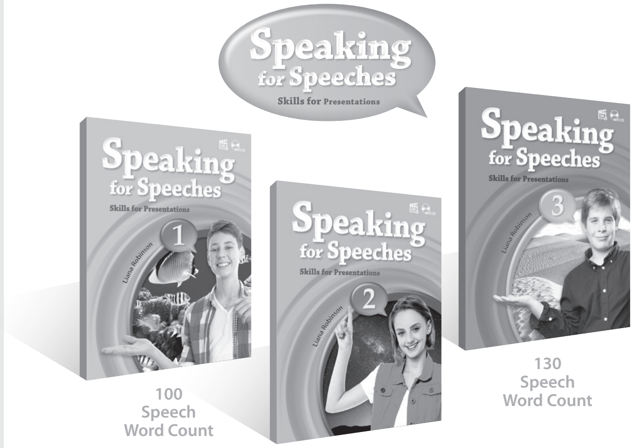
A. Offer
B. Request
i. Reading
ii. Listening
iii. Speaking
iv. Writing
v. Grammar
vi. Reading & Writing
vii. General

3) Learning Discussion

A. Study Tips
B. Experiences
C. Motivation

4) Translation Request

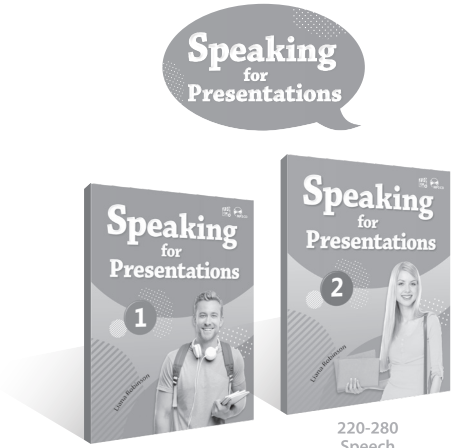
Learn the fundamentals of ***public speaking*** *to enhance social life, and career skills!*



100 Speech Word Count

115 Speech Word Count

130 Speech Word Count



180-220 Speech Word Count

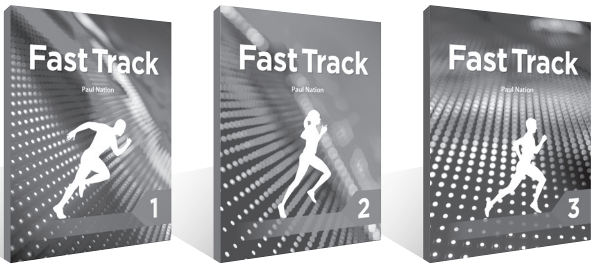
220-280 Speech Word Count

English language learners at the high-beginning to intermediate level

Adolescent and adult English language learners at the high-beginning to intermediate level

- Wide variety of speech topics ranging from informative speeches to entertaining personal stories
- Well-ordered exercises and activities allowing speakers to organize their ideas and prepare their presentations
- Guided speech patterns with useful sentence structures
- Continual recycling of high-frequency vocabulary
- QR code links to real-life videos of sample speeches and presentations illustrating effective presentation techniques

Fast production. Fast comprehension.
Fast fluency. Fast learning.
Fast Track!



Fast Track is a three-level series designed for young-adult and adult learners of English who have had some exposure to English but need review practice and fluency development to become better communicators. Each thematically-organized unit in the series integrates functional language models with skill-based activities. Lessons guide students from speaking together using structured dialogs to engaging in more flexible conversations using theme-based sets of questions. Informative readings on topics provide springboards for additional engaging in-class discussions.

Seed Learning

Tryalogue Education

Tryalogue Education Co.,Ltd.
E-mail : contact@tryalogue.co.jp
URL : www.tryalogue.co.jp


Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

TLT *Interviews brings you direct insights from leaders in the field of language learning, teaching, and education—and you are invited to be an interviewer! If you have a pertinent issue you would like to explore and have access to an expert or specialist, please make a submission of 2,000 words or less.*

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.interviews@jalt.org

Welcome to the March/April edition of TLT Interviews! For this issue, we are happy to bring you two fantastic interviews. The first interview is with Dr. Charlene Polio, a professor at Michigan State University in the Department of Linguistics, Languages, and Cultures. She directed the MA program in TESOL at MSU for many years and is also the co-editor of TESOL Quarterly. *She is a co-author of* Authentic Materials Myths *(2017) and* Teaching Second Language Writing *(2016). She is interested in essay writing peer review, corrective error feedback, and essays as a diagnostic tool. She was interviewed by Paul Tanner, a lecturer at Shiga University in Hikone. So, without further ado, to our first interview!*

Charlene Polio on Writing and *TESOL Quarterly*

Paul Tanner

Shiga University

Paul Tanner: *Thanks for taking the time to meet with TLT. I really found Authentic Materials Myths (2017) useful and enlightening, so we'll start with that topic. Could you explain your definition of authentic materials and tell us why ESL teachers should consider using them?*

Charlene Polio: "Authentic materials are those created for some real-world purpose other than language learning, and often, but not always, provided by native speakers for native speakers" (Zyzik & Polio, 2017, p. 1). Of course, "authentic native speaker" is a loaded term, but the idea is that authentic materials have a real-world purpose and are not intended as language learning materials. We are not trying to denigrate materials created for language learning purposes (non-authentic), rather, we want to show that authentic materials are essential and can be used more broadly than teachers might realize.

The key point about authentic materials is that if students are limited to non-authentic materials, they are never going to make the leap to real life. Real language is different than what is found in textbooks; the watered-down, simplified language limits students' exposure. Frequency in input is really important. With non-authentic materials, you'll never learn the combinations. As Long (2015) noted, a simplified text may improve comprehensibility at the expense of the real goal of language learning (as cited in Zyzik & Polio, 2017, p. 100). Modification of the original text is a loss of authenticity.

Teachers should consider using authentic materials because it motivates students, helps them develop content, and provides richer input. Regular ESL texts are often "contrived" and prioritize one dimension. They provide a distorted view of grammar, often overemphasizing certain structures at the expense of others. Simplified texts reduce difficulty by controlling lexical items and grammar structures. Elaborating is adding to a text, which increases redundancy and regularity, making the material more complex and improving comprehensibility without removing difficult or unknown items. Authentic texts encourage a focus on meaning (understanding a message created for a real-world purpose); however, teachers can intervene to provide attention to language form.

One way to use authentic materials is "narrow reading," which involves reading a series of texts on the same topic so that learners will naturally encounter the same vocabulary items more than once. Since high-frequency content words occur more often in related topics, reading about the same topic lowers the vocabulary load placed on the learner. Thus, narrow reading can facilitate the transition to authentic texts.

Do you have any suggestions for teaching the vocabulary for authentic materials?

The teacher should try to promote retention and not just provide definitions or make word lists because they don't have context. Students should have to search for meanings, and teachers should check to make sure students are using vocabulary correctly. Teachers should consider using dictation for proper nouns and difficult vocabulary. Grammar and vocabulary should be taught together.

How did you decide to focus on writing as a research area?

When I was in graduate school, an influential article by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) came out. The long-term study contrasted four methods of providing feedback on written error. These methods differed in the degree of salience provided to the writer in the revision process. They found that students who received detailed feedback on all of their errors did not produce more grammatically accurate writing than students who received more minimal feedback. More correction did not result in more accuracy. Rather, more writing resulted in a gradual increase in the quality of writing. Later, Truscott (1996) was also highly critical of error correction. He argued that grammar correction in L2 writing classes should be abandoned since research showed that it was ineffective and had harmful effects. His research was problematic in that it relied on only a few studies, and his reviewed studies used different research designs and methodologies to support his overall generalization.

These studies were pivotal in changing the field and advancing a research agenda. Give them credit for that. Like Krashen, even if you don't agree with him, his research was pivotal in changing the field and moving it in a positive direction. Now, the second language acquisition perspective looks at how writing helps us learn language, which differs from a composition studies perspective. Another influential person in my education was Barbara Kroll (2003), who was a guest lecturer in my doctoral program at UCLA.

How about now?

These days I recommend Christine Tardy (2019) concerning writing research and a genre perspective. Her work is fantastic, and she is an outstanding writer. The basic principle that underlies genre-based language teaching is that awareness of the forms, purposes, and social contexts of texts will aid in writing development. Genres are typified responses to repeated situational exigencies, meaning specific types of writing are done for a specific purpose. My graduate students love her book. I also recommend Caplan and Johns' (2019) *Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay.* A chapter in this book finds fault with the standard five-paragraph essay and offers alternatives to this form. Specifically, the five-paragraph essay genre (and some would find fault with calling it a genre at all) does not extend to other contexts. Why teach something students need to unlearn or something that could be harmful if they try to use it in an inappropriate context (*e.g., In this job application letter, I am going to give three reasons why I am qualified.)*? By teaching a variety of genres, students learn to analyze them and hopefully apply those skills to future writing tasks. They will see that no real-life genre follows the five-paragraph essay format. This can be done even with beginners by analyzing recipes, thank-you notes, and so on. Yasuda (2011) provided a clear example of how genre-based instruction was introduced in a Japanese EFL class.

Can you provide some general advice for TESOL teachers?

Make sure that everyone is engaged and on task. One of my pet peeves is oral presentations where one person is speaking in front of a class. What are the other students doing? Teachers should incorporate some authentic materials and focus on chunks of language, not just vocabulary. Pre-reading and pre-listening are very important. Students need the vocabulary and grammar, presented in context, and not just lists: review, teach, and preview the difficult reading passages. Try to get students to use new language. This is not always easy but can be accomplished through text-reconstruction activities. Incidental learning can happen, but it can be slow. Having teachers highlight language will facilitate learning.

As a writing specialist, can you explain a little about how you use corrective feedback?

I think students have to pay attention to feedback and do something with it. If students are not going to revise, teachers shouldn't correct all the errors. You can't give corrective feedback on every single assignment. Don't feel bad about that. Have them write, certainly. Use guided editing checklists, and activities that involve students noticing. Have them take responsibility for editing. Teachers don't have time to give feedback or check grammar on every single assignment. Students can do a few drafts and choose one draft to get feedback on. With specific guidelines, peer review can help students revise their writing.

Tell us about the review process at TESOL Quarterly, *and give us some suggestions about what to do or what not to do to get published.*

1. For many journals, situate your study within a theoretical framework.
2. Select the right journal for your focus.
3. Try not to be too local. In an international journal, for example, try not to focus on "writing problems of Japanese students." How can the research be used more broadly? How does the research move the field forward?
4. Be skeptical of measures of accuracy. Lexical / language complexity has come a long way and is interesting to researchers (motivated by Trus-

cott). How are they measuring accuracy?

5. Don't be frustrated. Remember that famous people get their articles rejected all the time. Try to use the feedback you get.
6. The literature review should synthesize and evaluate studies, rather than just mentioning sources and making a list.
7. Consider Swales' (1990) CARS model (Creating a Research Space) and subsequent instantiations, which explain writing an introduction to scholarly research studies.

Causes for rejection include the following points:

1. The scope is too local.
2. The writer doesn't follow the proper format genre-wise.
3. The literature review is outdated.
4. The study is not described well enough for reviewers to evaluate it.
5. Overly general / poor first sentence: "... is a neglected area of research" or
6. "... is a neglected skill."

Thank you, Dr. Polio, for taking the time to provide TLT *readers with some valuable insights. We hope to see you back in Japan again soon.*

References

Caplan, N. A., & Johns, A. M. (Eds.). (2019). *Changing practices for the L2 writing classroom: Moving beyond the five-paragraph essay.* University of Michigan Press.

Kroll, B. (Ed.). (2003). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing.* Cambridge University Press.

Long, M. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Polio, C. (2016). *Teaching second language writing*. Routledge.

Robb, T., Ross, S., & Shortreed, I. (1986). Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality. *TESOL Quarterly 20*(1). 83-95. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586390

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings.* Cambridge University Press.

Tardy, C. M. (2019) *Genre based writing: What every ESL teacher needs to know.* University of Michigan Press.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning, 46*(2). 327-369. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1996.tb01238.x

Yasuda, S. (2011). Genre-based tasks in foreign language writing: Developing writers' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge, and writing competence. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 20*(2). 111-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2011.03.001

Zyzik, E., & Polio, C. (2017). *Authentic materials myths*. University of Michigan Press.

For our second interview, we feature a stimulating discussion with Nicholas Rhea. Nicholas is currently an English language teacher in the Washoe county school district in Reno, Nevada, USA. He has been teaching English for five years, and has taught in Chile, China, Afghanistan, and the United States. He holds an MA in TESL from Northern Arizona University, and his research interests include corpus linguistics and working with refugee populations. Matthew Nall has taught English in Japan for over 10 years. He is an Assistant Professor at Miyagi University and is currently a PhD candidate at Ryukoku University. His research focus is language teacher identity.

An Interview with Nicholas Rhea

Matthew Nall

Miyagi University

Matthew Nall: *Hi Nicholas, thanks for taking the time to meet me today. It's always a pleasure to talk to you and to hear about your teaching experiences abroad. I know you've been very busy, so let's get into the interview. My first question for you is, can you tell me a little bit about your teaching background, and about how you ended up teaching in Afghanistan?*

Nicholas Rhea: Thanks for having me. It's a pleasure. To be clear, today I am not representing any institution in Afghanistan or the United States. Today's discussion is only based on my opinions and experiences teaching in Afghanistan.

Regarding my educational background, I have a bachelor's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in English. After graduation, I started teaching high school in the U.S., and I did that for one year. I was interested in living abroad, so I quit teaching high school, and then spent some time in Chile, working as a private English tutor and traveling before getting my MA in TESL from Northern Arizona University. I completed that in 2017. After that, I spent a year teaching English in China, and then my teaching journey took me to Afghanistan in July of 2018. My partner had seen a job posting for English teachers in Afghanistan. We were interested, so we applied at the same time and were both offered teaching positions. I honestly did not know much about English language teaching in Afghanistan until after I was offered the position and took time to do more research.

You have some very unique and interesting international experiences. So, what initially brought you into the field of second language teaching? And why didn't you just continue teaching in China?

As I mentioned, I started my teaching career as a high school English teacher in the United States. That job was fine, but in my heart, what I really wanted to do was travel. At that time, I discovered that I could teach English as a second language and travel, which was my primary motivation for getting an MA in TESL.

Teaching in China was a really great experience. The students were wonderful, but when we got the job offer to teach in Afghanistan, we felt that such an opportunity to do something exciting and unique might not come up again. We jumped at the chance. We discussed it, and decided that it was a chance to work with an interesting demographic with a unique need. I knew that as an English teacher in Afghanistan, I would be working with students and faculty that were going to be integral to the rebuilding of the nation. I felt that was one way that I could make my mark on history. We wanted to help, and that was what really drew my partner and I into that experience.

Can you tell me a little bit about your teaching scenarios there? What was it like?

My partner and I taught in a university foundations program. Many of the students needed to take some bridge classes before entering the university full-time. Those were the courses I taught. The program was new when we arrived, and so much of our work consisted of curriculum and program development. I taught 12 credits per semester. Those classes were a mix of English composition and grammar courses.

What, if anything, was challenging about teaching those courses? Can you tell me more about them?

One challenge was helping students to see the value in the courses. Some students felt that they should be directly enrolled in the university and did not see the benefit of spending time and money in a foundations program. I started each course by showing them the expectations of the university and then comparing their writing samples to those of freshman enrolled at the university level. The goal was not to show students that they lacked English language skills, but to show them the very high expectations of university study. I followed this lesson with one, where we discussed the importance of quality of work, and I emphasized that if they were rushed into full-time university enrollment, the quality of their work would not meet the high standards required of university course work. With time, most of the students came to see the foundations program as a benefit that would help them. Once there was this buy-in, the students were more motivated and worked harder.

In each of these courses I also focused on study skills and built student capacity to be successful in their courses as well as to adjust to university life. Additionally, I served as an academic advisor and was on several faculty committees. I often found myself in roles that I was unfamiliar with. So, there was constantly a huge learning curve going on. For example, I was a member of the research committee and the faculty committee, both of which were in the process of reorganizing. Each day was definitely a learning experience.

So, what did it feel like teaching in Afghanistan, a country that, sadly, has been war-torn for decades? Were you ever scared?

Honestly, it felt motivating to teach in Afghanistan. I was lucky enough to teach at the university and in their community outreach program, and each day I felt that I was making a difference, and that is unique. My family was definitely nervous about us moving to Afghanistan and initially so was I, but once we arrived and learned more about security and safety protocols, I was much more at ease. The hardest part of working there was that we did not really have the ability to go out into the broader community. We couldn't go to the markets, and could only go to a few restaurants. It was quite sad to be there and know that we couldn't interact more with the community. However, our students, the faculty, and the university did a great job of bringing events to campus. Through those we could learn more about the culture.

Can you tell me more about the students?

The students were great! They worked hard and brought so much expertise and experience with them. At the same time, they were willing to be open to different perspectives. They were on board with trying different learning styles, learning how to trust themselves and their peers. What has stuck with me the most was their sense of humor and kindness. They were always willing to help each other, and they were each other's biggest supporters, both in the classroom and outside. Students were always quick to help a student that had missed class. They also helped each other navigate financial barriers and family opposition to them studying.

This was especially true for the female students. The students had high standards for themselves, their instructors, and the university and I can truly say that we were a community.

Language teacher identity is an important research area in our field. How do you think your identity developed through your teaching experiences in Afghanistan? Do you perceive any differences in yourself as a teacher through the experience? That is, as a human being, or as a global citizen?

My time in Afghanistan has had a profound effect on my identity as a language teacher. The two biggest takeaways for me are, first of all, learning to really listen to the advice of my local colleagues, and secondly, understanding that students have a lot going on in their lives outside of their studies. To the first point, I realized that if I was going to be an effective teacher, I needed to learn about the local culture and social norms. I found that the best way to learn was by having conversations with my colleagues, asking them questions, listening to their advice, and putting into practice what I learned. Related to that, and this is something I have been coming to believe more and more, is that while I can learn about a culture and its practices, I can never fully be a part of that culture. This is counterintuitive to what many believe when they start teaching abroad, but I've come to find that it is OK. My colleagues taught me that I can be a culturally responsive educator without trying to force myself into their culture. I am constantly working on finding the balance of being culturally responsive and not projecting my cultural norms and understanding onto my students. This is something I will have to do for my entire career.

As for the second part, I quickly learned that my students had a lot going on outside of school. I don't really want to go into specifics here, out of concern for the students, but the lesson I took away was the importance of having patience. Students have so much going on in their lives that we don't know about, and we always need to keep that in mind. This can require flexibility and creativity when helping them balance their lives as students and as members of their communities. Now, I try to apply both of these lessons to my life both inside and outside of the classroom.

Are there any other lessons that you learned in Afghanistan that you think should be discussed more in the global ELT community?

The first lesson I would share is that we need to continue to move away from the native speaker ideal. Globally, I think we are making progress, but this is something I have heard from colleagues and students. While in Afghanistan, I was often asked, "How do I sound more American?" This is a loaded question because it completely ignores the linguistic diversity within the United States, and it also ignores or diminishes the value of the many versions of English around the world. I learned so much from my Afghan colleagues about teaching English, and I had the chance to offer my opinions about the negative aspects of native speakerism. We should encourage more of this kind of mutual exchange in the world.

Another lesson I learned in Afghanistan was that I need to be more patient with my students and with myself. We all have a lot going on outside of school and work. It is important to take this into account when designing courses and policies. I had to learn to set clear expectations and boundaries that reflected my needs and those of my students. One simple example is a late work policy. I found it much more beneficial to negotiate this policy with students at the beginning of the year. This allowed me to set my expectations but also to hear the concerns of the students, many of which were valid. One issue that has stuck with me was the lack of internet access for students. In Afghanistan, it was sometimes difficult to access the Internet. When I set due dates, I learned that this was something I needed to keep in mind.

The political and social situation in Afghanistan is tragic for a number of reasons. What would be the message that you would want to share with the global ELT community?

If I had to give a message to the ELT community right now, it would be to open your arms and doors—welcome these students, support these students, and teach these students. I would also advocate for more people to learn about trauma-informed practices in this classroom. A book I am currently reading is *Supporting the Journey of English Learners after Trauma* by O'Loughlin and Custodio (2020). This book has some good strategies and bits of information that can be used in the classroom. The context is more geared towards K-12 education, but some of it is transferable. Essentially, this can mean learning how to make students feel welcome and safe. This, combined with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), can really help to create a better learning environment. I think it is important to point out that culturally responsive teaching and trauma-informed practices are not the same thing, but they do, in my experience, complement each other. Most importantly, I think it is important to have an asset-minded approach. The Afghan people have a lot to offer the world, and we all need to recognize that.

As ELT professionals, our jobs often exist at the interface between politics and education. As foreign language teachers, sometimes the political landscape works to our advantage, but sometimes it does not. You have a unique experience abroad, and you have a lot of knowledge about teaching and about this geographic region. In your opinion, what do the current political changes in Afghanistan mean for ELT in the region? What do they mean for ELT globally? And, in Afghanistan, what do you think the picture will look like going forward?

I am not fully sure what ELT will look like going forward in Afghanistan. I don't think anybody really does. Regionally, it could mean that universities in nearby countries are asked to support more study abroad students or refugee students from Afghanistan. Universities around the world might also find themselves supporting more and more students from Afghanistan.

I am not an expert on Afghan politics, nor on the possible implications for the future of education in the country, but I believe the outlook for ELT in the foreseeable future is not good, especially regarding the education of women and ethnic minority groups in Afghanistan. As individuals, who are at risk of persecution by the Taliban, leave Afghanistan, the country may experience "brain drain." This can have long term effects on Afghanistan, as well as countries that see an influx of refugee Afghans.

The situation in Afghanistan is evolving rapidly, but it is important to remember the ripple effects of women being denied equal access to education. Unfortunately, the return to power by the Taliban may signal an abrupt reversal of progress in women's education in the region. As we have seen recently, girls have been denied access to schools or can only attend segregated classes and schools. My worry is that the curriculum will be very different for those women who do get to study. My outlook is even dimmer for women who are denied education. It breaks my heart to know that all of the effort by these women to get an education and to contribute to rebuilding their country will probably go to waste. Additionally, it is likely that the curriculum in Afghanistan could see drastic revisions. This is another factor that could affect educational goals and ELT there.

In terms of research, is there anything specific that you are working on that is related to Afghanistan? Or, can you think of any avenues of future research that are important for the region? Or that are important to the ELT field as a whole?

While working in Afghanistan, I conducted research that evaluated the unconscious biases of students towards non-native English language teachers (Rhea, 2020). My goal was to evaluate whether students better understood native English teachers or non-native (Afghan) English teachers. The results did not show any difference in listening comprehension, but they did show that when asked, that students tended to prefer native English teachers. I will say that there needs to be more research in this area and that my study would need some modifications if I were to do it again. Things in the global ELT field are changing, but I think we need to continually consider and reevaluate the native speaker ideal in ELT. I believe that more research in this area could bring a greater level of equity to the field in contexts abroad, especially in developing or struggling regions like Afghanistan.

I would like to add that concerning research in Afghanistan, at this point I think we should be monitoring the effects of the changes that are happening on student proficiency levels. While difficult, it is important to see how the dramatic changes to education in Afghanistan affect language programs and language acquisition. In particular, I would be interested in tracking literacy rates in Afghanistan.

This last question is completely open-ended. This interview has been about your experiences teaching English in Afghanistan, and about your identity development, et cetera. Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you would like to mention?

Afghans are going to need long term support from the ELT community. We should ask Afghans, those who have left and those still residing in Afghanistan, how we can best support them. The current outpouring of support for Afghans is wonderful, but we need to continue support through the long term. I think those of us in the ELT community need to be continually thinking of ways to support students in and from Afghanistan.

There are many ways people can offer their support. First, people should find out if refugees are being settled in their local areas. Various local organizations are often responsible for the actual resettlement process. For example, two of the larger organizations that do refugee resettlement in the United States are the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (https://www.lirs.org) and Catholic Charities USA (https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org). Countries around the world have similar organizations that help refugees. These organizations may offer volunteer English language teachers the opportunity to contribute their time and expertise. Another organization to support is the Friends of the American University of Afghanistan; they have a GoFundMe page (https://www.gofundme.com/f/

emergency-rescue-auaf-student-faculty-and-staff). Finally, at the international level there is the International Rescue Committee (https://www.rescue.org), which does extensive work with refuges around the world, including in Afghanistan.

Thank you, Nicholas, for taking the time to speak with me. This has been a wonderful chance for me to learn about you and your experiences abroad and about the situation in Afghanistan. You have certainly changed my perspective, and there are a lot of things that I need to think about now. Thanks again.

Thank you for having me. It's always a pleasure.

References

Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press, Colombia University.

O'Loughlin, J. B., & Custodio, B. K. (2020). *Supporting the journey of English learners after trauma*. University of Michigan Press.

Rhea, N. (2020, March). Rethinking students' native speaker instructor ideal in the EFL context. *AL Forum*. http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolalis/issues/2020-03-06/4.html

[JALT PRAXIS] MY SHARE


Steven Asquith & Lorraine Kipling

We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 600 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used that can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see the guidelines on our website below).

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.my.share@jalt.org • Web: https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Hi everyone, and welcome to this spring edition of My Share, the best place to find some fresh new ideas for the upcoming school year. One of the biggest pleasures of editing the My Share column has not just been working with the many outstanding authors, but also trying out the activities for myself. This time of the year, I often take a look through previous columns to get inspiration for the upcoming semester. I would certainly encourage all our readers to browse through the My Share back catalogue when planning ahead. As the My Share content rarely becomes dated, the many ideas at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare are a practical and convenient resource.

This month's column is no exception, as each author's offering provides a practical and flexible activity for the classroom. First, Justin Mejia describes a wonderful YouTube video discussion and comprehension activity with a twist; students choose and create the content. This innovative and learner-centered activity is not only very enjoyable, it also encourages students to develop practical and self-directed language skills. In the second article, John Syquia suggests the really enjoyable Good Gift Game, in which students have to apply their spoken persuasion and discussion skills. In the third article, John Campbell-Larsen provides an answer to an issue familiar to any educator who has taught using breakout rooms; the sudden silence upon entry. This article explains how students can acquire the important pragmatic skills to include a newcomer seamlessly into conversation. Finally, Edmund Fec introduces a practical and low preparation method of reviewing sentence structure using an activity entitled Alphabetical Sentences. As with the many fabulous ideas published previously, we hope that this month's selection of ideas will continue to support the teaching community long into the future.

—Steven Asquith

After five and a half years of service to the My Share community, Steven is now stepping down from his role as co-editor to focus on a variety of new and exciting projects. I would like to personally thank him for being such a supportive colleague and good friend. I will miss working with Steven very much, but I am also looking forward to welcoming a new co-editor, who will be joining the column soon. In the meantime, I wish Steven the very best for the future. It's been a pleasure working with you!

—Lorraine Kipling

YouTube Video Discussion

Justin Mejia

Nanzan University

jmejia@nanzan-u.ac.jp

Quick Guide

- » Keywords: *YouTube, video, discussion, comprehension*
- » Learner English level: *Low intermediate to advanced*
- » Learner maturity: *Junior high school to university*
- » Preparation time: *30 minutes*
- » Activity time: *90 minutes*
- » Materials: *Smartphones or computers, example video and worksheet, worksheet template handouts (see Appendices)*

This activity gets students to create and lead their own video analysis and discussion. It uses an authentic resource from their daily lives and practices language and critical thinking skills. This activity works well via distance learning or in the classroom and can be broken up over multiple lessons.

Preparation

Step 1: Before class, find a short (three minutes or less) YouTube video of appropriate level and relevance for your students.

Step 2: Create a worksheet including the video link, key vocabulary from the video, a space for students to note new vocabulary, and comprehension and discussion questions (see Appendix A for example).

Step 3: Print one copy of the worksheet per group and one copy of the template handouts per group (Appendices A and B).

Procedure

Step 1: Briefly introduce the topic of the video and discuss what students already know about it.

Step 2: Explain that students will watch a video about the topic you have just discussed.

Step 3: Distribute your worksheet (Appendix A) and pre-teach the key vocabulary.

Step 4: Point out the *New Words* box, where students can write vocabulary they hear for the first time, and then direct students' attention to the comprehension questions.

Step 5: Show the video, allowing students to work during and after viewing. Show the video more than once or with subtitles, depending on difficulty.

Step 6: Allow students to check their answers in groups, and then check as a class.

Step 7: Direct students' attention to the discussion questions and ask them to discuss their answers in small groups. Monitor and help as necessary.

Step 8: When the allotted discussion time is over, put students into small groups (or allow them to work alone) and explain that they will create similar worksheets themselves.

Step 9: Set the ground rules of the videos they may select: The video should be short, be in the target language, and be about a topic that is interesting and appropriate for class discussion. You could restrict students to a specific topic or ask them to submit their video for approval if needed.

Step 10: Provide each group with a worksheet template (Appendix B) and check that they understand the task.

Step 11: Give groups time to find their video and create their worksheet while you monitor and assist (check that students understand their own videos as well). Before moving onto the final stage, each student should have multiple copies of their group's worksheet ready for distribution.

Step 12: Put students into new groups so that all members have different videos.

Step 13: Have students take turns distributing their worksheets, showing their videos, and leading the discussion about them. Monitor and assist as necessary.

Step 14: If time allows, have students switch groups to view and discuss as many videos as possible.

Conclusion

This activity was first used in remote lessons and was 100% digital: students distributed their worksheets on Google Drive and screenshared their videos in breakout rooms. However, it worked equally well in person with smartphones and printed worksheets. In both cases, the students were excited to use authentic and relatable resources. In addition, there is so much flexibility in this activity that it is easy to make it work as a quality, student-centered, comprehension and discussion lesson in many different class situations.

Appendices

The appendices are available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

The Good Gift Game

John Syquia

Kwansei Gakuin University

johnsyquia@yahoo.com

Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Game, discussion, debate*
- Learner English level: *Intermediate and above*
- Learner maturity: *High school - adult*
- Preparation time: *15 minutes*
- Activity time: *20-45 minutes*
- Materials: *Game cards (Gift Cards and Person Cards)*

In this fun and accessible speaking game, students use creativity and persuasion to make light-hearted arguments for why unique items would be good gifts. At the beginning, students can easily choose suitable gifts (e.g., a flower vase for a romantic partner). However, as the game continues, they will have fewer gift options and therefore greater difficulty justifying their choices (e.g., a skateboard for an elderly person). This results in many humorous explanations, and plenty of speaking in the target language.

Preparation

Download, print, and cut out the game cards (see Appendix).

Procedure

Step 1: Pre-teach expressions for giving opinions, agreeing, and disagreeing, as necessary.

Step 2: Form groups of three to four people.

Step 3: Place a set of Person Cards face down in the center of each group.

Step 4: Give each group a set of Gift Cards, divided so that each student receives an equal number of cards to look at. Set aside one Person Card and some Gift Cards for the next step.

Step 5: Explain that students will play a game about choosing gifts for different people. Model an example with the class by taking a Person Card (e.g., *a soldier*) and asking for a volunteer to choose a gift idea from their set of Gift Cards. Ask the student to explain why their item is a good gift for that person. Elicit comments from other students about why that item is a good or bad gift. Repeat with another volunteer, if necessary. Use one of your reserved Gift Cards to suggest an unconventional gift, and give an explanation (e.g., "A cactus would be a good gift for a soldier because they could use it for self-defense, and it is easy to carry in a bag."). Then, ask the class to vote for the best gift.

Step 6: Note to students that they cannot pretend to have secret knowledge to make their items better gifts (e.g., "A bow and arrow would be a good gift for a three-year-old child because this child's parents did archery in the Olympics.")

Step 7: Now tell students to play in groups. One student flips over one Person Card, takes a Gift Card from their set, places it on the table, and explains why it's a good gift for that person. Then, ask the other students to discuss the merits of that item. Encourage students to provide longer answers and disagree politely with each other. After that, have the other students follow the same process.

Step 8: After all students have proposed their gifts and discussed, tell them to vote for the best gift.

Step 9: Tell students who have the best gifts to put that Gift Card into a *discard* pile.

Step 10: Tell each group to continue doing Steps 7-9. The winner is the first person to discard all their Gift Cards, or who has the fewest cards when time runs out.

Variation

After the game is finished, have each group create their own Gift Cards. Collect those cards and distribute them to different groups in a later class to play again.

Conclusion

This activity gets students to make persuasive arguments and disagree in a lively manner. It can be a break from usual classroom activities or as a springboard to more traditional debate topics.

Appendix

The appendix is available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Avoiding Silence when Entering a Breakout Room

John Campbell-Larsen

Kyoto Women's University

joncamlar@hotmail.com

Quick Guide

» Keywords: *Breakout rooms, participation*
» Learner English level: *Intermediate and above*
» Learner maturity: *University*
» Preparation time: *10 minutes*
» Activity time: *20 minutes*
» Materials: *Handout (see Appendix)*

One noticeable aspect of Zoom breakout rooms is the tendency of students to fall silent when the teacher enters the room. The teacher is usually expected to initiate some talk or action and the students usually remain silent until this happens. To integrate the teacher's arrival with minimal disruption, students can be encouraged to provide a *previous action formulation* (PAF) (Pillet-Shore, 2010) that accommodates an incoming person into the ongoing interaction. Note that although an enquiry by the incomer ("What are you talking about?") is not wrong per se, it is more desirable for students to be proactive in accommodating new entrants.

Preparation

Step 1: Prepare the handout from the appendix.

Procedure

Step 1: Elicit from the students what happens when a teacher enters a breakout room (i.e., students fall silent). Ask students how they feel if this happens when they join a conversation.

Step 2: Role play an example with three volunteers. Ask two students to keep their cameras on, while the rest of the class switch theirs off. Ask one other volunteer to switch their camera on and *join* the conversation after a minute or so. Converse about any topic with the *camera on* students, and when the nominated entrant student joins, provide a PAF (e.g., "Hi, we were just talking about work and Tomomi said she works in a café"). Get feedback about what you did to accommodate the incomer.

Step 3: Explain that when someone enters a breakout room when conversation is already underway, one of the students should self-select to provide a previous action formulation (PAF). This is the students' responsibility and needs to be done without discussion or selection games like *rock, paper, scissors*. Speed and automaticity are key.

Step 4: Distribute handout. Ensure students understand all components of a PAF: (1) A greeting, possibly with an address term ("Hi, John"); (2) An account of the topic using the reported speech form *speak/talk + about* ("We were just talking about work . . .") Be sure to include the word *just* as this serves the pragmatic function of bringing the listener up to date; (3) A more detailed report using *say + that* to report the content of the previous talk (". . . and Yuki was saying that she works in a café.") Make sure that students understand the need to report both topic and content. A report of topic only ("Hi John. We were just talking about work.") is incomplete.

Step 5: Tell students to work in pairs to write PAFs for the example conversations in the handout.

Step 5: Ask pairs to share their answers with the whole class. Note that answers will vary.

Step 6: Assign the students to breakout rooms. After a short while visit each room to ensure that a PAF is forthcoming. Resist the urge to fill silence when you enter a breakout room.

Step 7: Reconvene the whole class for feedback and establish that PAF will be expected in breakout room activities in all subsequent classes.

Conclusion

The ability to produce a PAF is a key resource for students in online interactions and should become automatic with practice. It shifts the accountability for maintaining conversational flow from teacher to students and establishes a pragmatic skill that can also be applied in off-line contexts.

References

Pillet-Shore, D. (2010). Making way and making sense: Including newcomers in interaction. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *73*(2), 152-175. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0190272510369668

Appendix

The appendix is available from the online version of this article at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Alphabetical Sentences

Edmund Fec

Tohoku University of Community Service & Science

edfec@koeki-u.ac.jp

Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Warm-up activity, adjectives, sentence writing, groupwork*
- Learner English level: *Pre-intermediate and above*
- Learner maturity: *Junior High School – University*
- Preparation time: *0 minutes*
- Activity time: *20-30 minutes*
- Materials: *paper and pens (or can be done online)*

In David Crystal's "A Little Book of Language" (2010), the reader is challenged to make a 26-word sentence "in which every word starts with a letter of the alphabet—in the right order!" (p. 197). This is a challenge even for a native speaker, but can be easily adapted as a warm-up activity for English language students, which can be done individually or in groups, in a classroom or online. The aim is for students to make short sentences in which each word starts with a different letter, but in correct alphabetical order. The challenge for the students is to make sure that each sentence has correct subject-verb agreement.

Preparation

None required.

Procedure

Step 1: Write the following sentences on the board and ask the students if they can see what is unusual about them:

Angry birds chase dogs eagerly.

Excited frogs get hungry in June.

The students should be able to identify that the first letter of each word is in alphabetical order.

Step 2: Ask the students to label the different parts of speech of the sentences. For example, the first one would be: *Angry (adjective) birds (noun / subject) chase (verb) dogs (noun / object) eagerly (adverb).*

Step 3: Write the alphabet on the board and elicit a few more examples of different parts of speech for different letters of the alphabet.

Step 4: Explain to the students that they will have to make some sentences, but the first letter of each word in the sentence must start with a different letter of the alphabet, in the correct "abc" order, for example, *Aunts buy cheese*, or *Birds chase dizzy elephants*. Explain that new sentences can start with any letter they wish. The aim is to write as many grammatically correct sentences as possible.

Step 5: Put the students in groups and set a time limit (10-15 minutes).

Step 6: When the time is up, get the students to share their sentences. Write them on the board / screen and give them feedback on their work, such as amending any subject-verb agreements.

Variations

Option 1: For lower-level groups or younger students, at Step 3 get the students to write down as many verbs as they can on a piece of paper. They can then share their lists with their group at the start of Step 5. Having a list of verbs will make it easier to write simple sentences.

Option 2: Use a point system. Set a minimum number of words per sentence (3 for lower levels, 4 or 5 for more advanced learners). Give points for each completed sentence with a bonus for the longest complete sentence.

Option 3: For more advanced learners, this task can be amended to practice adjectival order without asking students to make proper sentences (for example, *Awesome, black, Chinese dragons* or *Five green heads*). Advanced learners could even try multiple adjectives with correct subject-verb agreement (*Angry, barking Chinese dogs eat fried, green hotdogs*.)

Conclusion

This is a simple, fun exercise which can be done as easily online on platforms such as Zoom (using breakout rooms for groups and the whiteboard function to display the sentences) as in a classroom. This activity links spelling, vocabulary and basic grammar rules and encourages teamwork. In addition, the resulting sentences are often very entertaining!

References

Crystal, D. (2010). *A little book of language.* Yale University Press.

Paul Raine

In this column, we discuss the latest developments in ed-tech, as well as tried and tested apps and platforms, and the integration between teaching and technology. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.wired@jalt.org
Web: https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/tlt-wired

Paul Raine has been a Japan-based teacher and coder since 2006. He has developed the web-based language teaching and learning platform *TeacherTools.Digital*, and many other web-based tools.

Using the LingoLab Web Apps for Productive Phrase Practice

Oliver Rose

Kwansei Gakuin University

I designed the LingoLab web apps to fill a gap in the kinds of practice I saw offered by the usual textbooks and online sites. A lot of the popular four-skills communicative textbooks often have a few simple cloze exercises to practice a grammar point and then launch the students into a productive communicative task. As the students' performance is often hit-and-miss after such little productive preparation, I felt that more sentence-level practice was needed to scaffold such tasks. One of the great strengths of CALL is that it can allow for interactive practice for students to do as homework, better preparing them for more communicative tasks in the classroom. Three elements that I believe to be vital for effective CALL are being mobile-friendly, giving automated feedback, and providing systematic review. So assisted by the coding skills of Paul Raine and the support of my research funds, I started producing the LingoLab sites in 2019.

The LingoLab Activity Format

The LingoLab activity is primarily for phrase-level practice but can also be used for vocabulary study. The user is shown a cue that can be any combination of text (L1 or the target language), picture/GIF, or text-to-speech audio generated from the item data (see Figures 1 and 2). They are also shown text boxes which outline the target answer by showing the number of words and their approximate word lengths. This is important to help the user narrow down their input to get the target answer in case there are other possible correct responses.

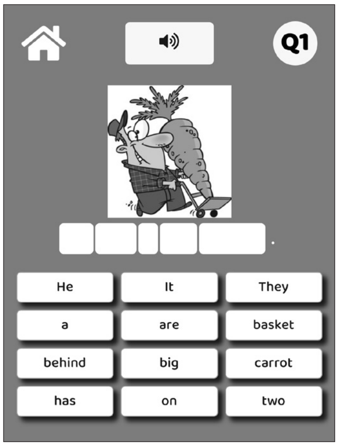
Figure 1

L1 Prompt

Note: The L1 phrase (Japanese) to be translated is displayed.

Figure 2

Audio and Picture Prompt



Note: Audio can be based on either the text cue or the target sentence.

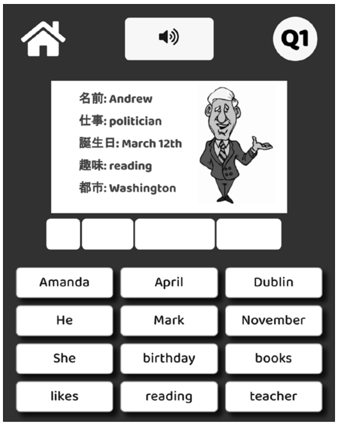
In response to the cues, the user can respond in one of three modes:

a. *Shown Words* mode has the component target words displayed on 12 tiles, with distractors filling in any extra tiles (see Figure 3).

b. *Hidden Letters* mode has the same layout as *Shown words* mode, but only the first and last letters are shown, with all the middle letters represented by a dot to show the number of letters. Obviously, this mode is more challenging, as the user needs to retrieve target words from memory rather than just recognizing them (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

"Shown Words" Mode



Note: A full word is shown on each tile.

Figure 4

"Hidden Letters" Mode

Note: Just the first and letters are shown.

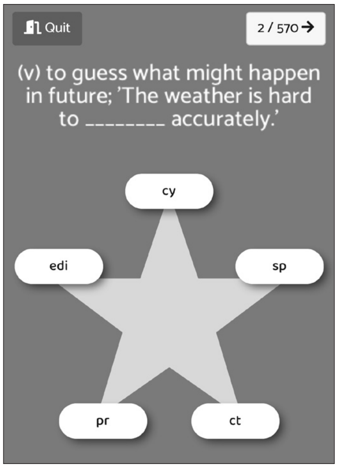
Stellar Speller mode divides the target word or phrase into as many as five chunks, which can be reassembled by the user by tapping or swiping them in the correct order. This mode is an original design based loosely on some kinds of interactions in casual mobile word games (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5

'Stellar Speller' Mode With Sentence

Figure 6

'Stellar Speller' Mode With Word



Separate Functions of the Three LingoLab Sites

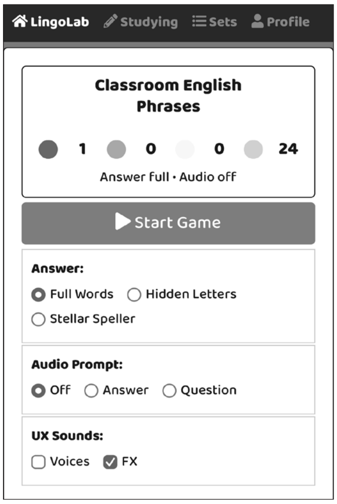
There are three LingoLab sites, each with a different function:

1. *LingoLabCo* (www.lingolab.co) is for student self-study with automated review and progress tracking.

On LingoLabCo, you can register and log in with Google to have your progress saved and continue from any logged-in device. Any phrases answered incorrectly will be presented again in later sessions, utilizing a simple but effective rating system to keep track of progress (see Figure 7). A variety of default sets is provided (mostly Japanese-English), and other sets made on LingoLabOnline can be easily imported.

Figure 7

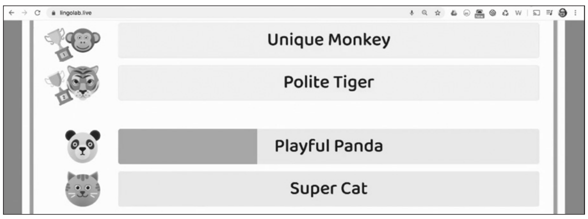
LingoLabCo Set Page Showing Progress and Mode Options



2. *LingoLabLive* (www.lingolab.live) is for teachers to set a real-time multiplayer quiz game for students to play online or in class. No registration is required for teachers or players. Teachers simply set up the game and have players join by URL or QR code. Players can keep the anonymous assigned name or edit it to show their real name. The scoreboard showing players' progress (see Figure 8) is shown on the teacher's display and can be shown to the class by a projector or by screensharing it on Zoom. Only the top 10 results are shown within the default scrollable area to avoid embarrassing slower players.

Figure 8

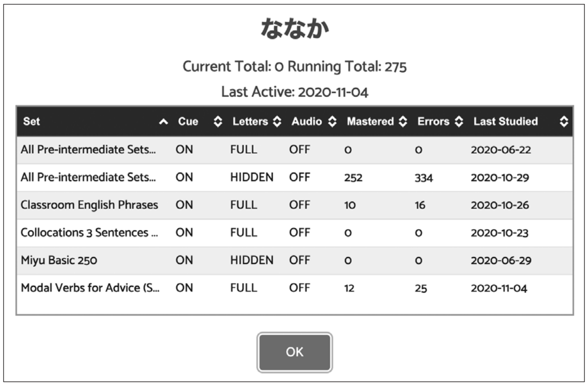
LingoLabLive Leaderboard View



3. LingoLabOnline (www.lingolab.online) is for teachers to make custom word/phrase sets, create one-off quizzes with detailed results reporting, and to monitor students' progress on LingoLabCo. After registering with a Google account, teachers can create their own custom sets by typing or copying and pasting them into an online spreadsheet. These custom sets can then be used in any of the LingoLab activities by inputting the ID number. A quiz can be easily set, which can be answered by any student inputting their name (such as a Google Form) without need for registration. After students have joined the quiz by URL or QR code, the teacher can monitor responses as each question is answered, reassuringly confirming everyone's progress during the quiz. The LingoLab format allows sentence-level quizzing that is automatically scored and does not need to be graded by the teacher. This is a unique benefit not found in systems, such as Google Forms or Quizlet, in which responses with minor errors in input would be graded as wholly incorrect. Another powerful function offered by LingoLabOnline is the ability to monitor students' self-study progress with LingoLabCo (see Figure 9). This means that teachers can assign sentence-level practice for homework, with the review system ensuring that students get extra practice with any items that are difficult for them. The reporting data is quite basic, simply showing the number of items in a set that have been completed by the student. However, this is sufficient to fulfil its function of monitoring assigned homework.

Figure 9

Individual Student Progress Report



ななか

Current Total: 0 Running Total: 275

Last Active: 2020-11-04

Set	Cue	Letters	Audio	Mastered	Errors	Last Studied
All Pre-intermediate Sets...	ON	FULL	OFF	0	0	2020-06-22
All Pre-intermediate Sets...	ON	HIDDEN	OFF	252	334	2020-10-29
Classroom English Phrases	ON	FULL	OFF	10	16	2020-10-26
Collocations 3 Sentences ...	ON	FULL	OFF	0	0	2020-10-23
Miyu Basic 250	ON	HIDDEN	OFF	0	0	2020-06-29
Modal Verbs for Advice (S...	ON	FULL	OFF	12	25	2020-11-04

OK

Note: Progress can be viewed by class, set, or student.

Conclusion

Having used this over the past three years, I have found it to be invaluable for providing sentence-level practice and assessment. Furthermore, student feedback has been extremely positive both in terms of perceived usefulness and enjoyment. Teachers and students are welcome to use the LingoLab sites for free, and there are no current plans to commercialize it. Any questions or feedback can be directed to Oliver Rose at oliverrose@kwansei.ac.jp.

The editor of the Wired column would like to apologize to the author of the Wired column in the previous issue of *The Language Teacher* (46.1). The column was lacking the correct attribution, which is provided below:

"Create Your Own Vocabulary Levels Tests with VocabLevelTest.org"

Brett Milliner

Tamagawa University

milliner@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp

[JALT PRAXIS] BOOK REVIEWS


Robert Taferner & Stephen Case

If you are interested in writing a book review, please consult the list of materials available for review in the Recently Received *column, or consider suggesting an alternative book that would be helpful to our membership.*

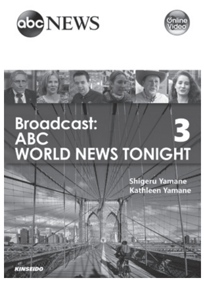
Email: jaltpubs.tlt.reviews@jalt.org
Web: https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/book-reviews

This month's column features Andrew Decker's review of Broadcast: ABC World News.

Broadcast: ABC World News Tonight (Editions 1-4)

[Shigeru Yamane & Kathleen Yamane. Tokyo: Kinseido Publishing, 1: 2019, 2: 2020, 3: 2021, 4: 2022. (Teacher's books, DVDs, and CDs available, as well as student access to streaming videos) 1: p. 111. ¥2,500. ISBN: 978-4-7647-4073-0, 2: p. 109. ¥2,600. ISBN: 978-4-7647-4096-9, 3: p. 111. ¥2,700. ISBN: 978-4-7647-4115-7, 4: p. 128. ¥2,800. ISBN: 978-4-7647-4145-4.]

Reviewed by Andrew Decker, Kansai University



Broadcast: ABC World News Tonight is one of several textbooks published in Japan that use authentic news stories from English news broadcasts. This series has been using US broadcasts from ABC's *World News Tonight* since 1987. I adopted the 2019 edition for my required, first-year intermediate listening and speaking general English classes before the pandemic. At the time, I asked my classes to help me choose a textbook for the next academic year, and 73 out 83 students recommended ABC News. Since then, a new edition has been published every January for the last three years with all new news stories from the preceding year. The latest 2021 and upcoming 2022 editions include stories about the pandemic.

Each news story in the textbook itself is logically organized into three parts: *Before You Watch the News Exercises*, the *News Story*, and *After You Watch the News Exercises*. *Before You Watch* includes preview questions and warm-up matching and fill-in-the-blank exercises that introduce five vocabulary words from the news story. The *News Story* includes a script with fill-in-the-blanks and notes with more vocabulary from the news story defined in Japanese. *After You Watch* includes true and false sentences, fill-in-the-blank translation and summary practice, and discussion questions. These exercises should help students adjust to listening to authentic news stories. In addition, the *Appendix* includes a map of the US that shows where each news story took place, an introduction to TV news broadcasts in Japanese and English, and a list of abbreviations and acronyms used in the news stories in alphabetical order. The teacher's book, which includes language support in Japanese as well, includes the answers to the exercises in English, the complete *Scripts* in both English and Japanese, and *Vocabulary Review Tests* for each news story. Each test is comprised of a summary of each news story with fill-in-the-blanks for 10 key vocabulary words from the news story, and definitions in English for the keywords are provided. The teacher's book also includes QR codes and links to various other related news stories and sources with *Additional Information and Updates*.

I used this textbook for the first-time last year—my first year online. That first year, I supplemented the textbook with new stories from an NHK website that added five new stories from *World News Tonight* every week, and each story, like the stories in the textbook, was short—just one minute each with language support in both English and Japanese. Unfortunately, this resource is no longer available. When I used this textbook again this year—my second year online—I just went directly to ABC News and supplemented with additional new news stories from ABC's *World News Tonight with David Muir*'s website (abcnews.go.com/WN). The news stories in the textbook are also still available here along with updates. For example, the first news story in the 2019 edition is *Sister Jean: Basketball Team's Secret Weapon*. Sister Jean was 98 years old when this new story aired and 100 by the time classes started last year. However, there have been four more news stories about Sister Jean since the news story in the textbook. This led me to ABC's podcasts (abcaudio.com/podcasts/), which includes a podcast of *World News Tonight with David Muir*, updated every day with the audio from the most recent broadcast. Coincidentally, the featured podcast, *The Dropout: Elizabeth Holmes on Trial* (2021), was an update not only of one of their most popular podcasts, *The Dropout* (2019), but also of the second story in the 2019 edition.

I have been using this textbook for project- or task-based language teaching. After chatting about stories from the textbook or supplementary materials, students record their own news stories. We use the news stories more than anything else as conversation starters for group discussion and as examples for presentations. Some students choose their own presentation topics, but many seem more comfortable starting with a topic from the textbook and updating it from a non-American perspective. We stopped just short of trying to record our own podcasts this year, but we may try that next year.

For the next year, I will use the 2021 edition of this textbook—my first year back on campus. I think the combination of using a newer edition and being back on campus will require fewer supplementary materials. At the same time, the ease with which this textbook can be supplemented is one of the main reasons my students recommended it in the first place and why I continue to recommend it for those interested in using authentic materials for task-based language learning.

Recently Received

Julie Kimura & Ryan Barnes

jaltpubs.tlt.pub.review@jalt.org

A list of texts and resource materials for language teachers available for book reviews in *TLT* and *JALT Journal*. Publishers are invited to submit complete sets of materials to Julie Kimura at the Publishers' Review Copies Liaison address listed on the Staff page on the inside cover of *TLT*.

Recently Received Online

An up-to-date index of books available for review can be found at https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/recently-received

** = new listing; ! = final notice —* Final notice items will be removed on February 28. Please make queries by email to the appropriate JALT Publications contact.

Books for Students (reviews published in *TLT*)

Contact: Julie Kimura — jaltpubs.tlt.pub.review@jalt.org

Penguin Readers—Penguin Books, 2019. [Penguin Readers is a series of classics, contemporary fiction, and non-fiction, written for learners of English.]

! Plastic—Morris, C. [We all use a lot of plastic every day. But where does it come from? And what can we do to recycle it? Level 1, CEFR A1.]

! How to turn down a billion dollars: The Snapchat story—Gallagher, B. [The story of how Snapchat grew from a university student's idea into a multibillion-dollar company. Level 2, CEFR A1+.]

! Wonder—Palacio, R. J. [August "Auggie" Pullman has been home-schooled all his life, but now he is starting fifth grade at a school in New York City. Level 2, CEFR A2.]

! Me before you—Moyes, J. [When Lou Clark loses her job at a café, she finds a new job caring for Will Traynor. Neither of them knows that they are going to change each other's lives together. Level 4, CEFR A2+.]

! Borrowed time: A Doctor Who novel—Alderman, N. A. [Andrew Brown makes a lot of money, but he never has enough time. He might have found a way to borrow some, but instead of making his life easier, he might have even more problems. Maybe Dr. Who can help. Level 5, CEFR B1.]

! Darkest hour: How Churchill changed history—McCarten, A. [The story of how the British Prime Minister changed history over 25 difficult days during World War II. Level 6, CEFR B1+.]

! Originals—Grant, A. [Learn how to recognize a great idea, speak up for yourself, and manage fear and doubt by standing out from the crowd. Level 7, CEFR B2.]

! English for careers in pharmaceutical sciences—Noguchi, J., Amagase, Y., Kozaki, Y., Smith, T., Tamamaki, K., Hori, T., & Muraki, M. Kodansha, 2019. [This coursebook was developed using an English for Specific Purposes approach, which aims at making students aware of genre approaches, how to examine them, and how to master them. Downloadable audio available for self-study.]

** Shape it! It's your world*—Cochrane, S., Lewis, S., Reid, A., Thacker, C., Vincent, D., & Wilson, M. Cambridge University Press, 2020. [Through a combination of learner training and project work, this four-level series of coursebooks helps high school students become more confident and independent learners. Materials include textbook and workbook for students as well as classroom audio, teacher's book and project book with a digital resource pack.]

Unlock: Listening, speaking & critical thinking 2 (2nd edition)—Dimond-Bayir, S., Russell, K., & Sowton, C. Cambridge University Press, 2019. [This coursebook is part of a six-level academic English course informed by research and created to develop the skills that language learners need. Critical thinking training develop skills required for productive speaking tasks. Online audio and video available, as well as a classroom app and an online workbook.]

Books for Teachers (reviews published in *JALT Journal*)

Contact: Greg Rouault — jaltpubs.jj.reviews@jalt.org

How languages are learned (5th ed.)—Lightbown, P., & Spada, N. Oxford University Press, 2021.

Second language prosody and computer modelling—Kang, O., Johnson, D. O., & Kermad, A. Routledge, 2021. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003022695

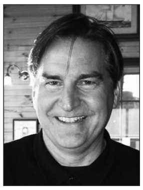
The art and architecture of academic writing—Prinz, P., & Arnbjörnsdóttir, B. John Benjamins, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1075/z.231

International Affairs Committee (IAC) Update

JALT has thirteen international partners with whom we have bilateral agreements whereby each organization can send delegates to each other's annual conference. IAC is in the process of making a list of these events and soliciting for JALT members who would like to participate on JALT's behalf. For more information, please look in upcoming JALT Talk bulletins or send an email to international@jalt.org.

Eight partner organizations sent a delegate to JALT2021. This involved making a research presentation and participating in an exploratory forum to report on partner events and to discuss common interests and concerns. Delegates from the following organizations participated: BELTA, FEELTA, KOTESOL, MELTA, NELTA, PALT, TEFLIN, Thailand TESOL.

More information and further updates about IAC are available at https://jalt.org (search for IAC).



David McMurray

Graduate students and teaching assistants are invited to submit compositions in the form of a speech, appeal, memoir, essay, conference review, or interview on the policy and practice of language education. Master's and doctoral thesis supervisors are also welcome to contribute or encourage their students to join this vibrant debate. Grounded in the author's reading, practicum, or empirical research, contributions are expected to share an impassioned presentation of opinions in 1,000 words or less. Teaching Assistance is not a peer-reviewed column.

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.ta@jalt.org

In this issue's Teaching Assistance column, a recent graduate student explains how the synergy from combining his studies in MATESOL and MBA programs are helping him to teach English in Turkey. Cem Yucel received his Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from La Trobe University and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Kaplan Business School in Melbourne, Australia. He is passionate about creating lesson plans that combine foreign language learning theories and frameworks of intelligence with various management skills he picked up, such as coaching and mentoring, negotiation and conflict management, organizational change and innovation. He speaks English, Turkish, Spanish, German, and Russian. He also plays the qanun, a traditional Middle Eastern stringed instrument, during his tutorials to raise the listening comprehension and pronunciation skills of his students who work in companies in Turkey.

Value of Reflective Practice for Language Teachers

Cem Yucel

EFL Instructor at Address Education Centre, Izmir, Turkey

Prior to the pandemic, I was a face-to-face learner in Australia. Concomitantly, I was a language teacher and had students from Japan, Brazil, Colombia, and Thailand. When I relocated to Turkey last year, I began teaching online at a language school center where all my learners were adult Turkish citizens. In this essay, I will share the basics of reflective practice by introducing five seminal frameworks from intelligence theory which I learned during my MBA studies. These models helped me to understand the value of reflective practice for language teachers: The Johari Window, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, Multiple Intelligence, and the Hierarchy of Needs. These core beliefs sustain my classes whether they are conducted face to face or remotely.

Reflective Practice

I engage in reflective practice to critically analyse my own needs and to help me make necessary changes so that I can continuously improve as a language teacher. Learning from my own mistakes requires acknowledging and correcting these mistakes, and this leads to ongoing self-improvement. I also encourage my adult students, who are business professionals, to engage in reflective practice for learning English. Reflective practices are techniques that help individuals, as well as the whole class, to reflect on their experiences and actions in order to engage in the process of continuous learning. This can be achieved with as simple an approach as lessons utilizing open-ended questions that begin with "What, Why, Which, Where, Who, and How." The technique is also useful for colleagues where I work. I have found that fellow teachers are capable of learning from their own mistakes and in turn, they can assist other co-workers in gaining similar insights.

The Johari Window

According to Luft and Ingham (1955), the Johari Window can help us to identify reflective practices at workplaces (see Figure 1). For instance, let's suppose that at the end of an intensive, reflective day, a manager discovers a personality trait that he hasn't spotted before, such as his rigidness, or narrow-mindedness. This self-discovery regarding his narrow-mindedness would be his blind spot, represented in the quadrant "Blind Area" on the Johari Window. This personality trait might have been recognized by his subordinates and gossiped about covertly for a long time. Discovering his negative trait, apologizing to his co-workers for his narrow-mindedness, as well as trying to fix it, could boost the manager's relationship with his co-workers. It could also spread reflective practices all around the workplace. On the Johari Window, identifying traits that are "Not-Known to Others" could also assist the manager to build rapport with his co-workers. As another example, if the manager knew that he had a sense of extreme tidiness and hygiene but did not openly share this with his co-workers, they could harbor irritated emotions towards him. Admitting that an obsessive-compulsive disorder could be the underlying cause of his extreme tidiness could relieve such tensions. A profound meditation and reflective journey could lead the manager to figure out that it would be much wiser and healthier to explain his sickness with his co-workers. This effort could dramatically strengthen the mutual relationship between the manager and his co-workers.

Figure 1

Diagram of the Johari Window

Quadrants	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	Open Area	Blind Area
Not Known to Others	Hidden Area	Unknown Area

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Goleman's (1996) influential EQ theory on self-awareness and empathy has allowed me to identify my own strengths and weaknesses and has assisted me in becoming a more aware, more productive teacher. I practice putting the needs of my students first by putting myself in their shoes. For instance, while I was teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in a multicultural class, a Colombian student suddenly rose from his seat and left the classroom during my lesson without saying anything. Though I was filled with anger and felt a sense of disrespect, I suppressed these initial feelings. I waited until the following day to find the root cause of my student's vanishing act. I realized this was an opportunity to consider others' needs and desires (Fisher & Ury, 1981). During a one-to-one chat prior to the group lesson, I listened to him attentively without judging him. It turned out that the student had been desperately looking for a job and was having some serious family issues. Also, he apologized to me several times for leaving the classroom during the lesson. This incident demonstrated that having a calm, empathetic attitude towards students is superior to reactive approaches which can destroy positive teacher-student relationships. Keeping EQ in mind while I work has led to more productive and healthier relationships not only with my colleagues and learners, but also with my friends and partner.

Cultural Intelligence

Another useful theory that I learned during my MBA studies that I apply to my foreign language teaching classes is cultural intelligence. Earley and Ang (2003) suggest that cultural intelligence assists people to integrate themselves into new cultures and environments. The capability to adapt to local lifestyle patterns by noticing cultural cues, understanding local values, as well as having the willingness to build rapport with other cultures, helped me to adjust to teaching and learning in Australia (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Photograph of the Author (wearing flags) at a Conference in Australia

Multiple Intelligence

I believe the way I approach teaching improved when I began to mentor and coach language learners to be better versions of themselves academically and spiritually. I encourage learners to highlight each of their strengths, while at the same time diminishing their weaknesses by relying on Gardener's Multiple Intelligence Theory (1983). For example, I will be on the lookout for which of my students display linguistic intelligence. They are likely to be sensitive to spoken and written language and have the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. Students with musical intelligence respond well to my lessons that include singing along to the *qanun* for rhythm. Students with kinesthetic powers respond well to my language games and activities related to football. When I identify students with spatial, naturalist, interpersonal, or logical-mathematical intelligences, I will try to customize my lessons to further draw out and nurture each individual.

Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's seminal Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) has allowed me to comprehend that basic needs such as accommodation, money, and family are indispensable. This theory reminded me that my students are less likely to perform at their full potential if their basic needs are unmet. Personally I will aim to fulfill aesthetics and self-actualization needs that are located higher up on the pyramid model of this theory. To achieve this goal, I will read more widely, more actively engage in music as a *qanun* performer, and spread my love for the English language, music, and sports to those who surround me. I believe that sustaining such an approach and helping my students to get what they need will create an ongoing synergy, harmony, and unity in our lives (see Figure 3).

Conclusion

I value the use of reflection practices as well as the tenets of business psychology in my language teaching career. These core beliefs sustain my classes, whether they are conducted face to face or remotely. I hope English teachers will be encouraged by my experience and apply these practices in their own teaching.

References

Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). *Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures.* Stanford University Press.

Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.* Penguin Groups.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind*. Basic Books.

Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence*. Bloomsbury.

Luft, J., & Ingham, H. (1955). The Johari window, a graphic model of interpersonal awareness. *Proceedings of the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development.* University of California.

Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–39. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Figure 3

Photograph of the Author and Students at a Coffee Shop in Turkey

[JALT PRAXIS] WRITERS' WORKSHOP


Jerry Talandis Jr. & Rich Bailey

The Writers' Workshop is a collaborative endeavour of the JALT Writers' Peer Support Group (PSG). Articles in the column provide advice and support for novice writers, experienced writers, or nearly anyone who is looking to write for academic purposes. If you would like to submit a paper for consideration, please contact us.

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.writers.ws@jalt.org • Web: https://jalt-publications.org/psg

Overcoming Writer's Block

Jerry Talandis Jr.

In my previous Writers' Workshop column, "Understanding Writer's Block" (Talandis Jr., 2021), I discussed common reasons why we sometimes get bogged down in our efforts to produce academic prose. The causes are myriad, complex, and intertwined, but they tend to fall into three categories: lack of knowledge, workflow-related issues, and emotional/physical reasons. Once you understand the causes, the next step is coming up with solutions for overcoming the problem. That's my aim for this column: providing a brief overview of some tried and true methods for unblocking your academic writing. In truth, there are many ways of dealing with writer's block, more than I can fit into the small amount of space allotted to me here. However, I'll aim to get you started with solutions which address the three categories of causes.

Start With Acceptance

Academic writing is hard, so a great place to begin is accepting this fact. While a degree of pain and discomfort is inevitable, recognizing this inherent struggle can, in fact, bring about some relief: "This acceptance of writing as an intrinsically challenging act seems particularly important for novice writers who often assume that the challenges come from their inexperience rather than from the very nature of academic writing" (Cayley, 2013, para 6). Evans (2013, p. 2) goes further, noting how blocks can lead to deeper insights: "Our writing blocks could be 'signposts' to new information about ourselves as writers and our material." Viewing obstacles in this positive light can lessen their capacity to hinder our academic self-expression, making the overall writing process less fraught with conflict.

Gain Knowledge & Experience

Academic writing is a skill that needs to be acquired. Without basic training, it's no wonder why some novice writers get stuck. Developing an academic voice that resonates truthfully and authentically requires a commitment of time, practice, and effort (Evans, 2013). If you're prepared to put in the work to hone your writing craft, then you'll naturally see gains in fluency and flexibility. A great way to acquire this basic knowledge is to get some formalized training, perhaps via a distance learning master's degree program or a specialized online writing course.

In the meantime, reading as much as you can is one of the best ways to pick up academic style (Everitt-Reynolds et al., 2012). Reading various books, journals, and articles in your area of interest with a keen eye on the writing and presentation can give you a much clearer sense of what academic writing entails. In fact, reading a lot in general, not only academic works, is highly recommended. For example, reading fictional literature can improve creativity and the ability to process information (Djikic et al., 2013).

Finally, another excellent way of gaining the basic knowledge you need to overcome blocks is to find ways to help other writers. In other words, put what you do know to good use. JALT Publications provides numerous opportunities along these lines. For example, you could volunteer as a proofreader/copyeditor for one of its publications or join as a writing mentor with the *Peer Support Group*. Working on a team with more experienced writers to help would-be authors improve the readability of their papers teaches you the basics of academic style and structure—knowledge which can in turn inform your own writing.

Improve Your Writing Workflow

Blockages can also be exacerbated by inefficient writing workflows. Writers are often unaware of numerous tips and tricks that can smoothen the writing process by removing unnecessary obstacles that waste time and energy. For example, Cayley (2018, para. 4) recommends writing your way through blockages: "Writing can move from being the problematic thing to being a means to solve the problem." She suggests a strategy of using a different font for signaling text that is exploratory in nature, for-your-eyes-only words written in-text to help you think through troublesome moments. Comments such as *I'm worried about what I'm saying here...* or *...is inconsistent with what I said on p. 37* enable you to keep moving through tough patches. Alternatively, margin notes can be used to similar effect. In the end, even if this process reveals serious problems, you can take comfort in having made progress by identifying what has gone wrong.

Similarly, keeping a journal is another strong approach to dealing with writer's block. Whether you write out your thoughts and feelings by hand or on a journal app such as *Day One*, the private, unstructured free space can lessen anxiety, help you think through particular problems, or brainstorm ideas for new sections. The mental and possibly even physical benefits of journaling have received a great deal of attention (Phelan, 2018) and are best realized when done regularly. Cameron (2016), in her best-selling book *The Artist's Way*, recommends developing a habit of writing each morning a set number of pages or words on whatever comes to mind. Even if you never read these daily musings, the act of writing each and every day will pay off when it comes time to produce your next academic project.

Additional workflow improvements, suggested by Fitzmaurice & O'Farrell (n.d.), include:

- *Make a set time to write*: If possible, find a specific time each day for writing. Experiment with different times and then stick with one that works best for your schedule.
- *Recognize and label distractors, then ignore them*: What breaks your flow? Figure out what gets in your way and work to minimize interruptions.
- *Do not aim for perfection in your first draft*: This is a classic time waster. It is more efficient to let your thoughts flow, get them onto the screen, then polish later on.
- *Establish the overall structure before you write*: Spend time designing and creating the frame that will hold your words, then tackle each section in turn, but not necessarily in order. For example, the *Introduction* can often be written last, after you have a firm grip on the content of your paper.

- *Do not stop writing when you come to the end of a section*: Instead, write a few sentences in the next section before you wrap up. This will make it easier to get started the next day.
- *Do not stop to correct and revise*: Do this later, after you have had some time to sleep on what you have written.
- *Reward yourself for meeting your targets*: Treat yourself to something enjoyable after you accomplish a particular goal. This can add some fun into the overall process.

Practice Mindfulness Meditation

I mentioned previously how putting a positive spin on writing blockages can relieve some of the pressure they cause. This shift in attitude can be facilitated with mindfulness practice. Blocks can be likened to a ringing alarm clock, reminding you to return to the present moment. When you notice yourself staring at the screen and unable to produce much of anything, use that moment to take a 10-minute meditation break. There are various techniques available, and numerous guided meditations can be found on *YouTube* or apps such as *Calm* and *Buddhify*. No matter the technique or approach, mindfulness practice will allow you to be more present, observant of your thoughts and underlying feelings, and ultimately more creative as you move through moments of stagnation and return to a state of flow (Mulrine, 2019).

According to Rosenberg (2018), you will know you are "in the zone" when your full attention is focused, and the writing seems effortless as the words flow with ease. It is a similar feeling to riding a bike with a strong wind at your back—you can move easily and freely, with little resistance. In these moments, the writing process itself can be seen as a form of meditation. As you follow your breath, thoughts will naturally come and go, and you will gradually learn to observe them, as if watching yourself on TV. As the chime sounds to end your meditation session, slowly lift your gaze to the screen and begin writing as soon as possible. Do your best to maintain that centered post-meditation state as you re-engage with your project. If blocks still persist, do not give up. Simply write out your thoughts in a journal and reflect on what is happening from a deeper state of conscious awareness. You will no doubt learn a lot about yourself and can feel satisfied for having confronted whatever fears or emotions may have prevented you from writing at your best.

Final Thoughts

In the end, it is important to remember that there is no single or correct way to write—each of us has to find out what works and does not work in our own writing (McQuillan, 2021). Academic writing is therefore a personal journey of professional growth and development. As with any adventure, there will be obstacles obstructing your way and moments when you feel stuck and unable to continue. However, I personally believe this is by design. Without such challenges, how could we ever grow? With an understanding of the basic causes of writer's block and a pocket full of viable solutions, you have everything you need to move forward. If you have been feeling stuck, hang in there! The frustration you feel is temporary, and with a bit of patience and perseverance, that magical state of creative flow will soon return.

References

Cameron, J. (2016). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. TarcherPerigee.

Cayley, R. (2013, September 11). Imposter syndrome and academic writing. *Explorations of Style: A Blog About Academic Writing*. https://tinyurl.com/bdendvp4

Cayley, R. (2018). Writer's block is not a struggle with your writing but with your thinking. Write your way out of it. *LSE Impact Blog*. https://tinyurl.com/2p8mawxu

Djikic, M., Oatley, K., & Moldoveanu, M. (2013). Opening the closed mind: The effect of exposure to literature on the need for closure. *Creativity Research Journal, 25*(2), 149-154. DOI: 10.1080/10400419.2013.783735

Evans, K. (2013). *Pathways through writing blocks in the academic environment*. Sense Publishers.

Everitt-Reynolds, A., Delahunt, B., & Maguire, M. (2012). *Finding your academic voice: A student's guide to the art of academic writing*. Dundalk Institute of Technology. https://eprints.dkit.ie/329/

Fitzmaurice, M., & O'Farrell, C. (n.d.). *Developing your academic writing skills: A handbook*. Trinity College Dublin. https://tinyurl.com/49yd7jpw

McQuillan, D. (2021). Forward. In D. McQuillan (Ed.) *Peer-led Student Handbook Series, Handbook 3*, Technological University Dublin. https://doi.org/10.21427/cec0-7f43

Mulrine, M. (2019). The secret to overcoming writer's block: Meditation. *Writer's Digest*. https://tinyurl.com/yc72frt8

Phelan, H. (2018). What's all this about journaling? *The New York Times*. https://tinyurl.com/46fru8cj

Rosenberg, J. (2018). Train your brain: 6 steps for overcoming writer's block through meditation. *Writer's Digest*. https://tinyurl.com/48rxdf2n

Talandis Jr., J. (2021). Understanding writer's block. *The Language Teacher, 45*(6), 58-61. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT45.6


Robert Morel & Satchie Haga

JALT currently has 30 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) available for members to join. This column publishes an in-depth view of one SIG each issue, providing readers with a more complete picture of the different SIGs within JALT. For information about SIG events, publications, and calls for papers, please visit https://jalt.org main/groups.

Email: jaltpubs.tlt.sig.focus@jalt.org • Web: https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/sig-news

Collaboration is a cornerstone of JALT activities, and the same goes for SIGs. While many people often think of collaboration within a SIG, there is an ever-growing amount of collaboration between SIGs as well as among SIGs, chapters, or other groups. This year, the SIG Focus column would like to highlight SIG collaboration in all its forms. Please feel free to contribute or suggest ideas by emailing us at jaltsigfocus@gmail.com.

Meet the JALT Writers' Peer Support Group

Rich Bailey, General Coordinator

First formed in 1999, the more than 35 current volunteers of the JALT Writers' Peer Support Group (PSG) (https://jalt-publications.org/psg) provide peer revision and support to authors looking for assistance in improving their papers for publication. Since its start, the PSG has helped more than 50 authors and reviewed more than 100 papers. As of 2021, the PSG became an official JALT committee, a change that will hopefully increase exposure and help reach a wider audience.

Peer Reading for Content, Clarity, and Organization

Publishing is an important way to share research and ideas and can be a key part of a successful job hunt. However, the writing process can be very frustrating and time-consuming, and many authors find themselves struggling on their own to revise and rewrite for publication. With a mission statement of "*to collaboratively assist writers in working through the writing process in order to develop their manuscripts to a (hopefully) publishable level*," the PSG's goal is to help writers successfully navigate that process. PSG peer readers provide feedback on the paper's organization and on areas that can use more development, more research, or possibly less information.

The PSG Process

Once an author has contacted the PSG via the contact page (https://jalt-publications.org/contact), the PSG Coordinator will get in touch with them to discuss their needs, goals, and deadlines as well as any other required or relevant information. The paper should also be submitted as a Google Doc to facilitate the revision process. The PSG Coordinator will then prepare all the materials in Google Drive and put out a call for PSG peer reader volunteers. Two PSG peer readers will separately review the paper, and each will provide feedback and comments directly on the Google Doc(s), which will be shared with the author. If the author wishes to discuss the feedback with the PSG readers, an arrangement must be made between the author and the peer readers; however, the PSG Coordinator can facilitate the process.

Writers' Workshop Column in *TLT*

Since May and June, 2015, the PSG and its volunteers have been participating (on and off) in the writing of the Writers' Workshop Column (see page 36 in this issue). The column provides discussion and advice on writing for publication and other related topics, such as publication opportunities and updates to the APA guidelines. Past columns can be accessed in TLT archives. They are excellent reading if we do say so ourselves!

Benefits of Becoming a PSG Volunteer

"Good writers are good readers."

As a volunteer with the PSG, you not only help other authors, but gain valuable experience while reading and editing the writing of others—skills that need daily practice. You can also learn about new ideas and areas of research both in and out of your own field of expertise. Finally, it is an excellent chance to meet other curious people and to network professionally.

There are no minimum requirements to become a PSG volunteer—just the willingness to help. We are happy to provide guidance and unofficial training for those with limited experience in peer revision before they take on the full responsibility of reviewing a paper.

Peer readers volunteer to read papers based on their availability and interest in the topics. There is no required minimum participation.

If you are interested in joining the PSG or having your paper reviewed, or if you have any questions, please contact us via the PSG contact page (https://jalt-publications.org/contact).

JALT MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

- A professional organization formed in 1976
  - 1976年に設立された学術学会
- Working to improve language learning and teaching, particularly in a Japanese context
  -語学の学習と教育の向上を図ることを目的としています
- Almost 3,000 members in Japan and overseas
  - 国内外で約 3,000名の会員がいます

https://jalt.org

Annual International Conference

- 1,500 to 2,000 participants
  - 毎年1,500名から2,000名が参加します
- Hundreds of workshops and presentations
  - 多数のワークショップや発表があります
- Publishers' exhibition - 出版社による教材展があります
- Job Information Centre
  - 就職情報センターが設けられます

https://jalt.org/conference

JALT Publications

- *The Language Teacher*—our bimonthly publication
  - 隔月発行します
- *JALT Journal*—biannual research journal
  - 年2回発行します
- JALT Postconference Publication
  - 年次国際大会の研究発表記録集を発行します
- SIG and chapter newsletters, anthologies, and conference proceedings - 分野別研究部会や支部も会報、アンソロジー、研究会発表記録集を発行します

https://jalt-publications.org

JALT Community

Meetings and conferences sponsored by local chapters and special interest groups (SIGs) are held throughout Japan. Presentation and research areas include:

Bilingualism • CALL • College and university education • Cooperative learning • Gender awareness in language education • Global issues in language education • Japanese as a second language • Learner autonomy • Pragmatics, pronunciation, second language acquisition • Teaching children • Lifelong language learning • Testing and evaluation • Materials development

支部及び分野別研究部会による例会や研究会は日本各地で開催され、以下の分野での発表や研究報告が行われます。バイリンガリズム、CALL、大学外国語教育、共同学習、ジェンダーと語学学習、グローバル問題、日本語教育、自主的学習、語用論・発音・第二言語習得、児童語学教育、生涯語学教育、試験と評価、教材開発 等。

https://jalt.org/main/groups

JALT Partners

JALT cooperates with domestic and international partners, including (JALTは以下の国内外の学会と提携しています):

- AJET—The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching
- IATEFL—International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
- JACET—The Japan Association of College English Teachers
- PAC—Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies
- TESOL—Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Membership Categories

All members receive annual subscriptions to *The Language Teacher* and *JALT Journal*, and member discounts for meetings and conferences. *The Language Teacher*や*JALT Journal* 等の出版物が1年間送付されます。また例会や大会に割引価格で参加できます。

- Regular 一般会員: ¥13,000
- Student rate (FULL-TIME students of undergraduate/graduate universities and colleges in Japan) 学生会員(国内の全日制の大学または大学院の学生): ¥7,000
- Joint—for two persons sharing a mailing address, one set of publications ジョイント会員 (同じ住所で登録する個人2名を対象とし、JALT出版物は2名に1部): ¥21,000
- Senior rate (people aged 65 and over) シニア会員(65歳以上の方): ¥7,000
- Group (5 or more) ¥8,500/person—one set of publications for each five members グループ会員(5名以上を対象とし、JALT出版物は5名ごとに1部): 1名 ¥8,500

https://jalt.org/main/membership

Information

For more information please consult our website <https://jalt.org>, ask an officer at any JALT event, or contact JALT's main office.

JALT Central Office

Urban Edge Building, 5th Floor, 1-37-9 Taito, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0016 JAPAN

JALT事務局：〒110-0016東京都台東区台東1-37-9
アーバンエッジビル5F

Tel: 03-3837-1630; Fax: 03-3837-1631; jco@jalt.org

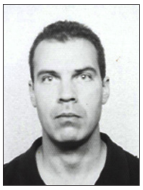
Joining JALT

Use the attached *furikae* form at post offices ONLY. When payment is made through a bank using the *furikae*, the JALT Central Office receives only a name and the cash amount that was transferred. The lack of information (mailing address, chapter designation, etc.) prevents the JCO from successfully processing your membership application. Members are strongly encouraged to use the secure online signup page located at:

https://jalt.org/joining.

THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING
全国語学教育学会

[JALT PRAXIS] OLD GRAMMARIANS



Scott Gardner *jaltpubs.tlt.old.gram@jalt.org*

Every Dog Has Its Day

Did you know that March 10 is International Bagpipe Day? If you've been looking for an excuse to turn that old plaid Christmas tree skirt into a kilt and start doing Gaelic dances in your living room, well now you've got one. And, as if to maintain the motif of twisted networks of noisemaking tubes, the next day, March 11, is World Plumbing Day. I had hoped that the ritual observance powers-that-be might carry that theme on to March 12 with Gastrointestinal Awareness and Support (GAS) Day, but apparently that's not until barbecue season in August.

In the USA, April is National Humor Month, coinciding with the global acceptance of April Fool's Day on the 1st. But April is also National Fresh Celery Month, and that's no laughing matter. In ways that we don't always readily perceive, humanity depends on a good supply of fresh celery (see GAS Day, above).

Some of these specially earmarked days and months are suspicious, as if commercial interests have simply claimed their own commemorative time slots to draw attention to their products. For example, there's Wine Day, which falls on the 20th of *every month*. Why? In French both *vin* (wine) and *vingt* (20) are conveniently pronounced the same. With a more ambitious marketing campaign, though, they could have covered even more calendrical real estate: "Wine Wednesday! Thirsty Thursday! Fermented Friday! Besotterday!" and so on.

David Foster Wallace's 1996 novel *Infinite Jest* satirized the concept of corporate procurement of solar/lunar time units by creating a near-future world in which each calendar year is given a sponsor rather than a number. (My personal favorite is "Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment.") Wallace may have been prophetic. I used to think it was no big deal when the TV news said, "Today's weather is brought to you by—" while naming some major sponsoring business or other. But nowadays I get uneasy when I see persistent Rakuten shopping ads in my phone's weather app, like it's going to start raining unless I go online *right now* and order a new umbrella. And what is going to happen to me if I go through International Body Piercing Day (June 28) without getting a new belly button barbell stud?

Like other countries, Japan has its own designated days of socio-commercial awareness, but the only ones I ever hear about are the "cute" ones (like Wine Day above) that play with the sounds of numbers and dates. For example, there's Happy Couple Day (いい夫婦, *iifuufu* = good couple), which is on November 22 simply because the numbers *1, 1, 2, 2* can be said as *i*, *i*, *fu*, *fu*. Same goes for Mountain Climbing Day on October 3 (mountain climbing = 登山, *tozan*, a slightly altered way of saying *10* and *3*). Using this system, I have designated April 20 as National Be Rude Day. The numbers *4*, *2*, and *0* can be read as *shi*, *tsu*, *rei* in Japanese, and *shitsurei* (失礼) means "impoliteness". Mark your calendars!

Time intervals dedicated to language awareness are also out there, and not just silly ones like Talk Like a Pirate Day (9/19). There are days for languages like Arabic (12/18), Portuguese (5/5), Braille (1/4), and sign languages (9/23). There is even a day for emoji (0_0)! According to one website, the International Day of Multilingualism falls on March 27. That date was chosen because it is the only date appearing in all three of the ancient languages found on the famous 2200-year-old Rosetta Stone. (The actual text reads: "From: King Ptolemy V; To: Kelly; Cc: Team—Hey, it's March 27, folks. Quarterly budget reports are due THIS WEEK. Let's get some hustle on!")

I think it would be fun to have a "Royal We Month." People talk like monarchs and refer to themselves in the plural for the entire month. Lawyers and doctors have been doing this for ages, with lines such as, "How are we doing today?" and "Let's have a look at our tonsils, shall we?" (Addressing individual clients in the plural probably has something to do with how much they charge for appointments.) So why not pluralize yourself for a month and see what kind of social benefits you can multiply? Who knows, maybe you can talk your way out of a parking ticket or something: "Do not lecture us, Officer. We have far more important matters to deliberate than the locations of our fair city's fire hydrants."

English Bento

GREAT for students...

A versatile English fluency app for students.
A user-friendly progress tracking system for teachers.

- Activities can be completed offline.
- Instructors create assignments in seconds.
- Progress is tracked along multiple metrics.
- Motivation is maintained through instant feedback.
- Content library integrates easily into any curriculum.
- Can be customized to compliment any textbook content upon request.

englishbento.com

Listen and Say

Listen to natural English in context and practice speaking. Spoken output is automatically evaluated, even offline.

Video

Watch original animated videos to understand how English is used in real-life scenarios.

Texting

Select the best responses to a series of incoming text messages. Deepen your socio-cultural awareness.

Build

Arrange lexical phrases to form grammatically accurate sentences. Strengthen your knowledge of English syntax.

How Many

Count the number of words you hear. Hone your perception of speech segmentation.

Definition

Select words with the same meaning to expand your vocabulary. Create connections between known vocabulary and more advanced synonyms.

Comp Q

Answer questions to check your understanding. Reinforce your comprehension of language in use.

Quiz

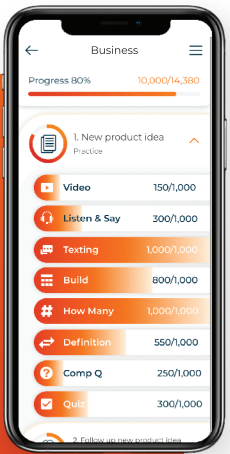
Answer multiple choice and cloze format questions to test your knowledge. A tried-and-true language learning activity.

...EVEN BETTER for teachers

1 Use our existing content, or have us add yours.

2 Create assignments in seconds. Track student progress, scores, and time-on-task.

3 Start for free with a class of 40 students or fewer.



- Scoring is handled automatically so that you can focus on teaching.
- Easily keep an eye on who is doing well and who needs additional support.
- Create assignments in seconds. Track your students' progress, scores, and time-on-task.
- Display three metrics at multiple levels of granularity. Monitor your student data at the level of the assignment, lesson, or activity — all at a glance.