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## In this month's issue . . .

**G**REETINGS and welcome to the May issue of *The Language Teacher*.

In the Feature, **Rachael Ruegg** examines group size within the context of an English language reading programme. In Readers' Forum, **Reiko Mori** and **Stuart Gale**, two EFL instructors from different faculties at the same university, describe and reflect upon a class-exchange experiment. In addition, **Deryn Verity** and **JD Brown**, the Plenary Speakers at the 8th Annual Pan-SIG Conference at Toyo Gakuen University on May 23rd & 24th explore limited opportunities in language education.

For instructors needing new classroom teaching ideas, we have two creative contributions to the My Share column.

*Widgets* is reviewed in Book Reviews. In *Wired*, Richard Hawking introduces simple ways to build educational web sites with WordPress.

I'd like to put out a word of thanks to all of the contributing authors as well as to our volunteer staff for their dedicated efforts in putting this issue together. We hope you find the content relevant and supportive of your teaching practice.



*Jerry Talandis Jr.*  
Co-editor

## TLT 5月号へようこそ

Featureでは、Rachael Ruegg が英語のリーディングプログラムでのグループのサイズを検証します。Readers' Forum では、Reiko Mori と Stuart Gale の2人のEFL講師(同じ大学の別々の学部に所属)が、クラス交換の実験について考察しています。さらに、5月23日と24日に東洋学園大学で行われる第8回SIG年次会議の基調講演者であるDeryn Verity と J.D. Brown は、語学教育における限られた機会について検討を加えます。

新しいアイデアを求めている皆様のために、My Share では2つの独創的な内容をご用意させていただきました。Book Reviews では、*Widgets* を採り上げています。Wired では Richard Hawking が、WordPress を用いて教育用ウェブサイトを作る簡単な方法を述べています。

著者の皆様やスタッフの、今月号発行に至る全ての献身的尽力に深く感謝申し上げますと共に、本誌が皆様のお役に立ち、ご満足いただけますようお願い申し上げます。

*Jerry Talandis Jr.*  
Co-editor



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# Raise your hand if you have any questions.

# Group size in the reading classroom

## Keywords

group size, classroom dynamics, reading comprehension, small groups

In English language teaching, there is a tendency to promote four as the ideal group size. Outside of the field of English language teaching no particular group size seems to be favoured. Although the primary purpose of small groups in the classroom is pedagogical, there are also social aspects which must be taken into account. As educators, we need to find a balance between making learners feel comfortable in order to increase their confidence and maximizing language acquisition, which may entail pushing learners beyond their comfort zone. The present study examines group size within the context of an English language reading programme. The learners completed reading comprehension activities in groups ranging from two to six members. Scores on the reading comprehension activities were collected. The learners also completed questionnaires about their preferences regarding group size. The results from the questionnaire were compared with the reading comprehension scores.

英語教育では、4名のグループを理想的とする傾向がある。英語教育以外では、そういった傾向は見受けられない。クラスでの小グループ形成は教育的であるが、考慮すべき社会的側面も存在することを頭に入れておかなければならない。私達は教育者として、学習者の自信を増進させるために、彼らを快適な環境に置くことと、言語習得を最適化するために「快適」ゾーンの外へ学習者を押し出すこととの間のバランスを探る必要がある。本論では英語リーディング・プログラムにおけるグループのサイズについて検証している。学習者は2名から6名のグループでリーディング学習活動を終え、その学習活動のスコアが集計されている。学習者はグループのサイズに関するアンケートも完成させ、そのアンケート結果とスコアの結果が比較されている。

## Rachael Ruegg Kanda University of International Studies

**C**OMMUNICATIVE language teaching focuses on the use of language in the classroom in the form of communicative activities. This is based on the idea that practice makes perfect; the more communication students experience in the classroom, the better communication skills they will develop. This in turn has resulted in an increase in the use of both cooperative and collaborative group activities in language classrooms around the world. In many institutions around the world it is now rare that a learner works on an activity alone without discussing it with a partner or in a group. How much thought goes into the process of forming groups? If a teacher uses the same group size consistently does this fulfill learner needs? Intuitively, it seems that different learners have different preferences and that different group sizes are suitable for different kinds of activities. The present study looks at the ideal group size for a university first-year reading course. Pedagogical and social perspectives are both considered. The research questions for this study are: (a) Which group size is the most effective in terms of maximizing comprehension? and (b) Which group size do learners prefer to work in?

## Literature Review

“Scholars of small groups often debate the absolute size of a small group. The fewest number, three, is generally agreed upon (although some scholars do not distinguish between the dyad, two, and the group of three or more).” (Barker, Wahlers, & Watson, 1995, p. 7)

A review of the literature regarding group size shows that there is little agreement as to what size is ideal. In the field of English language teaching, there is a tendency to promote the concept that four is the ideal group size. “Team or group size may vary from two to six or more per team. We prefer teams of four...” (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, p. 14). The pedagogical value of groups of four is commonly referred to both in the literature and by teachers; however, there is little, if any, empirical evidence to support this idea.

Outside of the field of English language teaching no particular group size seems to be favoured by

more than one writer. “[T]here is a positive relationship between the level of people’s participation and the degree of their individual satisfaction...as the size of the group increases, the opportunity to interact with other members decreases” (Beebe & Masterson, 1994, p. 117). Beebe and Masterson conclude that to have more people in a group is not necessarily better and they suggest a group size of around five to seven.

Napier and Gershenfeld (1993) state that it depends on the relationships within the group. In a pair, only one relationship is involved but as the group size gets larger there are exponentially more relationships at work within the group. For example, in a group of six there are 301 possible relationships at work. This does not mean that a larger group size is less effective but it does increase the possibility of problems occurring. In an English language classroom any problems present are likely to lead to a breakdown in communication which could in turn prevent the completion of the task at hand. Napier and Gershenfeld go on to say that a large group is more likely to break up into smaller groups. As the group size increases, along with the decreasing opportunities for participation, there is also the possibility of a decrease in motivation.

Wilson (1999) worries about the role of power within groups. He states, “When three people join together, they create a unique environment because of the ability of two members to unite and exert pressure on the other” (p. 7). This issue seems to be unique within the group of three and is one possible reason for avoiding groups of three.

What is apparent through the literature is that although the primary purpose of small groups in the classroom is pedagogical, there are also social aspects which must be taken into account. As enjoyment of group work increases, so too does motivation to do more group work. As educators, we need to find a balance between making learners feel comfortable in order to increase their confidence and maximizing language acquisition, which may entail pushing learners beyond their comfort zone. Furthermore, a learner-centered classroom approach needs to take into account all student learning preferences. As well as preferences related to course content, many learners also have preferences relating to classroom organisation and culture.

## Method

This paper represents an exploration into what effect group size has on an English reading course. The present study was carried out in the first semester of a 1st-year reading course. Each week, learners were given an episode from a story along

with ten reading comprehension questions to answer in groups. The materials were developed in the English language Institute of Kanda University of International Studies by the Skills Collaborative Research Committee. The reading comprehension questions were very difficult to answer as they required not only literal comprehension but also the application of reasoning and some background knowledge. They “differ from traditional reading comprehension questions in that they are designed in a way that students are forced to negotiate the meaning of the text as opposed to simply ‘testing’ their understanding of what they have been asked to read” (Galloway, 2007, p. 29). An extract from the first reading comprehension exercise is included in Appendix A. In addition to the reading comprehension questions, pre-reading and post-reading activities were carried out in the classroom to assist text comprehension.

The participants in this study were 55 first-year learners at Kanda University of International Studies. All of the students were English majors and the data were collected during the first semester of their 1st-year reading course, a required course for English majors. The data were collected over a period of ten weeks. The learners were instructed to discuss each question until they reached a consensus about what they thought the correct answer was. Asking them to reach a consensus was one way of letting learners know that the purpose of the group work was to have as much communication and negotiation as possible rather than a division of labour.

Although some people see pairs and triads as inherently different from larger groups, in this study the data were all treated in the same way. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, pairs and triads will be referred to as groups of two and groups of three. To measure the pedagogical value of different group sizes data were collected on group sizes and scores on the reading comprehension activities each week. To measure the social value of group size, learners were asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of semester. In the questionnaire, learners were asked to give their feelings about working in different sized groups. The results from the questionnaire were compared with the reading comprehension scores.

## Results

### Questionnaire

The questions were:

1. What group size do you prefer?
2. In which group size do you have the most

fun?

3. In which group size do you feel shy?
4. In which group size do you succeed (get the right answers)?
5. In which group size is it most difficult to succeed (get the right answers)?
6. In which group size do you understand the reading text best?
7. In which group size do you have the most difficulty understanding the reading text?

For a tabulated representation of student answers to the questionnaire, please see Appendix B. The most preferred group size amongst the students in this study was four; the least preferred were working as a whole class and working alone. In terms of enjoyment, groups of four were preferred, and the least preferred were working alone, in groups of two, and as a whole class. In terms of student perceptions regarding their ability to understand the text and successfully answer questions, groups of four came out on top and working alone and as a whole class were the least preferred. So we can see that students seem to prefer groups of four, but what is unclear is whether this is because they have become accustomed to working in groups of four or whether it is a natural preference. One third of the students stated that they feel shy when working in a group of two. This could be a result of the extra output required in this situation; there are only two people present, so each has to contribute around 50% of the discussion. Learners may feel this places too much demand on them in terms of the amount of speaking. What is shown quite clearly by the questionnaire results is the preference for group work in general. Regardless of which group size the learners are in, they state that it is much easier than working as a whole class or working alone.

Learners were asked to add any other comments they had regarding group size. Several wrote that it depended on who the members were; with some

people a large group is a lot of fun, but others work better in smaller groups. Also, several learners commented that smaller groups were better because it was sometimes necessary to meet outside of class to complete activities that had not been completed during class. In such cases, with larger groups it was difficult for learners to organize a meeting time. Several also commented on the value of doing group work outside of the classroom. They enjoyed meeting and talking to people they would not usually talk to in a more relaxed environment such as in the canteen at lunchtime. This could have increased the bond between the learners during class time as well.

### **Analysis of scores**

There are many confounding factors when looking at group size from a pedagogical perspective. The two most salient confounding factors are the difficulty of the different reading comprehension activities and variation in learner ability. To control for the difficulty of different reading comprehension activities, as many different group sizes as possible were used each week, while all the learners were working on the same reading comprehension activity. The ability of each learner would appear to have the strongest influence over the results. In order to eliminate possible variation of scores relating to personal ability the mean score for each learner over all ten reading comprehension activities was calculated, as a learner who is lower in ability is likely to be lower in ability no matter in which group size they work, likewise with a learner who is higher in ability. After that, individual learner mean scores for each group size were calculated. The score for analysis was the difference between a student's mean score and their score in each group size. For example, if a learner's mean score was 7.2 out of 10 and their mean score when working in groups of two was 8 out of 10, then 0.80 would represent that learner's value for groups of two. That is, that learner achieved on average 0.80 points higher when working in groups of two than in other

**Table 1. Mean reading comprehension scores for the different group sizes**

Group size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
2	0.44	1.08051	0.15130	-1.97	2.83
3	-0.3000	1.56255	0.21880	-2.81	6.40
4	-0.3271	1.28250	0.19118	-5.71	2.12
5 or 6	1.1639	1.09288	0.16476	-3.00	3.05
Total	0.2996	1.37882	0.1	-5.71	6.40

group sizes. If the same learner had a mean score of 6.25 out of 10 when working in groups of five, then the figure -0.95 would represent their score for groups of five, meaning that when working in groups of five the student achieved on average 0.95 points lower than their overall average score.

Post-hoc tests were used to determine within which group sizes learners scored significantly higher or lower than their personal mean score. The results are shown in Table 2.

## Discussion

### *From a social perspective*

It seems quite clear that the learners in this study prefer to work in groups of four. The questionnaire data showed they had the most fun in groups of four and not many reported feeling shy in these groups. Learners also felt they are more easily able to succeed in groups of four, with the fewest number feeling unable to succeed (4%). In terms of understanding the reading text, learners also felt that groups of four were the best and the fewest number reported feeling unable to understand the text (2%). Interestingly, none answered that they felt shy in a group of three.

It is also clear that the majority of learners dislike working alone; only 2% reported preferring this.

No one answered that they have fun when working alone. The largest number felt unable to succeed or understand the text when working alone. Certainly there are times when learners are required to read alone, notably when the reading is done for homework. If learners feel unable to succeed with reading comprehension questions or reading comprehension itself when working alone, then perhaps we should minimise the amount of intensive reading that needs to be done alone and maximize the use of groups in the reading classroom. There were many positive comments from learners about working in groups, even when it required meeting outside of class and doing homework in groups.

### *From a pedagogical perspective*

If one were to make a continuum of group size from the most success to the least success achieved by learners within this study, it would look like this:

$$5/6 > 2 > 3 > 4$$

When learners were working in groups of five or six they did significantly better than working in groups of two, three or four. When working in groups of four they did significantly worse than in groups of two and five/six and worse than in groups of three, but the difference was not significant.

**Table 2. Comparison of scores between the different group sizes**

Bonferroni		Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Significance
(I) group size	(J) group size			
2	3	0.46647	0.25257	0.398
	4	0.76358	0.26085	0.023*
	5/6	-0.72739	0.26242	0.037*
3	2	-0.46647	0.25257	0.398
	4	0.29711	0.26085	1.000
	5/6	-1.19386	0.26242	0.000*
4	2	-0.76358	0.26085	0.023*
	3	-0.29711	0.26085	1.000
	5/6	-1.49097	0.27040	0.000*
5/6	2	0.72739	0.26242	0.037*
	3	1.19386	0.26242	0.000*

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

It is interesting that although learners feel that they are able to succeed and understand the text best in groups of four, they failed to achieve high scores in the reading comprehension activities in groups of four. This shows just how important it is to take account of both social and pedagogical perspectives when considering the issue of group size.

### Conclusion

Although groups of four are often suggested as pedagogically ideal, this research demonstrates that this suggestion cannot be applied across the board in all educational settings for all activities. For some courses, groups of four may give learners a disadvantage. In the case of this freshman English reading course, pedagogically learners performed best in groups of two and five or six. Within the context of this course, putting learners in groups of three or four exclusively may disadvantage them.

On the other hand, it is apparent that learners enjoy working in groups of four. Furthermore, from the questionnaire data we can see that learners have very different preferences. If 14% of the learners prefer to work in groups of three, is it acceptable to ignore their preferences in favour of the 50% who like groups of four? How can we balance learner preferences with the organization which is the most effective pedagogically? In the freshman English reading course in which this study was carried out, learners did a variety of both pre-reading and post-reading activities to assist comprehension of the text. In this situation, perhaps it would be best for learners to carry out the pre-reading and post-reading activities in groups of three or four and then work in groups of five or six for the main event, the reading comprehension exercise, around which all the other activities are centred. Carrying out the pre-reading and post-reading activities in groups of three or four means that students have the opportunity to experience a group size they prefer, fulfilling social needs. Working in groups of five or six for the reading comprehension exercises, which in the context of this course were the most important activity, answers pedagogic needs by facilitating student comprehension of the text, potentially leading to better scores on reading comprehension questions.

Clearly, one group size will not work for all learners in all courses and all educational settings. It is in the best interests of everyone involved that teachers vary group sizes, giving learners opportunities to work with different people as well as different numbers of people to give them a broader language learning experience.

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### Appendices

The appendices for this article can be downloaded from <[jalt-publications.org/tlt/resources/2009/0905a.pdf](http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/resources/2009/0905a.pdf)>

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# Teacher development and reflecting on experience

## Keywords

teacher development, experience, reflection, native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy

Reflection on experience is commonly and correctly regarded as essential for teacher development. In order to reinvent themselves day after day, teachers need to reflect on professional experiences within a specific context and relate them to the broader issues of teaching and learning. In this report, two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors from different faculties at the same university describe a class-exchange experiment and reflect upon its outcomes. The report reveals the extent to which the reflective process is subjective. The teachers—one a native speaker, the other a non-native speaker—relate the experience to their own specific teaching backgrounds, contexts, identities, and insecurities. Though these are fundamentally different, they nevertheless arrive at the same conclusion: the class-exchange experiment was a thoroughly worthwhile endeavor and opportunities for reflection should be seized upon. The report therefore supports the contention that reflection on experience is a powerful tool for teachers wishing to manage their own professional development.

経験について内省することは、教師としての成長に重要であると考えられている。毎日、自己を再生するためには、教師は教育指導や学習に関連する大きな問題に結びつけて、自分自身の経験を内省する必要がある。この報告では、同じ大学の異なる学部でEFLを教える教員2人が試行したクラス交換と、それについての内省について論じる。2人の教師（英語を母語とする教師と母語としない教師）は、この経験をそれぞれの持つ異なる背景、文脈、アイデンティティ、不安に関連づけて主観的に内省しているが、どちらも同じ結論に達している。すなわち、クラス交換は極めて価値ある試みであり、(The Language Teacherや学校内の紀要といったジャーナルに投稿することも含めて) 経験についての内省を促進する機会はいかなるものでも利用すべきであると結論づけている。プロとしての成長を願う教師にとって、経験について内省することは強力な手段である。

**Reiko Mori**  
**Stuart Gale**

Fukuoka Prefectural  
University

**A**MERICAN philosopher John Dewey argued that only through reflection is life experience educative and personal development assured (1910, 1938). Schön (1983) similarly regarded reflection as necessary for promoting professional development, asserting that practitioners can grow if they reflect on their professional experiences instead of relying solely on technical knowledge (such as theories). Johnson and Golombek (2002) note that teachers' experiences and subsequent reflections in relation to theory and practice serve as a vital catalyst for development. Such reflection on experience allows teachers to reinvent themselves on a daily basis and avoid drowning in the drudgery of marking papers and getting bogged down with administrative work. As a way of exploring experiences, Johnson (2006) suggests "systematically problematizing [teachers'] own everyday practices" and asking "the broader questions of not just whether their practices work, but for whom, in what ways, and why" (pp. 248-249). This resonates with the concept of *crossing borders*, the idea that decompartmentalizing university departments and classes and working with diversified groups of people promotes creativity and experiential learning (Murphey, Okada, Iijima, & Asaoka, 2008).

In this report, we discuss a border crossing experiment at our institution. This experience gave us an opportunity to reflect on the relative merits of native and non-native speaker teachers, how they perceive themselves, and how a closer working relationship can help support student learning.

## Native and non-native speaker teachers working together: Reiko's story

As the only English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in my department, I have always wondered whether the students in my speaking classes were happy with having a non-native speaking English teacher. From my experiences as a teacher and as a learner, I knew my students would love to have a native-speaker instruct them. When I aired this concern to my British colleague Stuart Gale (who teaches EFL in a different faculty at our university), he offered to exchange lessons with me. We devised

a plan to do so three times over a single week on the understanding that, if successful, the experiment might develop into something more substantial and permanent. Stuart taught a lesson to each of my three speaking classes, and I taught each of his three writing classes in Japanese. Prior to these lessons, we discussed our usual teaching approaches, lesson plans, and materials. We also forewarned the students in order to pique their interest and raise anticipation. Each of us brought our own teaching materials and taught as we normally would to our regular students. Neither of us was present when the other taught.

Prior to this experiment, I had been very reluctant to bring native English speakers into my classes for a number of reasons. In contrast with native-speaking teachers, non-native EFL instructors often face challenges to their credibility as English communicators as well as to their professional status from administrators (Braine, 2004) and learners alike (Liu, 2004). I myself have often been frustrated and unduly affected by this common and erroneous perception. Indeed, when placed in a classroom with a native-speaker teacher, I have felt threatened as an advanced English learner and EFL teacher since, in the eyes of students, only speakers of inner circle varieties have legitimate claims to knowing "correct" English. Under these circumstances my English ability and self-confidence is likely to decrease, leaving me feeling inferior as a professional and making linguistic mistakes I would not normally make.

Despite my reservations, the reason why I invited Stuart to teach my classes was that I wanted my students to hear a different voice, a different kind of English, and experience a different way of teaching. In short, I wanted to provide them with an on-campus multicultural experience. My commitment to the students therefore enabled me to overcome deep-rooted fears and cross the borders between our faculties and between native speaker and non-native speaker teachers.

### **Thoughts on the native/non-native speaker dichotomy: Stuart's perspective**

As a native speaker teaching English in a monocultural EFL context, it is always with a wry smile that I hear of non-native speakers doubting the legitimacy of their English or their right to teach it. Thankfully, it is no longer a source of serious debate in linguistic circles. As Canagarajah (1999) and others have pointed out, the viability of English as the world's *lingua franca* rests upon it assimilating and de-stigmatizing those varieties spoken by people for whom it is not a first language (i.e., the vast

majority of its users). Nevertheless, and as Reiko has noted, the concept of "superior Englishes" is still with us at the grassroots level and continues to influence hiring policy at some universities in Japan and elsewhere. Strange then, that native speakers such as myself suffer from our own, equally real insecurities. For example, I am acutely aware that most Japanese students enter university with little or no experience of being taught a foreign language in that language. The extent to which they are immersed in English in my classroom (defensible in terms of sound pedagogic reasoning perhaps, but also due to my shortcomings as a Japanese speaker) is for the students potentially disorientating, threatening, and demotivating. I'm under no illusions that most of my students would welcome the occasional explanation in their first language, and though I sporadically try to provide this to the best of my ability, I'm sure it is rarely to their complete satisfaction.

A less obvious source of insecurity affecting native speaker teachers is our lack of familiarity and empathy with whatever concepts of good teaching students carry with them. This is also symptomatic of cultural imperialism and something to which native speakers, particularly those fresh off the plane and giddy with communicative ideals, are especially prone. Simply put, Japanese students, like all people, have expectations based predominantly on experience. It is therefore condescending and unreasonable for others with little or no appreciation of that experience to suddenly impose alien philosophies upon them. The native speaker may find that his or her preconceptions, so applicable back home, lack credibility and are resisted when applied to another context. Ironically, this often leads to complaints about the passivity of the class, the very quality that has traditionally defined proper student conduct in Japan.

While crossing borders does not necessarily solve these problems, it does at least serve to demonstrate that native speaker teachers have much to gain from studying other teachers in action, and particularly those from the same cultural background as the students. This is especially true for native speakers who, like me, were educated in Britain from the mid-seventies. At that time, state schools were very much in thrall to a radical interpretation of the communicative ideal. Consequently, those of us who passed through that system are now only too aware of our shortcomings in terms of explaining what was never explained to us, namely the rules of English grammar. By contrast, the non-native speaker teacher from the same cultural background as the students has not only thoroughly studied English grammar formally, but can also

anticipate typical problems caused by interference with their mutual first language. It is therefore my firm conviction that, in terms of circumventing whatever they perceive to be their own limitations, every EFL teacher has something to gain by crossing borders and introducing their students to an alternative variety of English and teaching style.

### **Reiko's reflections on the border crossing**

The exchange was well received by my students. Some of them expressly thanked me for the opportunity to interact with a native English speaker and to be exposed to different teaching materials. Working with Stuart and his students was an educative experience for two other reasons: First, I learned that crossing borders could provide provocative experiences that promoted reflection. In addition, I realized I can develop my professional awareness anytime, anywhere if I critically reflect on those experiences.

The border crossing experiment was also a wonderful opportunity to get to know my colleague personally and professionally, something not always possible in the compartmentalized academic world. I could glimpse into his personality and philosophy on learning and teaching. Above all, I came to know him not as an idealized native speaker, but as a professional placed in a specific local context, a person trying his best to enhance student learning in ways he felt comfortable with. As we planned and carried out the lesson exchange, a high degree of professional camaraderie developed between us. This will undoubtedly be useful as we carry out future duties in our respective faculties and university committees.

Non-native educators face and overcome misperceptions of their work in different ways. Some emphasize culture and effective language use, employing anti-racist materials so as to demystify the native speaker (Amin, 2004). In my case, however, I needed to directly hear from a native speaker teacher in order to sensitize myself to the unique tensions they themselves are under and consider their experiences and insecurities in relation to my own. Negotiating the lesson exchange and writing this report together has provided me with a valuable opportunity for enquiring into an issue that has long troubled me.

Finally, the border crossing experience helped me realize that I can continue to develop as an EFL professional as long as I continue reflecting on my experiences and relating them to theory and practice. Ever since I became an EFL teacher, I have gone to graduate school, attended conferences, talked shop with colleagues, and discussed language-re-

lated issues with students in an attempt to develop professionally. Theories I was exposed to during graduate school and conferences have kept me in touch with the TESOL world and have saved me from feeling crushed by everyday drudgery. Similarly, regular teaching practice has helped anchor me to the classroom reality I have faced each day. This lesson exchange experiment and subsequent reflection has reminded me that opportunities for professional growth are all around me. I don't even need to leave campus. All I need to do is to act and be open to opportunities.

### **Crossing borders as catalyst for reflection: Stuart's experience**

The term *crossing borders* is appropriate because it evokes images of uncharted territories and unfamiliar faces—things that might in some circumstances be encountered with trepidation. Furthermore, and for the teacher entering a new class, there is also the realization that we are never more likely to fail in some endeavor as we are the first time we undertake it. Far from being debilitating, this fear of failure often sharpens us and contributes to a successful and mutually satisfying outcome.

From the students' perspective, an unfamiliar teacher is, as with anything new, exciting and potentially motivating. Though it does not automatically lead to increased learning, a different teaching style militates against routine and forces students into a process of reassessment and negotiation. There is a honeymoon period at the beginning of any course when the teacher and students are mutually eager to please as they negotiate their roles relative to each other. This period may last for half an hour or (in equally rare cases) the entire course, but it is almost always at its most pronounced in the first 30 seconds or so after the teacher has entered the room and begun to address the class. It is recognizable in the alert postures of the students and their heightened receptiveness. While it may be beyond most of us to sustain this atmosphere for more than a single class, crossing borders with another teacher does at least give us the means to recreate it at any given time.

It is therefore no surprise that the students I met in Reiko's class were thoroughly responsive and apparently motivated by having a new teacher with them. Similarly, the need for us all to prove ourselves was conducive to a higher-than-usual degree of student participation (by comparison with my own classes). I was also impressed by the homework I received from my usual students the following week. This homework had been set by Reiko and was different to the type of writing assignment

usually given them. The results were generally very pleasing and, in some cases, genuinely outstanding. Some of the students had taken it upon themselves to produce their best work of the semester, a fact that has subsequently motivated me to evaluate and modify my classes. This, I believe, bears further testimony to the positive effects of crossing borders, both in terms of facilitating the development of students and, just as importantly, teachers themselves.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to present an example of reflection on experience as an educative process. The experience itself (i.e., exchanging classes with a colleague) proved constructive in terms of enhancing student-teacher motivation and teacher-teacher collaboration. Most importantly, it provided an opportunity for reflection and professional development comparable to other similar endeavors such as peer coaching and narrative inquiry (Johnson, 2006), as well as the process of reflection-through-writing for publications such as *The Language Teacher* and in-house journals. Refining the reflective process makes it more likely that better understood instructional processes will be translated into more effective classroom practice.

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**"Wow, that was such a great lesson, I really want others to try it!"**

**「すばらしい授業!、これを他の人にも試してもらいたい!」**



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# Exploring limited opportunities in language education: Pan-SIG interview with JD Brown and Deryn Verity

## Keywords

connected speech, sociocultural theory, cultural, online teaching, opportunities, testing, limitations, proficiency and curriculum

**D**ERYN Verity and JD Brown are the plenary speakers at the 8th Annual Pan-SIG Conference May 23-24, at Toyo Gakuen University, in Chiba. They are interviewed by Folake Abass and Andrew Atkins.

James Dean ("JD") Brown is a professor on the graduate faculty of the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He specializes in the areas of language testing, curriculum design, program evaluation, and research methods. He has published a number of articles and books on these topics.

Deryn Verity is a professor in the Department of International & English Interdisciplinary Studies at Osaka Jogakuin College in Osaka. She is also a lecturer in the Columbia University/Teachers College Tokyo MATESOL program and Instructor in the new online MATESOL program offered by the New School in New York City. Her interests include socio-cultural theory, pedagogy and methodology, online education, and language awareness.

**Folake:** Thank you both for doing this interview with us. To begin, can you tell us about your research interests?

**Deryn:** I'm interested in what Vygotskian theory has to tell us about teachers and teaching and by implication, learners and learning. I'm also interested in language awareness and how teachers can support learners in developing a sense of active engagement with their second language. The most fundamental interest I have is in how we as teachers can help learners come to know new things, particularly in the ways that we use language.

**JD:** At the moment, I am working on two books: a collection of modules for teaching various aspects of connected speech, and a teacher training book giving detailed explanations of various aspects of connected speech. I'm also working on a number of papers: one reflects on my three decades of cloze testing research, another looks back at all the mistakes I've made in language testing and what I have learned from them, and I just published a paper in *Language Assessment Quarterly* on language testing context analysis. In terms of outside consulting, I am currently doing a qualitative and quantitative evaluation for the STEP organization of their Eiken tests and testing program, as well as an oral-proficiency test-development project for kids in Hawaiian language immersion programs all over the state of Hawaii.

**Andrew:** How did you become involved in these areas?

**JD:** Back in 1980, when I was teaching in China, I found my students could understand me if I spoke using dictionary pronunciation, but they were completely lost when they encountered natural North American English my colleagues and I produced when we spoke together. The search for ways to bridge that gap eventually led me to what I now call *connected speech*. Over the years, I have found some research about connected speech, but with the sole exception of Shockey's (2003) linguistic treatment of related topics, I have found nothing that focuses exclusively on it. Seeing a need and corresponding gap, I set out to remedy the situation. I began by editing a collection of articles on connected speech with my wife (Brown & Kondo-Brown, 2006). I then edited modules (Brown, forthcoming a) and wrote a book (Brown, forthcoming b) for teaching connected speech. I've tried to make all of these resources practical and useful in both ESL and EFL contexts.

**Deryn:** Going from a MATESOL program to a PhD program where several professors were actively engaged in developing their understanding of socio-cultural theory (SCT) and its application to second language acquisition influenced me a lot. I came to understand that what you can't see in the classroom is maybe more important than what you can see. A more recent interest of mine is in online education and what it has to show us about dialogic interaction and the possibilities of scaffolding learning. I was skeptical at first that the teaching would be as satisfying as face-to-face teaching, but that concern soon disappeared. The internet was, and continues to be, an intensive, truly dialogic medium for teaching and learning.

**Folake:** For those not familiar with SCT, could you tell us about it and how it applies to second language acquisition (SLA)?

**Deryn:** The basic premise of SCT is that language acquisition is a process of social and cultural construction of self and knowledge. Rather than seeing the learner as a processor, and SLA as a mostly internal, private process, SCT views SLA as a socially-situated process. By learning a second language, we learn to participate in the conventions of that language. Language acquisition is a two-way street. SCT allows learners a lot more agency than some other models of SLA, yet it does not marginalize the

role of instruction. Indeed, for SCT, learning only happens when the learner interacts with others, and often the most significant "other" is the teacher.

**Andrew:** JD, in recent years, some of your publications have been about the suprasegmental properties of connected speech you mention. Could you tell us more about what this involves?

**JD:** To me, connected speech is the speech used in all native speaker talk. Returnees and other advanced-level EFL learners also use connected speech, which I suspect, is one important feature that marks them as high-level learners of English. Connected speech is a fairly complex, rules-based pronunciation system that makes words easier to pronounce in natural speech and connects the words into a smooth flow of language. These rules involve word and utterance stress, strong and weak forms of words, vowel and consonant reduction, syllable and word linking, dropping of sounds, inserting sounds, assimilating sounds, and so on.

**Folake:** What are some of the challenges of SLA, especially teaching in Japan? How can we as teachers introduce a more holistic approach?

**Deryn:** SLA is a psycholinguistic, culturally situated, highly complex process, and language teaching is another, separate culturally constructed and situated, highly complex process. As language teachers know, they do not always converge!

Second language fluency in Japan is constrained by a variety of factors. There is a strong tradition of making language a book subject instead of a practical one. The challenge is to break through to more holistic, aware language use with students. What is whole or context-rich for one learner (or teacher) is not for another; so perhaps we should be offering more opportunities to make choices. This not only provides more potential match-ups between learners and techniques/goals/activities, but it also directly builds learner agency into the curriculum. By helping learners recognize and commit themselves to new choices, we may be serving them well and indirectly removing some of the barriers that exist between them and language.

**Andrew:** You have both been asked to give a plenary lecture at the Pan-SIG conference in May and given the conference theme, how do you interpret *limited opportunities in language education*, and how does what you do relate to this theme?

**JD:** In these times, we tend to think of financial limitations, at least in the US. But I prefer to think the theme of this conference has to do with limitations Japanese students face while studying English. These are not financial but rather cultural limitations, about which we *gaijin* should probably remain silent. Nonetheless, since I have a secure job in Hawaii, I can pose some questions which indirectly point to some of the limitations I have observed over my two decades of being in and out of Japan:

- Why is English a required subject for all Japanese? Should it be required?
- Why do those Japanese students who like English feel that way?
- Are the entrance examinations and other admissions systems developed in recent years (e.g., the recommendation system and special admissions tests/practices for returnees) reliable, valid, and fair?
- Why don't Japanese students have more opportunities to interact with native speakers and to study abroad? And when they do get a chance, why are they stigmatized as returnees?

While being an outsider to Japan may mean I don't really understand (as suggested in no uncertain terms by Yoshida-sensei, 1996a, 1996b), I may have the advantage of perspective in that I have other baselines in Hawaii and around the world to compare my Japan experiences to. In any case, the questions I raise above did not come to my mind in a vacuum. I learned about them from people living, working, and struggling with these issues on a daily basis.

Even though I've spent a total of six years teaching graduate courses in Japan (spread over the past 25 years), it is clear to me that the only effect I could possibly have had was an indirect one. That's as it should be. I have taught hundreds of Japanese and *gaijin* graduate students in Japan and Hawaii, given public presentations to literally thousands of people at conferences and other venues in Japan, and of course written articles to the many readers of *JALT Journal* and *The Language Teacher* and various JALT SIG newsletters. In many of those contacts with language teachers in Japan I addressed the issues raised above. I can only hope I have indirectly made some people think about them, perhaps in new ways. It is the people of Japan who must bring these issues up as problems in real Japanese settings, suggest changes with a chance of being accepted, and create reforms that will have any real importance to language teaching in Japan.

**Deryn:** English teaching in Japan is a mature industry. It has undergone many stages of development. We enjoy the benefits of high level facilities, resources, and technology. So what is the relevance of the term limited opportunities here? Even with all the privileges we enjoy as teachers and learners enjoy, there are many ways in which the potential for good teaching and successful learning is overlooked, deflected, or even thrown away completely.

Partly because it is so comfortable to teach here in many ways, I think there is always a danger of becoming somewhat complacent about the language classroom. Although we may not be consciously aware of them, there are limits of time, proficiency levels, money, and energy. Part of our professional development should be in practicing various ways of coping with these limits. That's one of the great strengths of JALT. Simply by attending a chapter meeting or conference, you are stimulated into looking afresh at your own teaching practice. So expanding could just mean doing something new; it broadens the mind.

I am very aware of the legitimate gripes many language teachers have here in Japan. Students can be under-motivated (even while expressing great interest in learning English), tired, overworked, and generally distracted. Materials can be inappropriate and boring. So another sense of expanding limited opportunities could be seeking ways of not letting these negative aspects wear you down and redefining their limits as opportunities for growth! What is most important and interesting about the conference theme is that it encourages us to seek what the limits are, because boundaries are as socially constructed as anything else.

**Folake:** Your point about complacency in the classroom is an interesting one. As teachers and students often feed off each other, it can be a struggle not only to motivate our students but to keep them motivated. How can we move beyond the negativity we sometimes face?

**Deryn:** I'm not sure there is a single or all-purpose answer to the question. One thing is understanding what the source of the negativity is. Sometimes it seems to come from the students, but at other times it surely comes from us, even if it is unexamined and unrecognized. An experienced teacher can often dip into a toolkit of experience and make a small change that can tip a class or a group dynamic from negative to positive. Even a less experienced teacher can do something similar, and that's how you learn what works-by experimenting in different ways.

How important is the negativity? Depending on the surrounding culture and the institutional culture of the school, some groups of learners can appear to be more resistant than they are. I wrote about a situation I had some years ago, after I taught my first semester in Japan (Verity, 2000). I found the students incredibly resistant until I looked more closely at how I was acting with them. It took most of the first semester, but by mid-year I was much more aware of how to read the students, and they ended up being exactly the same mix of resistant, cooperative, enthusiastic, and uninterested kids that I was used to teaching. But I had to allow the sense of failure I felt at first to exist, look at it, then finally experiment my way out of it.

**Andrew:** Thank you again for doing this interview with us. Can you give us some insight in to what you will be talking about in your plenary at the Pan-SIG conference?

**JD:** I plan to reflect on assessment and curriculum development mistakes I've made over the years and the lessons I've learned. For example, at UCLA (1976-1980), I learned the importance of a priori standards setting, the value of matching placement tests with curriculum, and the immovability of curriculum. In China (1980-1982), I discovered the importance of listening to people and the value of multiple sources of information. At FSU (1982-1985), I discovered the importance of including all stakeholders in curriculum development and the dangers of territoriality. At UHM (1986-1991), I learned how to combine CRT and NRT principles for placement testing, the value of including both discrete-point and integrative tests, the usefulness of quantitative research methods as a weapon, and the impermanence of curriculum development. In a number of other large-scale curriculum projects around the world, I have learned how using the same research methods can produce different results.

**Deryn:** I'm going to be looking at the online discourse that occurs in online teaching from an SCT perspective. Considering the reservations I had about the potential for real teaching to happen online, it was exciting to see the ways in which online teaching allows for more and deeper interaction with learners. Teaching online opened up an important window onto what I think of as the fractal problem of teacher education. How can we help novice teachers learn to teach in transformative ways when the standard MA-level teaching/training context tends to force us into a very instructor-centered, transmission-based mode?

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## ...with Myles Grogan & Mark de Boer

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We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 700 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used which can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see any edition of *The Language Teacher*). Please send submissions to <my-share@jalt-publications.org>.



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**T**HIS month Harlan Kellem and James Matchett join together to bring a popular quiz show game into your classroom. After that, Jerry Talandis gives us an account of how your students can bring stories alive with Web 2.0. Enjoy!

# Classroom Feud: A survey and competition

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### Quick guide

**Key words:** Family Feud, four skills, game

**Learner English level:** All

**Learner maturity:** Junior high school and above

**Preparation time:** Part of one class to conduct survey, plus 30 minutes

**Activity time:** 50 minutes

**Materials:** Survey handout, clicker, *marubatsu* hand-held buzzer (optional)

### Introduction

This activity was inspired by the classic TV game show, "Family Feud." It works well for a class of 40 students, but it is best when used in more than one class. The students produce the material; it is a fun and anxiety-free competition!

### Preparation

**Step 1:** Prepare a survey with about a dozen questions to suit your students (see Appendix for sample survey questions).

**Step 2:** Count the responses and rank each category according to the number of students who wrote

the same response. Choose as many as seven of the most popular categories. *Option:* Write the answers on note cards, which can be turned over as correct answers are given.



### Procedure

**Step 1:** Put the students into teams. One way is to divide the class down the center and have the students turn their desks so the two teams are facing each other. Another option is to have more teams (maximum of four) of fewer students. In that case, some students watch but will have a chance for action later as teams rotate. Non-playing teams can hold the answers on note cards.

**Step 2:** Explain the rules.

1. One student from each team comes to the front of the class to face off.
2. The teacher reads a question from a category at random. For example, "What are your favorite zoo animals?" The student who hits the clicker first guesses. When the student guesses one of the most common answers (e.g. "Monkey!"), his or her team gets 13 points, for the number of people who wrote monkey in the survey. If the guess is not among the most common survey responses, the student from the other team has a chance to guess.
3. The team of the student who first answers correctly gains control of the category. Each student takes a turn and guesses the other items in the category, getting points for each correct response.

- Each incorrect guess is one strike (X). Three strikes against the team means the other team then gains control of the category and guesses until the category is exhausted or they have three strikes.  
*Option:* When the first team has three strikes, the second team gets one chance to guess one of the remaining answers. If they get it, they steal all the points away from the first team for that category.
- Return to rule 1, above, and continue the process for all categories.

### Notes

For beginners, it is helpful to pre-teach useful phrases such as: *I think it's ~, Is it ~? I think number one is ~, Can you repeat the question?* etc. The number of items in each category and the questions should be adjusted for your class level and size.

### Conclusion

Students always get excited guessing, but there is a danger of waning interest if the game goes on too long. One thing we like about this lesson is that the students are providing the input for the activity. It is their classmates' answers that they are discovering. Also, it is a great way to prepare one activity that can be used in many classes!

### Appendix

#### Sample survey questions

*Questions appropriate for university level, and top responses out of 100 surveyed:*

- What is the best part-time job for students? (tutor 24, waiter or waitress 23, convenience store job 14, cashier 7, gas station attendant 5)
- Where is the best place for a holiday? (Hawaii 32, Europe 12, Australia 11, France 9, U.S.A. 8, Italy 5)
- What turns you on? (music 10, sports 8, shopping 6, soccer 6, traveling 5, driving 5, singing 5, love 5)
- What turns you off? (study 21, tests 8, part-time job 5, insects 5, homework 4, cleaning my room 4)
- What occupation would you like to have in the future? (teacher 23, translator 10, office worker 10, hotel clerk 8, travel agent 8, nothing 8)
- What is most important for you when thinking about a marriage partner? (character 23, kindness 22, gentleness 8, money 7, love 6, looks 6)

*Questions appropriate for senior high school level, and top responses out of 140 surveyed:*

- What are your favorite zoo animals? (panda 23, elephant 18, monkey 13, lion 13, rabbit 11, tiger 10, giraffe 9)
- What objects do you find in a book bag? (wallet 25, pencil case 21, lunchbox 19, cell phone 14, textbook 12, mirror 10, cosmetics 9)
- What are your least favorite school rules? (must wear uniform 36, cannot dye hair 28, must wear cardigan 13, 7 periods in a day 10, no short skirts 8, no pierced ears 6, 8:30 start 5)
- What are your favorite Japanese foods? (sushi 30, takoyaki 19, udon 18, okonomiyaki 12, tempura 9, sukiyaki 8, miso soup 6)

## Digital storytelling with free, online Web 2.0 resources

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### Quick guide

**Key words:** digital storytelling, computers, Web 2.0, multimedia, four skills integration

**Learner English level:** Intermediate and above

**Learner maturity:** High school and above

**Preparation time:** About 3 hours

**Activity time:** Four 50-minute class periods

**Materials:** Computer, broadband Internet connection, digital or cellphone camera. Optional: An external microphone or digital recording device, webcam, photo and audio editing software, video camcorder

### Introduction

The recent explosion of free, online Web 2.0 resources has provided ELT instructors with a

veritable cornucopia of options for helping students practice all four language skills in unique, interactive, and creative ways. From blogs, wikis, podcasting, and social networking sites, to services such as *Flickr*, *Jump Cut*, and *Slideshare*, there is no shortage of ways for learners to create and share multimedia content in English with the world. The possibilities are endless, and therein lies a problem: With so much that could be done, it may be hard to know where to start, especially for those new to Web 2.0. One strategy is to take a familiar activity genre and apply it with an e-learning spin to it. The following activity, based on Alan Levine's wiki, *50 Web 2.0 ways to tell a story*, exemplifies this tactic by providing a flexible online storytelling template that encourages creative self-expression and opportunities for English interaction. Here *VoiceThread* (a multimedia story creation website) is the tool of choice, but variations of this plan can be accomplished with virtually any online service.

### Preparation

**Step 1:** Explore the *VoiceThread.com* website, browsing through the various tutorials and sections. Clicking on a few sample VoiceThreads in the *Storytelling* section should demonstrate clearly the capabilities of this service.

**Step 2:** Create an account, then construct a simple test VoiceThread made from a few random digital photos you have convenient access to. Follow the instructions: Upload your photos and add some audio, video, or text commentary to each one.

**Step 3:** For practice, leave some audio, video, or text comments on a few other interesting and inspiring VoiceThreads.

**Step 4:** Decide on and bookmark a few already existing VoiceThreads to use as models for your students.

**Step 5:** (Optional) Create a more polished VoiceThread for yourself, one exemplifying the type of story you would like your students to tell.

### Procedure

**Step 1:** In the first class, introduce the concept of digital online storytelling and provide an overview of what you would like your students to create.

**Step 2:** Introduce the VoiceThread service by showing a few sample stories or the story you had created previously. Be sure to emphasize the interactive nature of the service, with the ability to give various types of feedback.

**Step 3:** Guide your students through the process of creating accounts.

**Step 4:** Provide time for students to explore various stories on their own and practice leaving comments on VoiceThreads they find interesting.

**Step 5:** Explain in more detail the sort of story you would like your students to create. Is it a simple narrative? A work of fiction? A movie review? A how-to manual? Lay out the required elements.

**Step 6:** Have students decide on a story idea and assign the photo taking/image creation step for homework.

**Step 7:** In the second class, students should write up their story on a simple storyboard handout (see Appendix). Help out as needed.

**Step 8:** In the third class, assist students as they create their own VoiceThreads.

**Step 9:** In the fourth class, require each student to view and leave comments on their classmates' VoiceThreads.

**Step 10:** (Optional) Alert your colleagues and friends to your students' stories and encourage them to leave comments.

### Conclusion

As stated, this activity can be done with any number of free, online resources. Follow up on the reference below for more ideas. The basic workflow is the same: Students write a story, gather multimedia content to illustrate it, then share their creations with classmates and others. In addition to providing a creative four-skills learning experience, this activity also helps students build Internet skills they can utilize beyond the classroom. Finally, it is a demonstration to you of how e-learning techniques can be implemented in conjunction with your regular English lessons.

### Reference

Levine, A. (2008) *50 Web 2.0 ways to tell a story*. [Online] Available: <cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/50+Ways>.

**Appendix****Sample storyboard handout**

Title:	Name:	Class:	
		Date:	

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Text:

Text:

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Text:

Text:

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Image #: \_\_\_\_\_

Text:

Text:

## ...with Robert Taferner

<reviews@jalt-publications.org>



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.

### BOOK REVIEWS ONLINE

A linked index of Book Reviews can be found at:

<jalt-publications.org/tlt/reviews/>

**T**HIS month's column features Malcolm Swanson's review of *Widgets*, an engaging, task-based classroom textbook.

## Widgets

[Marcos Benevides and Chris Valvona. Hong Kong: Pearson Longman, 2008. pp. 106. ¥2,520. ISBN: 978-962-01-8953-1.]

Reviewed by Malcolm Swanson, Seinan Jo Gakuin University

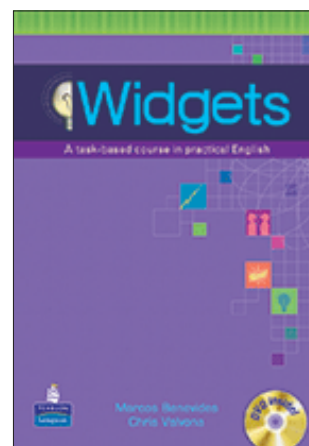
Like many course books, *Widgets* offers a progressive set of engaging activities, all displayed in an attractive, colourful package. However, most of the dialogues, activities, and drills that form the staple diet of many textbooks are gone, as *Widgets* is a task-based programme that combines a role play, a story, and a workbook.

The course is based around the story of a group of interns (played by your students) who enter a fictitious company, Widgets Inc. This company specializes in producing off-the-wall solutions to many daily problems, such as a multipurpose razor-cum-cell phone, or an Internet-enabled surfboard. However, the company is not doing well, and it soon falls on the new recruits to develop products that will save the company. The students are then guided through a series of scenarios that have them identifying possible products, developing and evaluating them, doing market research, and creating a marketing strategy, all the while under the guidance of the rather eccentric president and division heads.

This guidance comes in the form of teleconferences, all available on the DVD that is included in the book.

Working in groups, the students have ample opportunity for both self- and peer-review. This is an important part of the programme, for the responsibility for succeeding in this course is constantly placed on the students. They must produce to succeed. They are also evaluated at every phase by their group's project manager—a position that rotates so that every student has a chance to lead. These groups are determined in the first class, and continue without change for the entire course. After successfully selecting, developing, and demonstrating the products that eventually save the company, the trainees begin their future careers by creating a résumé and taking part in a job interview.

Teacher preparation is intense and essential. This is *not* a textbook you thumb through on the way to class. I found myself having to mentally rehearse each lesson beforehand so that I could fully understand the flow of the class and prepare the appropriate materials. There is no teachers' manual as such. Instead, comprehensive workplans and copiable materials are available from the Widgets website <www.widgets-inc.com>.



So, does the course work? The answer really depends upon any teacher's situation and expectations. Ellis (2003, pp. 333-334), in discussing the evaluation of task-based pedagogy, states, "tasks do not aim to teach communication, but to engage learners in communication, the assumption being that by so doing they will help learners achieve communicative competence." Certainly my students were engaged and on-task for the length of the course, and what they produced in that time was original, fun, and creative. Post-course student feedback, even allowing for the usual buttering up, was definitely positive, with most students reporting they enjoyed the course and had got a lot out of it. However, potential users might consider a few issues before deciding to adopt *Widgets*. Firstly, the text works best with a very stable class of around 16-20 students. If the class suffers from attendance problems, or has students who are not familiar with each other, groups will find it difficult to complete

tasks. I used it with larger classes of 30-40 students, which, while doable, became difficult to manage.

That seemingly unattainable quest of all language teachers—students working on-task in English—proved elusive, even when using the recommended approach of applying pressure through the group leaders. To be fair though, this might have been easier had I had smaller classes. Some of the pair work activities involved products the students could not identify with (such as a trash-talking baseball helmet), and as these are hard-wired into the lessons, those parts flopped. A selection of resources might serve this role better, as these were regular activities. The rigidity of the grouping was also an issue. This was fine with groups that clicked, but some rotation would have given other groups a better chance to succeed. In my case, I used the book for a 15-class semester, though the writers recommend a twice-weekly programme. That, I would have found difficult to sustain, and if I were in that situation I would have preferred a course

that allowed for more student-planned material, using the textbook's content as a model to build on.

Those reservations aside, I will probably use *Widgets* again this year, partly because it certainly was fun, quirky, and well-received by the students, but also because I want to put into practice everything I learned through using it for the first time last year. However, for teachers considering using *Widgets*, I would recommend first checking the composition of your classes carefully, studying *Widgets*' online resources, then taking the time to review task-based language learning. As Nunan (2004, p. 19) states, "the point of departure for task-based language teaching is real-world or target tasks," and *Widgets* certainly offers ample opportunity for both.

## References

- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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## RESOURCES • RECENTLY RECEIVED

### ...with Greg Rouault

<pub-review@jalt-publications.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 the Publishers' Review Copies Liaison address listed on the Staff page at the back of *TLT*.

#### RECENTLY RECEIVED ONLINE

An index of books available for review can be found at <jalt-publications.org/tlt/reviews/>

\* = new listing; ! = final notice. Final notice items will be removed 31 May. Please make queries by email to the appropriate JALT Publications contact.

### Books for Students (reviewed in *TLT*)

Contact: Greg Rouault

<pub-review@jalt-publications.org>

! *American English File*. Oxenden, C., Latham-Koenig, C., & Seligson, P. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. [4-level four skills coursebook incl. class audio CD, DVD, workbook w/multi-ROM, teacher's book, and *Test Generator* CD-ROM].

*Discover Great Britain and Ireland*. Berlin, S., & Nakayama, C. Tokyo: Kinseido, 2008. [Culture coursebook incl. DVD, VHS, translated transcripts, and task instructions and vocabulary in Japanese].

*Get Real*. Hobbs, M., & Keddle, J. S. Crawley, UK: Helbling Languages, 2008. [3-level coursebook for teens w/split student book and workbook for CEF A1-B2 incl. student's audio CD, CD-ROM, class audio CD, teacher's book, tests and resources book w/audio and *Test Builder* CD-ROM, and extension materials online].

! *Join In*. Richards, J. C., & O'Sullivan, K. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. [3-level conversation skills coursebook incl. student book w/edited CD, full class audio CD, teacher's book, and test pack w/CD].

! *Open Career Doors*. Tsuda, A. Tokyo: Pearson Longman/Kirihara-Shoten, 2009. [Basic business communications skills coursebook through TOEIC-type materials 300-500 level incl. CD, crossword puzzles, answer key, and vocabulary and cultural notes in Japanese].

! *Technical English*. Bonamy, D. Essex, UK: Pearson Education, 2008. [2-level English for technical purposes coursebook (CEF A1 and A2) incl. audio CD, workbook w/audio CD, teacher's book with *Test Master* CD-ROM, and companion website].

## JALT FOCUS

## ...with Marcos Benevides

<jalt-focus@jalt-publications.org>



JALT Focus contributors are requested by the column editor to submit articles of up to 750 words written in paragraph format and not in abbreviated or outline form. Announcements for JALT Notices should not exceed 150 words. All submissions should be made by the 15th of the month, one and a half months prior to publication.

## JALT FOCUS ONLINE

A listing of notices and news can be found at:  
<jalt-publications.org/tlt/focus/>

SHOWCASE  
GRASSROOTS  
OUTREACH  
JALT FOCUS  
MEMBER'S PROFILE

## JALT Calendar

Listings of major upcoming events in the organisation. For more information, visit JALT's website <jalt.org>, the JALT events website <jalt.org/events>, or see the SIG and chapter event columns later in this issue.

- ▶ 23 - 24 May – Eighth Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference: *Infinite Possibilities: Expanding Limited Opportunities in Language Education* at Toyo Gakuen University, Nagareyama Campus, Chiba.
- ▶ 5 - 7 Jun – JALT CALL Conference 2009, Toyo Gakuen University, Hongo Campus, Tokyo.
- ▶ 27 - 28 Jun – JALT Executive Board Meeting. Venue: Yoyogi, Tokyo.
- ▶ 28 Jun – JALT Ordinary General Meeting from 3:00pm. Venue: Yoyogi, Tokyo.
- ▶ 11 Oct – The 4th JALT Joint Tokyo Conference, Toyo Gakuen University, Hongo Campus.
- ▶ 21 - 23 Nov – JALT2009 "The Teaching Learning Dialogue: An Active Mirror" will be held at Granship Shizuoka. See <jalt.org/conference> for more information.

MEMBER'S PROFILE  
SHOWCASE  
GRASSROOTS  
OUTREACH

## JALT Focus

**T**HIS month we have a progress report from **Philip McCasland**, JALT's Director of Programs and *the* biggest cheese behind the biggest, language teaching conference in Asia (thought I was going to write "cheesiest" didn't ya?) So step into his world... if you dare!

## Behind the scenes at JALT2009

I have never wanted to be a wedding planner. Never, not in this life nor in any other. Yet, interestingly enough, there are several similarities between what I do and what I imagine wedding planners do. Consider: year-long planning... needing to accommodate relatives, friends, strangers, guests... coordinating times and spaces... planning events such as ceremonies, parties, food, fun, entertainment, travel... helping to reconcile dreams with realistic expectations and real life demands... balancing priorities against expenses... dealing with nerves, egos, stresses... and all for a huge 3-day event that thousands of people have invested so much money, time, and expectations on. Come to think of it, the JALT conference is far bigger and more complex than all but the most lavish of weddings!



The annual conference is our biggest event of the year. It requires the concerted efforts of hun-

JALT2009



THE TEACHING LEARNING DIALOGUE  
AN ACTIVE MIRROR  
- NOV 21-23, 2009 -  
GRANSHIP SHIZUOKA  
<JALT.ORG/CONFERENCE>

dreds of volunteers over thousands of hours. Here are some current trends, general challenges, and changes.

### **Current trends**

This conference planning year we have already instituted several changes that I hope will improve overall cooperation, communication, and general efficiency. For instance, we have started to spread responsibilities for the conference amongst all JALT Directors, which has greatly reduced the once-massive responsibilities of the Director of Programs. We have transitioned to a smaller, more compact—and thus higher-quality—conference, in recognition of the fact that we simply cannot continue to grow. What has been in the most recent past a three-and-a-half day conference will become a 3-day event this year, with more scaling back in 2010. We have begun using more online collaboration in real-time through *Google Documents* and *Skype* conference calls, to simplify document management and reduce email overload. We now offer new positions on the conference team as a response to the changing needs of each conference and site—in other words, getting more volunteers involved helps spread the workload. Finally, we will limit conference benefits for volunteers; after all, there are plenty of excellent, intrinsic reasons to volunteer.

### **General challenges**

JALT has hosted the national conference at the Shizuoka Granship site 4 times in the last 10 years. This means that we know more about its advantages and limitations than any other venue. One big advantage is that it is completely self-contained, and having all the events together in one spacious building makes layout and general logistics a breeze. One challenge remains in programming (i.e., scheduling) because not all of this abundant space is particularly usable for our type of conference. Thus, this year's conference team is looking for interesting alternatives to utilize as much of this unused or underutilized space as possible—metaphors of a desert reclamation project or urban renewal come to mind. Here are some of our ideas so far: (1) Make more poster presentation blocks available, raising the profile of this particular conference component; (2) Divide some of the open space into usable sections for small, regular presentations; (3) Schedule required SIG or chapter meetings in alternative spaces since they are not always well attended. Of course, we are open to your suggestions. Do *you* have any ideas for our Granship “desert reclamation” committee?

### **New! Improved!**

Here are some changes being made to the general events schedule: Featured speaker workshops have been part of our conference for more than 20 years. For at least the past 10 years, they have been subscribed to separately as a pre- or post-conference event. This year they will return to the main conference schedule (around the lunch-hour), but will still keep their unique intimacy with a limited number of participants (40). This frees up the late afternoon, early evening time block on the pre-conference day for the Technology in Teaching (TnT) sessions. We also know you want to meet the stars, but not in an awkward setting that is neither entirely formal nor informal. This year we hope to offer both formal and informal access to plenary and featured speakers through discussion sessions, lunch and dinner events, and pre-conference banquets. More information on events will be coming soon.

**Food and drink:** As many of you have experienced in past years, food and drink issues are a challenge at this site. It is just too far from the city center or any local eateries. So, this year, back by popular demand, the International Food Fair will return accompanied by several additions: (1) a coffee shop in the EME area, with limited breakfast and snack items served all day; (2) bento lunches that can be ordered in the morning and picked up at noon; (3) a lunchtime banquet with Plenary and Featured Speakers—requiring pre-registration; (4) a green tea exhibition and event (we *are* in Shizuoka after all), plus a local sake and distillers exhibition, with other local food and souvenirs available.

**Entertainment:** Rumors have it that our JALT conference parties may include a comedy team and karaoke with open participation. Other events such as author book signing, independent film screening, and a raffle with big prizes are also in the works.

All in all, I feel fortunate to be part of an extremely energetic team this year. It gives me great satisfaction to report that conference planning is on—or ahead of—schedule, thanks especially to the continuing efforts of these committee members: Deryn Verity, Steve Cornwell, and Sarah Louisa Birchley (Programs); Kazumi Kato, Masahiko Goshi, and Andrew Zitzmann (Site); and Jon Dujmovich and Forrest Nelson (Food and Entertainment). Needless to say, much more work awaits us in the coming months, as intensity and synergy intensify the closer we get to November. Please volunteer if you want to be part of this year's conference experience. Contact me at [programs@jalt.org](mailto:programs@jalt.org)

*Philip McCasland*

*Director of Programs (also available for weddings)*

## Announcements

### **Call for papers: Discourse and Identity Special Issue**

*The Language Teacher* is seeking papers (1,500-2,000 words) for a special issue on discourse and identity in second language contexts, including language learning settings and/or language-in-use beyond the classroom. Papers should be research-based and focus on the discursive accomplishment of identity through the application of participant-centred methodologies such as discursive psychology, conversation analysis or membership categorization analysis. We are looking for articles that document the negotiation of identity in instances of naturally-occurring interaction, particularly studies that feature original collections of interactional practices. Transcripts should conform to Jeffersonian conventions and be limited to 35 characters per line, including spaces. If you are interested in writing a paper for this special issue or have suggestions which might fit with the above themes, please contact Tim Greer at <tim@kobe-u.ac.jp> and Keiko Ikeda at <ikedakeiko@nagoya-u.jp>. The deadline for manuscript submissions is 30 July 2009.

### **Call for papers: Lifelong Language Learning**

*The Language Teacher* is seeking papers (1,500-2,000 words) for a special issue focusing on lifelong language learning. Papers should be research or classroom-based and related to language education for adult learners (post-graduation) in various contexts. Articles may address topics such as local or national guidelines and facilities for lifelong language learning; reasons that adults study languages; business-related language learning; language classes for the elderly; materials and methodology for adult learners; the challenges faced by lifelong learners and their teachers; the future of lifelong language learning; and other related topics. In addition, shorter papers for *My Share*, book reviews, and teacher or learner profiles are welcome. If you are interested in submitting a paper for this special issue, please contact Julia Harper <harper.julia.k@gmail.com>. The deadline for manuscript submissions is 30 September 2009 and publication is expected in September 2010.

### **Editorial position: TLT Associate Editor**

*The Language Teacher* is seeking a qualified candidate for the position of Associate Editor, with future advancement to the position of Co-Editor. Applicants must be JALT members and must have the knowledge, skills, and leadership qualities to

oversee the production of a monthly academic publication. Previous experience in publications, especially at an editorial level, is an asset. Knowledge of JALT publications is desirable. Applicants must also have a computer with email and word processing capabilities. This post requires several hours of concentrated work every week editing feature articles, scheduling and overseeing production, and liaising with the Publications Board. Applicants should be prepared to make a minimum 3-year commitment with an extension possible. The assumption of duties is tentatively scheduled for June 2009. Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae (including details of publication background and published works), a cover letter, and a statement of purpose indicating why they would like to become Associate Editor (and later advance to Co-Editor) of *The Language Teacher* to: Steve Brown, JALT Publications Board Chair, at <pubchair@jalt.org>. The deadline for receipt of applications is 31 May 2009.

### **Research Grants 2009**

Spring means a new opportunity to be awarded a JALT Research Grant to help fund your research aspirations. This year, apply between 1 May and 31 July for one of three 100,000 yen grants. Successful awardees will receive comprehensive support, both from the Research Grants Committee and from experienced advisors and mentors in the Research Grants Teacher-Researcher Network. Full information, including application procedures, is available on the JALT website at <<http://jalt.org/research-grants/>>.

## Is your membership due for renewal?

Check the label on the envelope this TLT came in for your renewal date, then go to <[jalt.org/main/membership](http://jalt.org/main/membership)> and follow the easy instructions to register. Help us to help you! Renew early!

## ...with Jason Peppard

<memprofile@jalt-publications.org>



Member's Profile is a column where members are invited to introduce themselves to *TLT*'s readership in 750 words or less. Research interests, professional affiliations, current projects, and personal professional development are all appropriate content. Please address inquiries to the editor.

### MEMBER'S PROFILE

## Jason Peppard

As the incoming Member's Profile and Showcase Editor, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the readers of *TLT*. First, however, I owe a big thanks to Damian Rivers for his sound advice and guidance through the transition process, and also to Theron Muller for his encouragement in offering me this position. I have big shoes to fill and will do my best to maintain the high standards set by my predecessors.

By retracing my steps in ELT, I hope to cover all of the appropriate topics for the Member's Profile column: professional development, professional affiliations, research interests and current projects. I'm sure that my story is not an unfamiliar one.

I came to Japan 6 years ago armed with a 120-hour TESOL certificate and a Japanese phrasebook. Feeling slightly burnt out from my youth-care job at a group home for troubled youth, I wanted to go on an adventure before pursuing graduate studies in psychology. Teaching English in Japan was the perfect solution: I could experience a new and exotic culture while making money to support myself, and eat sushi every day!

My first teaching position was with James English, a medium-sized *eikaiwa* in beautiful Yamagata city where I still live. My initial training consisted of observing a few classes taught by more experienced teachers and a short informal session with the head teacher. I was a little nervous at first, but jumped in and, to my surprise and relief, found teaching English to be a truly enjoyable and rewarding experience. I had originally planned to stay in Japan no longer than 2 years. When I had reached the 4-year mark, I realized that my teaching adventure was turning into a teaching career and felt the need for professional development.

After researching my options, I settled on pursuing an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham. Although a little more expensive than other distance MAs, the Birmingham courses are among the most respected worldwide, and the university has the highest possible ratings for teaching and research. It was an easy decision to make. The only regret that I have is not starting the MA earlier. It has helped me become a better teacher, introduced me to a large and expanding network of ELT professionals and friends, and has opened several doors, all before even finishing the program. I switched from fulltime to part-time at James to pursue work at the university level and have just finished my first year teaching at Tohoku Gakuin University. I've also recently taken on a part-time English lecturer position at Yamagata University.

Currently, my two main academic interests are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Lexical Approaches to language teaching. CDA involves analyzing discourse to uncover the underlying ideologies or agendas of its authors. I'm primarily interested in comparing how reports of the same events from different media outlets differ according to their respective ideological agendas, and how this can be determined by the authors' linguistic choices. Although not directly applicable to my current teaching situations, I hope to someday teach CDA awareness to advanced learners.

My interest in Lexical Approaches to language teaching mostly stems from my ongoing struggle with Japanese. The formal lessons I've taken have always focused on grammatical structure, much like the dominant PPP approach in ELT. However, when it comes to real life situations where I need to communicate in Japanese, I'm at a loss for words... literally. I've come to realize that it does not matter how much grammatical knowledge I have if my mental lexicon is underdeveloped. So, for my dissertation, I'm exploring the possibility of integrating a more lexical approach with a functional syllabus, using corpus-driven lexicogrammatical patterns. I hope to develop a system of syllabus design that is more efficient than the traditional grammatical approaches and easy to customize for specific groups of students.

Joining professional associations such as ETJ and JALT has also been a very integral step in my professional development. I was so impressed by my first JALT conference experience that I felt compelled to get more involved. I have since progressed from avid *TLT* reader, to proofreader, and finally to the editor of this column, all in a relatively short span of time.

If you too are interested in getting more involved, submitting to the Member's Profile or Showcase column would be a great way to get started. I'm looking forward to working with you and hearing your story.

## ...with Joyce Cunningham and Mariko Miyao

<grassroots@jalt-publications.org>



The co-editors warmly invite 750-word reports on events, groups, or resources within JALT in English, Japanese, or a combination of both.



In this issue, Nicolas Gromik writes about discovering suitable strategies for expanding learner potential, the focus of the JALTCALL conference this June. In the second report, Dan Waldhoff tells you how the Ibaraki Chapter employed some of the world's most sophisticated Internet technologies to simplify their web presence and did it for free!

## Expanding learner potential –It's your CALL!

by Nicolas Gromik, Tohoku University

With over 100 presentations specifically addressing education technology, the JALTCALL Conference 2009 is the best internationally recognized venue to discuss Computer Assisted Language Learning. The conference will take place from 5 to 7 June at Toyo Gakuen University, located near Suidobashi station between Akihabara and Shinjuku on the Sobu line in Tokyo. This year's guest speaker is Mark Warschauer, one of the most prolific contributors to the evolution of CALL policies, theories, and teaching practices. Readers not familiar with his papers can access them at <[www.gse.uci.edu/person/markw/markw\\_papers.php](http://www.gse.uci.edu/person/markw/markw_papers.php)>.

Through workshops and presentations, JALTCALL attendees will find topics that address their current educational settings or will discover something to exploit later in classrooms and research. The pre-conference workshops scheduled for Fri 5 June will

start from 6:00 p.m. They offer practical training in a variety of areas, ranging from video editing, teaching with iPods, using audio software for speaking skills development, and much more.

The conference itself starts on 6 June and consists of a wide variety of both practical workshops and more theory-based presentations. The conference workshops provide more intense practical sessions addressing issues relating to particular software, hardware, or computer-assisted teaching practices. Topics cover such areas as using Moodle, designing quizzes and games with HotPotatoes, or maximizing time used in a CALL lab.

Presentations include show-and-tell sessions, reporting on experiments conducted in high schools or at universities. Many presentations deal with improving listening comprehension or using the Internet to improve reading fluency. Some presentations report on experiments to improve typing speed or writing skills.

The conference site presents some of the most up-to-date computer facilities, which are likely to make this conference very productive and memorable. Publishers will be on hand with books and resources suitable for

language learners, and the JALTCALL conference is the best venue to explore the latest software and online learning materials available.

In addition to bringing CALL enthusiasts together at one venue, the JALTCALL reception offers a great opportunity for attendees to network with presenters, publishers, and colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere. For early-bird registration the cost of the reception is included in the price of the conference, so make use of this excellent offer and join this special occasion to hear more about CALL in Japan and abroad. JALTCALL Conference registration opens in June, and the organizing committee would like to extend a warm welcome to this annual event. For more information check the conference website <[jaltcall.org/content/course/view.php?id=16](http://jaltcall.org/content/course/view.php?id=16)>.

### JALTCALL 2009 Conference

Expanding learner potential— it's your CALL!

Toyo Gakuen University, Hongo Campus  
June 5-7, 2009  
Tokyo, Japan



# Using Google for chapter web services

by Dan Waldhoff, JALT Ibaraki Chapter

I'll begin this article with an acknowledgement of gratitude to Mariko Miyao. That long serving, can't-say-no lady has been the webmaster for Ibaraki Chapter since the first day we went on the web. Her hard work prompted me to investigate ways to lighten her load and allow other officers to share some of her duties.

There are many options for consolidating web services. I chose Google because of its ease of use, friendly "face," nearly seamless integration of services, and because it's what I've become accustomed to using. The goal was to create a user-friendly front end and an officer-friendly back end to our web presence. A secondary goal was to provide a location for secure document archival that would be independent of individual computers and, more specifically, eliminate boxes of documents for which someone (Dan at the time) had to be responsible. I'll present the process as a list of steps and attempt to make it as painless as possible for anyone to duplicate. One could also use the same steps to set up services for classes, clubs or other activities.

1. The first step is to register. This is as simple as going to Google.com and registering an account for Gmail. With that mail account we have over 7 gigabytes of archival capacity. All official mail from our chapter is sent through that account name, ibarakijalt@google.com, and actually looks... official. Individual officers can send and receive from the official account by setting up their email software to access it. If you use a Mac this is as simple as adding the account and providing the password. If your email software is less accommodating, a login to Google is an easy alternative. Gmail will import address books from most other mail software.
2. Having done that, **the other doors open automatically.** Google Docs gives you an MSOffice compatible suite and storage forever. No boxes

to lug to meetings, as it is all accessible online! All of our proxy forms, meeting minutes, and similar important documents have been uploaded and are ready for instant recall when needed. They will remain safe as long as Google remains online.

3. Next comes Blogger, Google's blogging tool. It makes a wonderfully easy homepage face for our chapter. You can see ours at <ibarakijalt.blogspot.com/>. Setting it up and then updating it is virtually as easy as typing. Each officer with the password can update it with no special knowledge required. Our "Home Page" looks good and is as easy for us to manage as it is for our guests to navigate. We've incorporated a Google Calendar into the page to tell visitors when our chapter events will be and will also include JALT National events and other events of interest.
4. The final step was setting up a Google Group. This tool allows both email contact and member interaction. The most difficult part of the transition was inputting our email address list into this. Google is smart enough to disallow a direct upload of names. Bad guys might want to spam from a Google account and they don't have time to input individual names. All of our members with email addresses have been added and have the option of selecting their own mail preferences. They login from their private email addresses and are recognized by the Group automatically.
5. As a final step, we've archived a Standard Operating Procedure file in Google Docs to make use of the system available to incoming officers as time passes.

Because Google has done so much to make their services user-friendly and space here is limited, I've excluded nuts-and-bolts instructions. You'll find their setup steps are logical as well as clear. They provide excellent help when you need it, but you probably won't. The whole process of setting up Ibaraki Chapter took less than an hour. Other online services are available and you may already have a preference. We changed our dispersed services to consolidate with Google and so far the results have been excellent.

Anyone interested in details or a video presentation of the process may contact me at <dwalldhoff@gmail.com>.

**Visited TLT's website recently?**  
**<tlt.jalt-publications.org/>**

## ...with David McMurray

<outreach@jalt-publications.org>



Outreach is a place where teachers from around the world can exchange opinions and ideas about foreign language learning and teaching. It provides outreach to classroom teachers who would not otherwise readily have access to a readership in Japan. The column also seeks to provide a vibrant voice for colleagues who volunteer to improve language learning

in areas that do not have teacher associations. Up to 1,000 word reports from teachers anywhere in the world are welcomed. Contributors may also submit articles in the form of interviews with teachers based overseas.

“Children love telling funny stories—how can they share them?” wondered teacher-librarians at a recent International Association of School Librarianship conference. From this line of questioning came *GiggleIT*, an online book written by children, and for children, hosted by IASL, working in partnership with ICDL, the International Children’s Digital Library. This new project is introduced by **Katy Manck**, librarian at Gilmer High School and adjunct professor in the College of Information, Library Science and Technologies at the University of North Texas.

## Sharing humorous stories and giggles with children around the world

The Children’s and Young Adult Literature Special Interest Group of the International Association of

School Librarianship began work on a new project during IASL2008 at the University of California at Berkeley, on 3-7 August 2008. Designed to help children around the world improve their English language literacy skills, the *GiggleIT* project encourages students from 10 to 14 years old to contribute their writings to a free online book celebrating stories and humor from world cultures.

Members of the international team who are collaborating on this project include Patricia Carmichael, Barbara Combes, Karen Bonanno, and Rhonda Cooney in Australia, Moira Eckdahl in Canada, Katy Manck in Texas, and Emily Manck at Drury University in Missouri. Following their initial meeting, the team has worked entirely online. Carmichael is the SIG chair, Combes and Carmichael designed the teaching/learning packages and rationale for the project, Bonanno is webmaster, Katy Manck works on publicity, and Emily Manck designs the mascots.

“Teaching online courses in UNT’s school librarian preparation program, I rarely meet my graduate students face-to-face,” notes Manck, “but I feel like I know them personally because we often add humorous notes to our emails and discussions. *GiggleIT* was created completely online after we left the conference, including my daughter’s designs for *GiggleCritters*, and it’s been more fun than work. Through this project, our teachers and children can become better writers and learn to clarify vocabulary in their stories and poems, so that readers all over the world will understand their culture and enjoy their humor.”

Here is an example of a limerick shared by Patricia Carmichael to encourage students to contribute rhyming limerick-style humorous poems to the *GiggleIT* eBook <[www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT](http://www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT)>.

*There once was a koala named Syd,  
Who was caught smoking leaves as a kid,  
His mother she spanked him,  
The leaves nearly choked him,  
And his ears caught fire in the bid.*

Humor is an aspect of foreign culture that some L2 instructors in Japan find difficult to get across to students. It is a challenge for Japanese students to bridge the cultural divide and share humor in writing. According to the teacher-librarians, humor is a vehicle that can be used to promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration for children and young adults around the world. Their plan is to publish children’s work online internationally and to help the children to identify their own culture

through literature. The goal is to motivate, engage, encourage, and support, but most of all create an Internet site where children can have fun. Here is an example of free verse poetry about Australia contributed by Patricia Carmichael on the GiggleIT website <[www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT](http://www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT)>.

### ***Ocean End***

*Standing in an ocean end  
Listen and see.  
Green and inviting,  
Calling and luring  
Her fingertips curling  
With crispy edged sand crusts,  
And soft warm sifted dune hills  
Feeling and caressing.  
The lilt of the gull call,  
The zest of the foam spray and  
The scent of the shell song.  
All over and over  
Rolls in and then in again,  
Draining round toe ends,  
Tingling up ankles,  
I fill up my lungs  
With the call of the sea song.*

The teacher-librarians plan to include many humorous stories and poems by children in the book to be read by children around the world. When

they do, the GiggleIT project will be able to inspire children to be creative and make cross-cultural connections with other children around the world as they learn about humor from other countries while improving their literacy skills. It is hoped that students who contribute stories will make new friends around the world.

Competitions have been planned to motivate and stimulate students' reading and writing skills. Downloadable files and e-learning packages with examples and worksheets for the class on the site are intended to help teachers connect stories, jokes, and poetry to their curriculum. Groups registered by their teacher are eligible to win cute prizes.

Registration, teaching resources, and access to the children's stories, poetry, and jokes are free. Teachers of intermediate and middle school students can register to take part in the international project at the IASL homepage <[www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT](http://www.iasl-online.org/sla/giggleIT)>.

The GiggleIT teacher-librarians suggest that the term, *ebook* has run its course and want the children contributing to the book to coin a fresh new term or label to describe the online publication. They hope that such a term can then become accepted into contemporary vocabulary worldwide.

Manck and her team members look forward to seeing haiku, senryu, and other writing genres appear in the GiggleIT ebook. Japanese students of English are invited to share their humor with other children around the world. The team hopes that Japanese students of English will share stories of their homeland as well as their own original work.



[Photo: L-R: Karen Bonnanno, Barbara Combes, Katy Manck, Patricia Carmichael and Emily Manck with a cast of GiggleCritters. Not pictured: Rhonda Cooney, Moira Eckdahl.]

## ...with James Hobbs

<sig-news@jalt-publications.org>



JALT currently has 16 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) available for members to join. This column publishes announcements of SIG events, mini-conferences, publications, or calls for papers and presenters. SIGs wishing to print news or announcements should contact the editor by the 15th of the month, 6 weeks prior to publication.

### SIGs at a glance

Key: [🔍] = keywords [📖] = publications [🗣️] = other activities [📧] = email list [💬] = online forum]

Note: For contacts & URLs, please see the Contacts page.

The 8th Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference will be held 23-24 May at Toyo Gakuen University, Nagarayama Campus in Chiba Japan. Plenary speakers will be JD Brown and Deryn Verity. For more information, check the website <pansig.org>.

### Bilingualism

[🔍] bilingualism, biculturalism, international families, child-raising, identity [📖] *Bilingual Japan*—3x year, *Journal*—1x year [🗣️] forums, panels [📧]

Our group has two broad aims: to support families who regularly communicate in more than one language and to further research on bilingualism in Japanese contexts. See our website <www.bsig.org> for more information.

当研究会は複数言語で生活する家族および日本におけるバイリンガリズム研究の支援を目的としています。どうぞホームページの<www.bsig.org>をご覧ください。

### Computer Assisted Language Learning

[🔍] technology, computer-assisted, wireless, online learning, self-access [📖] *JALTCALL Journal Newsletter*—3x year [🗣️] Annual SIG conference, regional events and workshops [📧] [💬]

The CALL SIG welcomes new members to join us at this exciting time of innovations in educational technology both in Japan and abroad. Our next international conference, *JALTCALL 2009: Expanding Learner Potential—It's Your CALL!*, will be held 5-7 Jun at Toyo Gakuen University, Hongo Campus, Tokyo. For more information on the conference, serving as an officer, or volunteering to help in any way you can, visit <jaltcall.org/news/index.php>.

### College and University Educators

[🔍] tertiary education, interdisciplinary collaboration, professional development, classroom research, innovative teaching [📖] *On CUE*—2x year, *YouCUE* e-newsletter [🗣️] Annual SIG conference, regional events and workshops]

The CUE SIG annual conference, *ESP/EAP: English for Global Living, Working and Studying* will be held 17-18 Oct at Tezukayama University, Nara. See the call for papers in the Conference Calendar at the back of this *TLT* or visit <jaltcue-sig.org>.

### Extensive Reading (forming)

The ER SIG exists to help teachers in Japan start and improve Extensive Reading and Extensive Listening programmes. Our newsletter, *Extensive Reading in Japan (ERJ)*, is full of ideas for those new to ER and experienced ER practitioners. It keeps our members up-to-date on ER research and new graded reader releases. Check out our website at <www.jaltersig.org>.

### Framework & Language Portfolio (forming)

[🔍] curriculum-planning, assessment, language education reform, Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), European Language Portfolio (ELP) [📖] newsletter [🗣️] seminar, workshops, materials development [💬]

### Gender Awareness in Language Education

[🔍] gender awareness; gender roles; interaction/discourse analysis; critical thought; gender related/biased teaching aims [📖] newsletter/online journal [🗣️] Gender conference, workshops [📧] [💬]

GALE works towards building a supportive community of educators and researchers interested in raising awareness and researching how gender plays an integral role in education and professional interaction. We also network and collaborate with other JALT groups and the community at large to promote pedagogical and professional practices, language teaching materials, and research inclusive of gender and gender-related topics. Visit our website at <www.gale-sig.org> or contact us for more details.

### Global Issues in Language Education

[🔍] global issues, global education, content-based language teaching, international understanding, world citizenship [📖] *Global Issues in Language Education Newsletter*—4x year [🗣️] Sponsor of Peace as a Global Language (PGL) conference [📧] [💬]

Are you interested in promoting global awareness and international understanding through your

teaching? Then join the Global Issues in Language Education SIG. We produce an exciting quarterly newsletter packed with news, articles, and book reviews; organize presentations for local, national, and international conferences; and network with groups such as UNESCO, Amnesty International, and Educators for Social Responsibility. Join us in teaching for a better world! Our website is <www.gilesig.org>. For further information, contact Kip Cates <kcates@rstu.jp>.

### Junior and Senior High School

[ 📖 curriculum, native speaker, JET programme, JTE, ALT, internationalization ] [ 📖 *The School House*—3-4x year ] [ 🗣️ teacher development workshops & seminars, networking, open mics ] [ 📧 ]

The JSH SIG is operating at a time of considerable change in secondary EFL education. Therefore, we are concerned with language learning theory, teaching materials, and methods. We are also intensely interested in curriculum innovation. The large-scale employment of native speaker instructors is a recent innovation yet to be thoroughly studied or evaluated. JALT members involved with junior or senior high school EFL are cordially invited to join us for dialogue and professional development opportunities.

### Learner Development

[ 📖 autonomy, learning, reflections, collaboration, development ] [ 📖 *Learning Learning*, 2x year; *LD-Wired*, quarterly electronic newsletter ] [ 🗣️ Forum at the JALT national conference, annual mini-conference/retreat, printed anthology of Japan-based action research projects ] [ 📧 ]

The Learner Development SIG is a lively and welcoming group of teachers interested in improving our practice by exploring the connections between learning and teaching. The SIG publishes an e-journal twice a year. We also meet to share ideas and research in small-scale events such as mini-conferences, poster-sessions, and local group meetings. For more information check out our homepage <ld-sig.org>.

### Lifelong Language Learning

[ 📖 lifelong learning, older adult learners, fulfillment ] [ 📖 *Told You So!*—3x year (online) ] [ 🗣️ Pan-SIG, teaching contest, national & mini-conferences ] [ 📧 ] [ 🗣️ ]

The increasing number of people of retirement age, plus the internationalization of Japanese society, has greatly increased the number of people eager to study English as part of their lifelong learning. The LLL SIG provides resources and information for

teachers who teach English to older learners. We run a website, online forum, listserv, and SIG publication (see <jalt.org/lifelong>). For more information or to join the mailing list, contact Yoko Wakui <ywakui@bu.iij4u.or.jp> or Eric M. Skier <skier@ps.toyaku.ac.jp>.

生涯語学学習研究部は来る高齢化社会に向けて高齢者を含む成人の英語教育をより充実することを目指し、昨年結成した新しい分科会です。現在、日本では退職や子育て後もこれまでの経験や趣味を生かし積極的に社会に参加したいと望んでいる方が大幅に増えております。中でも外国語学習を始めたい、または継続を考えている多くの学習者に対してわれわれ語学教師が貢献出来る課題は多く、これからの研究や活動が期待されています。LLLでは日本全国の教師が情報交換、勉強会、研究成果の出版を行い共にこの新しい分野を開拓していこうと日々熱心に活動中です。現在オンライン<jalt.org/lifelong>上でもフォーラムやメルリスト、ニュースレター配信を活発に行っております。高齢者の語学教育に携わっていらっしゃる方はもちろん、将来の英語教育動向に関心のある方まで、興味のある方はどなたでも大歓迎です。日本人教師も数多く参加していますのでどうぞお気軽にご入会ください。お問い合わせは涌井陽子<ywakui@bu.iij4u.or.jp>。または Eric M. Skier <skier@ps.toyaku.ac.jp>までご連絡ください。

### Materials Writers

[ 📖 materials development, textbook writing, publishers and publishing, self-publication, technology ] [ 📖 *Between the Keys*—3x year ] [ 🗣️ JALT national conference events ] [ 📧 ] [ 🗣️ ]

The MW SIG shares information on ways to create better language learning materials, covering a wide range of issues from practical advice on style to copyright law and publishing practices, including self-publication. On certain conditions we also provide free ISBNs. Our newsletter *Between the Keys* is published three to four times a year and we have a discussion forum and mailing list <groups.yahoo.com/group/jaltmwsig>. Our website is <uk.geocities.com/materialwriterssig>. To contact us, email <mw@jalt.org>.

### Other Language Educators

[ 📖 FLL beyond mother tongue, L3, multilingualism, second foreign language ] [ 📖 *OLE Newsletter*—4-5x year ] [ 🗣️ Network with other FL groups, presence at conventions, provide information to companies, support job searches and research ]

OLE welcomes you to a full 2-day program of Other Language Education-related presentations at Pan-SIG 2009, Sat 23-Sun 24 May at Toyo Gakuen University, Nagareyama campus, Chiba <pansig.org/2009>. Please also inform your Other Language colleagues of the contributions dealing with Turkish, German, Chinese, Spanish, French, and cross-cultural communication in general, including

presentations on issue-focused research as well as on curriculum programs. For more information, contact <reinelt@iec.ehime-u.ac.jp>.

### Pragmatics

[💡 appropriate communication, co-construction of meaning, interaction, pragmatic strategies, social context] [📖 *Pragmatic Matters* (語用論事情)—3x year] [👤 Pan-SIG and JALT conferences, Temple University Applied Linguistics Colloquium, seminars on pragmatics-related topics, other publications] [📧]

If it's not on your calendar already, be sure to add the Pan-SIG Conference to your schedule. The Pragmatics SIG is a sponsor of this eighth annual event. This year, the conference will be held on the weekend of 23-24 May at Toyo Gakuen University, Nagareyama campus, Chiba. The theme is *Infinite Possibilities: Expanding Limited Opportunities in Language Education*, and plenary speakers are J. D. Brown and Deryn Verity. See <pansig.org/2009>.

### Professionalism, Administration, and Leadership in Education

The PALE SIG welcomes new members, officers, volunteers, and submissions of articles for our journal or newsletter. To read current and past issues of our journal, visit <www.debito.org/PALE>. Also, anyone may join our listserv <groups.yahoo.com/group/PALE\_Group>. For information on events, visit <www.jalt.org/groups/PALE>.

### Study Abroad (forming)

[💡 study abroad, pre-departure curriculum, setting up, receiving students, returnees] [📖 *Ryugaku*—3-4x year] [👤 Pan-SIG, national and mini-conference in 2009] [📧]

The Study Abroad SIG is a new and upcoming group interested in all that is Study Abroad. We aim to provide a supportive place for discussion of areas of interest, and we hope that our members will collaborate to improve the somewhat sparse research into Study Abroad. We welcome submissions for our newsletter, *Ryugaku*, and we are still in need of officers. Contact Andrew Atkins or Todd Thorpe <studyabroadsig@gmail.com> for further information.

### Teacher Education

[💡 action research, peer support, reflection and teacher development] [📖 *Explorations in Teacher Education*—4x year] [👤 library, annual retreat or mini-conference, Pan-SIG sponsorship, sponsorship of speaker at the JALT national conference] [📧]

The Teacher Education SIG is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. Our members teach at universities, schools, and language centres, both in Japan and other countries. We share a wide variety of research interests, and support and organize a number of events throughout Japan every year. We also have an online discussion group. Contact <ted@jalt.org> or visit our website <jalttesig.terapad.com>.

### Teachers Helping Teachers (forming)

[💡 teacher training, international education programs, language training, international outreach] [📖 *THT Journal*—1x year, *THT Newsletter*—4x year] [👤 teacher training conferences/seminars in Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam, and the Philippines, AGM at JALT national] [📧]

### Teaching Children

[💡 children, elementary school, kindergarten, early childhood, play] [📖 *Teachers Learning with Children*, bilingual—4x year] [👤 JALT Junior at national conference, regional bilingual 1-day conferences] [📧]

The TC SIG is pleased to announce its support for the JALT Hokkaido Teaching Children Mini-conference, to be held Sun 24 May 2009 at Hokkaido International School from 9:30-17:30. Day care is available. The theme is *Teaching Children—Assessing Children*. The keynote speakers are Lesley Ito, Mari Nakamura, and Taka Ishii. There will also be a panel discussion for parents (in Japanese) on teaching children. For more information, visit <tcsig.jalt.org>.

### Testing & Evaluation

[💡 research, information, database on testing] [📖 *Shiken*—3x year] [👤 Pan-SIG, JALT National] [📧]

The TEVAL SIG is concerned with language testing and assessment, and welcomes both experienced teachers and those who are new to this area and wish to learn more about it. Our newsletter, published three times a year, contains a variety of testing-related articles, including discussions of the ethical implications of testing, interviews with prominent authors and researchers, book reviews, and reader-friendly explanations of some of the statistical techniques used in test analysis. Visit <www.jalt.org/test>.

## ...with Ben Lehtinen

<chap-events@jalt-publications.org>



Each of JALT's 36 active chapters sponsors from 5 to 12 events every year. All JALT members may attend events at any chapter at member rates—usually free. Chapters, don't forget to add your event to the JALT calendar or send the details to the editor by email or t/f: 048-787-3342.



### CHAPTER EVENTS ONLINE

You can access all of JALT's events online at:  
<[www.jalt.org/calendar](http://www.jalt.org/calendar)>.

If you have a QRcode-capable mobile phone, use the image on the left.

**H**OOORAY for May! As the weather continues to get warmer, chapter events continue to sprout up all over Japan and hopefully in your neck of the woods. Take some time, get involved and grow. Since many chapters add or change plans after *TLT* goes to press, be sure to check the events calendar on <[www.jalt.org](http://www.jalt.org)> for the very latest in chapter programming.

**Gunma—Try the opposite!** by John Fanselow. Engaging our students with alternative activities sometimes takes more time than we have. One way to save time is by following the admonition in the title. So the alternative activities we create are related to your day-to-day teaching, please bring one of the textbooks you use to the workshop. 17 Sun May 14:00-16:30; venue TBA; Non-members ¥1000.

**Gifu—ELT and the science of happiness** by Marc Helgesen. Positive, motivated students, engaged with their subject and each other, learn more. How do we facilitate that? Attitude. The new field of "positive psychology" offers ideas. Traditional psychology focuses on mental illness. Positive psychology focuses on mental health: What do happy, mentally healthy people do? TIME magazine calls it "the science of happiness." Language learning is informed by educational psychology. This session will experiment with tasks combining positive psychology with language learning goals. 17 Sun May 10:00-12:00; Gifu JR Station, Heartful Square, 2F; Non-members ¥1000.

**Hokkaido—Teaching children mini-conference** with keynote speakers Mari Nakamura and Taka Ishii. Nakamura will demonstrate how to design a four skills program using a popular children's story as a springboard. By participating in the designing process and trying out several fun classroom activities, the audience will see the picture book-based curriculum in a whole new light. Ishii will present on common types of learning disorders affecting children: symptoms, what to look out for, forms of treatment, and what happens if ignored. 24 Sun May 9:30-17:30; Hokkaido International School; ETJ Members ¥500, Others ¥1000.

**Ibaraki—Language development: Vocabulary teaching for young adults and Cross-cultural issues in education/Working in an international environment** by James Banner of Hilderstone College, UK. At this one-day seminar, the morning presentation will explore areas and techniques for teaching vocabulary, including art, fashion, and pop culture icons. Following a luncheon, the afternoon presentation will demonstrate how minor cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and will suggest a strategy for working in an international environment and for exploiting cross-cultural issues in the classroom. 10 Sun May 10:00-17:30; Ibaraki Christian University (Bldg. #5), Hitachi Omika 6-11-1; Non-members ¥500.

**Kitakyushu—Choosing topics for writing classes** by Itsumi Ohmura and Margaret Orleans. In a workshop setting, the presenters will explore topics that stimulated the best writing from their high school students and analyze the factors that characterize the best topics, illustrating their findings with examples of student writing and comparing them with the results of a simple student survey. Participants are encouraged to bring along some successful topics to share which they have used in their own writing courses. 9 Sat May 14:00-?; Kitakyushu International Conference Centre, 3F; ¥1000.

**Kobe—Bilingual SIG meeting and barbecue** by Tim Greer and Mary Noguchi of Kansai University. Noguchi will provide a rationale for developing bilingual literacy and offer some suggestions on how parents can help their children develop in both English and Japanese. Next, Greer's presentation will focus on some socio-interactional functions of codeswitching, demonstrating how bilingual people can use it to express certain aspects of their identities, with discussion following. For information about the barbecue see <[kobejalt.bravehost.com](http://kobejalt.bravehost.com)> or contact Shirley Ando <[kobejalt@gmail.com](mailto:kobejalt@gmail.com)>. 23

*Sat May 14:30-16:30; Kobe Regatta and Athletic Club (1-20, 2-chome, Hachiman-dori, Chuo-ku, Kobe, tel. 078-231-2271); Non-members ¥1000.*

**Kyoto—Group building in the classroom** by **Warren Decker**. Come on down to Kyoto for a great afternoon of group building activities! This presentation will start with some simple name games, progressing through to increasingly challenging teamwork activities. The latter portion of the workshop is open for a discussion and idea exchange. This workshop will feature lots of active participation, so please wear comfortable clothing, and come prepared to share your favorite name learning and group building activities with everyone else. *31 Sun May 13:00-15:00; Campus Plaza, Kyoto JR station; ¥500.*

**Matsuyama—Preparing your students for TOEIC success** by **Yoshiko Hashimoto**. The TOEIC listening and reading test is used to assess non-native English proficiency and is currently the standard measure of English proficiency in Japan. Hashimoto will look at what the TOEIC test is, what it is used for, and how it is changing. *10 Sun May 14:15-16:20; Shinonome High School, Kinenkan, 4F; Free.*

**Nagasaki—Brain studies and learning/Active skills for communication** by **Curtis Kelly**. In the first half, Kelly will discuss how “brain-compatible teaching” calls on us to develop teaching practices that focus less on language and more on how it is learned and remembered. In the second half, he will ask us to consider how we can reshape our teaching or learning in relation to these issues. For updated information on this and other meetings, please check our website at <jalt.org/groups/Nagasaki>. *16 Sat May 14:00-16:00; Dejima Koryu Kaikan, 4F; Non-members ¥1000.*

**Nagoya—ELT and the science of happiness** by **Marc Helgesen**. Positive, motivated students, engaged with their subject and each other, learn more. How do we facilitate that? Attitude. The new field of “positive psychology” offers ideas. Traditional psychology focuses on mental illness. Positive psychology focuses on mental health: What do happy, mentally healthy people do? TIME magazine calls it “the science of happiness.” Language learning is informed by educational psychology. This session will experiment with tasks combining positive psychology with language learning goals. *17 Sun May 13:30-16:00; Nagoya International Center, 3F, Lecture Room 2; Non-members ¥1000.*

**Okayama—Interview discourse and national sports** by **Chie Yamane-Yoshinaga** of Sanyo Gakuen University and **Enhancing EFL instruction through the use of manga** by **Chad Godfrey**. The first presentation will examine the interview discourse of athletes, coaches, and supervisors who participate in the national sports of four countries (Australia, Korea, China, and Japan). In the second workshop, educators will be able to see how *manga* can be a relevant tool for helping reluctant learners to share language and for instructors to channel instruction. *17 Sun May 15:00-17:00; Sankaku A Bldg. 2F near Omotecho in Okayama City; ¥500.*

**Shinshu—The 20th annual Lake Suwa Charity Walk** by **everyone!!!** Join us for an 8 km walk by Lake Suwa while learning about life in the lake from Shinshu University graduate students. After lunch, there will be a forum at the Shimohama Kumin Center. You will be able to get back to the starting point by taking a free ride on the Swan Boat which leaves after the forum. Bring a lunch and something to write with. *3 Sun May 8:10-13:30; Katakura Fureai Nagisa on the south shore of Lake Suwa near the Swan Boat dock; Free but donations welcome!*

**Yokohama—Using a classroom response system** by **Jonathon Lynch**. A classroom response system provides students with a remote control that enables the instructor to conduct an interactive lesson for large classes. During the workshop, a class response system will be demonstrated with participants using the system. Discussion will follow regarding the usefulness of the system in different teaching contexts. *17 Sun May 13:00-16:15; please see <www.yojalt.org> for map links to the venue, the Kanagawa Museum of Modern Literature; Non-members ¥1000.*

**Yamagata—Delaware in terms of its history, culture, education, and language** by **Braden Jenkins**. Jenkins, an English conversation instructor in Yamagata City, will present this topic as a theme for teaching English as a means of international communication in the 21st century. Contact Fumio Sugawara at 0238-85-2468 for more information or directions. *9 Sat May 10:00-12:00; Yamagata-shi Kajo-kominkan (Yamagata-shi, Shironishi-machi, 2-chome 2-15); Free.*

**...with Troy Miller**[<chap-reports@jalt-publications.org>](mailto:<chap-reports@jalt-publications.org>)

The Chapter Reports column is a forum for sharing with the *TLT* readership synopses of presentations held at JALT chapters around Japan. For more information on these speakers, please contact the chapter officers in the JALT Contacts section of this issue. For guidelines on contributions, see the Submissions page at the back of each issue.

**Gunma: November—*Developing the four skills of language acquisition with picture books and stories* by Naoko McLellan.** McLellan took participants on a bilingual, experiential journey in a holistic language classroom. Based on this experience we could understand that a holistic classroom is full of genuine interaction and that there are no correct or incorrect answers, as much of what we shared was about our impressions, feelings, and thoughts. McLellan read four books, engaging us in pre- or post-reading activities incorporating the four skills of language acquisition and enabling learners to use language to express “what they really want to express.”

McLellan engaged us in activities such as (1) expressing a reaction to a story, (2) feeling a pouch with unknown contents and saying how we feel when handling the pouch, **with the instructor writing all our responses on the board** (3) in groups, drawing four pictures summarizing the story, and then presenting our summary to the other groups, and (4) writing a book report. Throughout the journey, McLellan pointed out the ways in which we adult learners were responding, by “thinking,” and the ways that children respond, using their senses more, enabling us to understand how learners of all ages can be engaged.

*Reported by Lori Ann Desrosiers*

**Hamamatsu: January—*Using readers and teaching TOEIC* by Jonathan Robinson.** Robinson first introduced us to his publishing company's book that is meant to prepare students for the TOEIC test. He showed us figures on the breakdown of people who take the TOEIC test around the world and it is clear that Japanese people consider the test particularly important. The book has many helpful tips on how to use time efficiently when taking the test. After a break, **he told us about his com-**

pany's extensive reading program. He showed us samples of how classics, such as “Tom Sawyer,” by Mark Twain, have been adapted by skilled authors to the levels of different students of English as a foreign language. The reading programs are also graded, which is helpful to teachers and students when trying to decide what kinds of books are appropriate for different levels. It was an engaging afternoon, and the participants went away with new ideas, as well as sample books, which they will try in their own teaching and learning situations.

*Reported by Dan Frost*

**Hiroshima: February—*A four-level approach to communication and public speaking* by Charles Lebeau.** Lebeau's presentation was built on two basic premises: firstly, keeping something simple, interesting, challenging and repetitive. Secondly, any structured plan for a language class on public speaking should of course contain many levels, but with clearly broken-down categories.

To start, basic templates were introduced to show how to organize learners' thinking with, for instance, title work. These were then broken down further with work on sequencers and commands. Lebeau emphasized the next stage of using pictorial storyboards to aid linguistic acquisition. At the final level, discussion and interaction consolidated all the previous work, and educators should not be afraid to experiment here.

A sizeable Hiroshima audience interacted with each other to act as his students and the variety of teaching situations represented by the audience members demonstrated the catch-all nature of JALT. Lebeau caught on to this and finished off by wrapping up his talk with PowerPoint Presentations For Everyone, emphasizing that humans can't present through mere language alone.

*Reported by Ewen Ferguson*

**Hokkaido: February—*The road to the software-armed skillful language teacher, and more communication with Skype and blogs* by Norihito Kawana.** The presenter began by describing some of the elements of e-learning that make it beneficial for language learners. The learning environment can be anywhere, learning can happen at any time, and the students can learn from anyone on the Internet. The wide variety of tools (both software and websites) available to students allows them to work on language in various ways, through text, video, photos, sound, and quizzes. E-learning can be one-way or interactive, although some universities don't allow comments on student blogs. Several of the

tools described allow archiving of the records of the learners' activities for easier evaluation by teachers.

For most of the session, **the presenter demonstrated** the many e-learning resources he uses with his students. For a list of links to the materials that were demonstrated, please check the JALT Hokkaido blog at <<http://jalthokkaido.net/blog/>>.

*Reported by Wilma Luth*

**Kitakyushu: February—How the SELHi program has changed our students** by **Norie Matsushita, Atsuko Chiba and Gareth Steele**. In the presenters' three-year-old Super English Language High School (SELHi) program, their English department has developed methodology for teaching and evaluating students' ability in self-expression via reading (as input of ideas), writing, and oral communication. Directed by the school administration, they were initially unsure of what to do to implement these objectives, beyond recognition of the importance of increasing motivation through the integrated teaching of the four skills and encouraging creative use of English with other subjects, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education.

This latter goal was not shared by teachers of other subjects at the onset of the project, but this changed dramatically as it developed, along with the attitudes and methodology of those directly involved, something appreciated as one of the most important and apparent benefits of the program.

Games and strategies to extend and fine-tune conversations, **such as encouraging immediate responses** and following the formula, A(nswer)A(dd)A(sk), are used extensively in the program. Debate was introduced as a powerful means of facilitating oral expression. This inspiring presentation finished with a video clip of Seinan students winning a debate contest.

*Reported by Dave Pite*

**Nagoya: February—Keeping them engaged! Enhancing language learning through curiosity and emotions** by **David Stephens**. Through the use of interesting tools like magic, puppetry, 3D effects, and unique props of his own making, Stephens strives to arouse students' interest and curiosity. The presenter explained that teaching in ways that best relate to students' sensory preferences in learning is important. Auditory learners benefit from spoken information such as discussion, lectures, speeches, and debates. Visual learners remember and use information better when seeing it. Worksheets, diagrams, photos, and **illustrations** are useful. Kinesthetic learners learn best by

handling, touching, making projects, pictures, and maps, or engaging in physical movement. According to Stephens, a balanced approach is the most effective in class.

Lastly, strong emotions like excitement, sadness, fear, and humor are significant factors in learning and memory retention. It is important to keep your students' attention with variations of lessons, something new in every lesson, and authentic lessons.

*Reported by Kayoko Kato*

**Okayama: February—A four-level approach to communication and public speaking** by **Charles LeBeau**. LeBeau provided an informative and entertaining look at why student presentations should be included in EFL classes, while demonstrating how to best engage and motivate learners in the process. He introduced his four-step plan and in a workshop atmosphere participants assumed the role of students. These steps are (1) demonstrating by example, (2) introducing helpful language, (3) choosing an appropriate format, and (4) storyboarding.

Using posters, wooden toys, and handouts from his book, participants worked individually, in pairs and in rotating pairs, to create and deliver a brief presentation. With this approach, students have multiple opportunities to present and refine their work. LeBeau showed how to physically arrange a classroom to better assess and provide feedback to individuals.

The final activity, a variation on Chinese whispers, provided more chances for speaking. LeBeau concluded by illustrating common problems students encounter when using PowerPoint in presentations and provided simple solutions to these stumbling blocks. Throughout the workshop four key concepts—keeping the task simple, interesting, challenging and including repetition—were emphasized.

*Reported by Richard Lemmer*

**Sendai: January—(1) Reports from JALT2008** by three local members. **(a) Gerry Lassche** introduced us to ideas on corpus analysis of spoken English from Michael McCarthy's workshop. He discussed how this type of information might be used in ELT and what implications corpus analysis might have for university entrance tests in Japan. **(b) Maggye Foster** summarized several presentations from forums on "Languages other than English or Japanese" presented in conjunction with the OLE SIG. Numerous questions regarding her

own presentation on motivation and course design led to a particularly in-depth discussion. **(c) Ken Schmidt** then summarized Monika Szirmai's talk on computer-based tools for vocabulary study aids and gave his own assessment of the online options. **(2) Best of JALT:** attendees voted on JALT Sendai's best presentation of 2008, selecting "Integrating music into EFL materials" by Jim Smiley and Brian Cullen (December 2008). **(3) Brainstorming for 2009:** the meeting concluded with a useful brainstorming session on presentation topics, recommended speakers, and other ideas for upcoming JALT Sendai program.

*Reported by Ken Schmidt*

**Shinshu: January—An online system for an Extensive Reading programme** by **Mark Brierley**. In the first part of his presentation, Brierley explained what Extensive Reading was and the rationale behind it, citing Krashen's input hypothesis as well as research on word frequencies and collocation done by Waring and Nation. It is said that, although approximately seventy-five percent of English can be understood with 1,000 words, these words also appear in myriad collocations which have meanings of their own. Rather than trying to painstakingly learn the meaning of each one, frequent exposure to them through reading would be "the royal road to improving language ability." Brierley then proceeded to describe the Extensive Reading program which was begun at Shinshu University in 2005 and now involves approximately 2,000 students. Several dilemmas were outlined. How should ER

be assessed, if at all? How many words should students aim for? How would teachers know the books had been read? In the second half, Brierley guided participants through the university online ER program, where stakeholders can see student levels and progress, as well as rank books according to popularity and level of difficulty and share their ideas about them with the goal of mitigating the above dilemmas.

*Reported by Mary Aruga*

**Tokyo: February—The Temple University Applied Linguistics Colloquium 2009, cosponsored by JALT Tokyo Chapter and the JALT Pragmatics SIG** featured two plenary speakers. **(1) Peter Robinson**. In his talk on *Task demands, speech production, interaction and L2 learning*, Robinson provided an introduction to cognitive task analysis and described recent findings from research into the effects of task demands on second language speech production, interaction, and learning. **(2) Donald Carroll**, in his talk, *Embracing the body in second language interaction and learning*, explored the ramifications for second language research of incorporating a deeper level of appreciation for the embodied aspects of second language interaction and learning. The colloquium ran smoothly as more than 40 presenters covered a variety of topics and generated many positive comments from participants.

*Reported by Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska*



## 8th Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference

*Infinite possibilities: expanding limited opportunities  
in language education*

Saturday May 23rd - Sunday May 24th  
at Toyo Gakuen University, Nagareyama Campus, in Chiba, Japan

## ...with James McCrostie

&lt;job-info@jalt-publications.org&gt;



To list a position in *The Language Teacher*, please submit online at <jalt-publications.org/tlt/jobs/> or email James McCrostie, Job Information Center Editor, <job-info@jalt-publications.org>. Online submission is preferred. Please place your ad in the body of the email. The notice should be received before the 15th of the

month, 2 months before publication, and should contain the following information: location, name of institution, title of position, whether full- or part-time, qualifications, duties, salary and benefits, application materials, deadline, and contact information. Be sure to refer to *TLT's* policy on discrimination. Any job advertisement that discriminates on the basis of gender, race, age, or nationality must be modified or will not be included in the JIC column. All advertisements may be edited for length or content.

## Job Information Center Online

Recent job listings and links to other job-related websites can be viewed at <jalt-publications.org/tlt/jobs/>

## ALT furniture: A look at dispatch ALT contracts

Chris Flynn

Kyushu Institute of Information Sciences

**A**LTs have become a regular part of the Japanese educational landscape—or perhaps I should say like a piece of educational furniture. Since the JET Program's commencement in 1987, thousands of young teachers have made their way to Japan to teach at a variety of schools, peaking at 6,273 in 2002. However, since that peak, there has been a steady decline in the number of ALTs from the JET Program, the slack being taken up by non-JET ALTs (CLAIR 2009). Dispatch companies employ more than half of the approximately 10,000 foreign English instructors teaching at elementary and junior high schools in Japan. Interac, the largest dispatcher, now supplies more than 200 school boards across Japan with over 1,000 instruc-

tors (NHK Report on Problems, 2007).

Why the sudden drop-off in JET ALTs? The answer is simple—money (Crandall 2006). Maintaining one JET ALT costs about ¥6 million per year but, by outsourcing, the boards of education (BOE) can cut costs. Or can they?

In my research, I've found that the average ALT employed by a dispatch company works 29.5 hours per week and is paid ¥200,000-¥245,000 a month. With JETs making ¥300,000, that's about a 20-30% cut in salary. But how much is the BOE paying the middleman? It's quite simple to find the answer. The Freedom of Information (FOI) window (Joho Kokai Madoguchi, 情報公開窓口) in any city/town office will furnish you with the contract between the BOE and the dispatch company, if you fill in a simple form. It usually takes ten minutes and costs about ¥10 per page.

Thirty contracts released from BOEs in Fukuoka Prefecture reveal some interesting findings. Firstly, the amount the BOEs are paying is surprising. On the upper end, one town pays ¥500,000 per month to the dispatch company, while the ALT gets ¥245,000, but no health, pension, or employment insurance (see Appendix 1). Fukuoka City paid dispatch companies an average of ¥345,000 per ALT in 2007, but generously increased this to ¥364,000 the following year (see Appendixes 2 and 3). Alas, the ALTs got no pay raise. On average the ALT got about 60% of what the BOE was paying—with the company taking 40%.

Other behind-the-scenes moves are revealed in the FOI documents. For example, one public school in Kitakyushu City refused their allocated ALT because he was a man. They demanded a woman, and were willing to go without any ALT until a woman could be employed (see Appendix 4).

Another worrying trend is that the tender bidding process drives offers from the bidding companies lower and lower. In 2008, Kanda Machi's contractor changed, with a ¥126,000 per annum discount on the previous year (see Appendixes 5 and 6). Eventually, this discount will come out of the ALT's salary. Worse, many teachers lose their jobs when the company loses the contract.

Looking more deeply into the contracts, there are discrepancies between what the dispatch company promises the BOE, and what the company gives the ALT in terms of work hours, duties, insurance, etc. For example, the BOE says the ALT's duties include club activities, where the dispatch company says they are "voluntary" (see Appendix 7).

Under these poor work conditions, any decent teacher soon leaves, forcing the dispatch company

to find a replacement. This system is definitely not conducive to providing quality education. ALTs are the only teaching staff subjected to a tendering process—just like the desks and chairs that are procured by the BOE. Perhaps it's time to start treating them like educators and not like furniture.

## References

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- Crandall, E. (2006). Learning English to improve Japanese. *Saga Shimbun*. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from <www.saga-s.co.jp/view.php?pageId=1093&mode=0&classId=&blockId=132436&newsMode=article>.
- NHK report on problems with ALT dispatch companies. (2007). Retrieved March 3, 2009 from <www.letsjapan.org/nhk-report-on-problems-with-alt-dispatch-companies.html>.

## Appendices

The appendixes are available online at <jalt-publications.org/tlt/jobs/resources/0905a.pdf>

## Job Openings

The Job Information Center lists only brief summaries of open positions in *TLT*. Full details of each position are available on the JALT website. Please visit <jalt-publications.org/tlt/jobs/> to view the most up-to-date list of job postings.

**Location:** Nagano and Fukushima

**School:** Interac Japan

**Position:** Short-term intensive language programme instructors

**Start Date:** Four times a year

**Deadline:** Ongoing

**Location:** Throughout Japan, working from home

**School:** International Student Placement, Inc

**Position:** Full or part-time international education consultants

**Start Date:** Ongoing

**Deadline:** Ongoing

## ...with David Stephan

<conferences@jalt-publications.org>



New listings are welcome. Please email information (including a website address) to the column editor as early as possible, preferably by the 15th of the month, at least 3 months before a conference in Japan, or 4 months before an overseas conference. Thus, 15 May is the deadline for an August conference in Japan or a September conference overseas. Feedback or suggestions on the usefulness of this column are also most welcome.

## Upcoming Conferences

**21-24 May 09—First Conference on Second Language Processing and Parsing: *State of the Science***, at Texas Tech U. **Contact:** <www.languag-es.ttu.edu/L2processing/index.htm>

**23-24 May 09—Eighth Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference**, Toyo Gakuen U., Nagareyama campus, Chiba. **Contact:** <www.elcalendar.com/events/

details/4173>

**27-28 May 09—UPALS ICL 2009: *Rejuvenating the Passion for Teaching and Learning of Languages***, in Penang. **Contact:** <www.icl-2009.com/index.htm>

**28-30 May 09—Sixth International Conference on Language Teacher Education: *Preparing Language Teachers for the 21st Century***, in Washington, DC. **Contact:** <nclrc.org/lte2009/>

**3-5 Jun 09—Independent Learning Association Conference: *Independent Learning: Building on Experience, Seeking New Perspectives***, at Hong Kong Polytechnic U. The ILA is an association for teachers and researchers interested in independent language learning. Specific areas of interest include: fostering learner autonomy through classroom practice supporting self-directed learning; providing self-access language learning facilities; and teacher autonomy. **Contact:** <ilac2009.elc.polyu.edu.hk/index.php/ILAC/ILAC2009>

**5-7 Jun 09—JALTCALL 2009**, at Toyo Gakuen U., Tokyo. Annual conference of the JALT CALL SIG. The keynote Speaker will be Mark Warschauer. **Contact:** <jaltcall.org/news/index.php>

**11-13 Jun 09—International Society for Language Studies Conference: *Critical Language Studies: Focusing on Power***, in Orlando, FL. **Contact:** <[www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm](http://www.isls-inc.org/conference.htm)>

**17-21 Jun 09—21st International ISHS Humor Conference**, hosted at Long Beach by California State U. **Contact:** <[www.ishs2009.com/](http://www.ishs2009.com/)>

**18-20 Jun 09—LPLL 2009: Language Policy and Language Learning: *New Paradigms and New Challenges***, hosted in Limerick by the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics. **Contact:** <[www.ul.ie/~lcs/lpll2009/](http://www.ul.ie/~lcs/lpll2009/)>

**30 Jun-2 Jul 09—Fifth Biennial Conference of the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing: *The Roles of Writing Development in Higher Education and Beyond***, at Coventry U. **Contact:** <[www.coventry.ac.uk/eataw2009](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/eataw2009)>

**12-17 Jul 09—11th International Pragmatics Conference: *Diversity, Context, and Structure***, in Melbourne. **Contact:** <[ipra.ua.ac.be/](http://ipra.ua.ac.be/)>

**20-23 Jul 09—Fifth Corpus Linguistics Conference**, at U. of Liverpool. **Contact:** <[www.liv.ac.uk/english/CL2009](http://www.liv.ac.uk/english/CL2009)>

**3-5 Sep 09—BAAL 42nd Annual Conference: *Language, Learning and Context***, in Newcastle. **Contact:** <[www.ncl.ac.uk/ecls/news/conferences/BAAL2009/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ecls/news/conferences/BAAL2009/)>

**13-16 Sep 09—Third Biennial International Conference on Task-Based Language Teaching: *Tasks: Context, Purpose and Use***, in Lancaster, UK. **Contact:** <[www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/tblt2009/index.htm](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/tblt2009/index.htm)>

**11-13 Oct 09—Language Learning in Computer Mediated Communities (LLCMC) Conference**, at U. of Hawaii, Manoa. **Contact:** <[nflrc.hawaii.edu/llcmc](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/llcmc)>

**5-7 Nov 09—Symposium on Second Language Writing: *The Future of Second Language Writing***, at Arizona State U. Plenary speakers include: Carole Edelsky, Mark James, Ann M. Johns, Mark Warschauer, Gail Shuck. **Contact:** <[sslw.asu.edu/2009](http://sslw.asu.edu/2009)>

**21-23 Nov 09—JALT2009: 35th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning: *The Teaching-Learning Dialogue: An Active Mirror***, in Shizuoka. Mirrors allow us to look at a single object from many different angles. In a good teaching-learning situation, there is always another way of looking at any issue: We proceed successfully only when reflection and a variety of perspectives are involved. **Contact:** <[jalt.org/conference](http://jalt.org/conference)>

## Calls for Papers or Posters

**Deadline: 15 May 09 (for 18-20 Sep 09)—15th IAICS International Conference on Cross-Cultural Communication: *Intercultural Communication and Collaboration Within and Across Sociolinguistic Environments***, at Kumamoto Gakuen U. **Contact:** <[www.uri.edu/iaics/](http://www.uri.edu/iaics/)> <[iaics2009@kumagaku.ac.jp](mailto:iaics2009@kumagaku.ac.jp)>

**Deadline: 31 May 09 (for 16-17 Oct 09)—First International Conference on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching**, at Thammasat U., Bangkok. Keynote speakers: Anne Burns, Macquarie U.; Gita Martohardjono, CUNY Graduate Center; Shelly Wong, President, TESOL. **Contact:** <[flt2009.org](http://flt2009.org)>

**Deadline: 14 Jun 09 (for 26-27 Sep 09)—International Conference on Applied Linguistics: *Developments, Challenges, and Promises***, Teheran, Iran. Keynote speakers include: David Block, Guy Cook, Hossein Farhady, Barbara Seidlhofer, Henry Widdowson. **Contact:** <[appliedlinguistics.ir](http://appliedlinguistics.ir)>

**Deadline: 15 Jun 09 (for 17-18 Oct 09)—Annual Conference of the JALT College and University Educators (CUE) SIG: *ESP/EAP: English for Global Living, Working and Studying***, at Tezukayama U., Nara. Cosponsored by JALT Nara Chapter. Proposals are invited for presentations or workshops, in English or Japanese, on any relevant topics, including: materials development, pedagogy, ESP/EAP programs, and curriculum/syllabus design. **Contact:** <[jaltcue-sig.org](http://jaltcue-sig.org)> <[jalt.cue.conference2009@gmail.com](mailto:jalt.cue.conference2009@gmail.com)>

# JALT2009



THE TEACHING LEARNING DIALOGUE  
AN ACTIVE MIRROR  
- NOV 21-23, 2009 -  
GRANSHIP SHIZUOKA  
<[JALT.ORG/CONFERENCE](http://JALT.ORG/CONFERENCE)>

The editors welcome submissions of materials concerned with all aspects of language education, particularly with relevance to Japan. If accepted, the editors reserve the right to edit all copy for length, style, and clarity, without prior notification to authors. Materials in English should be sent in Rich Text Format by either email (preferred) or post. Postal submissions must include a clearly labeled floppy disk or CD-ROM and one printed copy. Manuscripts should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style as it appears in *The Language Teacher*. Please submit materials to the contact editor indicated for each column. Deadlines are indicated below.

日本国内での語学教育に関わる投稿をお待ちしています。できるだけ電子メールにリッチ・テキスト・フォーマットの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。郵送の場合には、フロッピーディスクかCD-ROMにラベルを張り、プリントアウトしたものと一緒に送ります。書式はアメリカ心理学会(APA)スタイルに基づき、スタックリストページにある各コラムの編集者まで締め切りに留意して、提出してください。提出されたものにつきましては編集者に一任していただくこととなります。

## Feature Articles

**English Features.** Submissions should be well-written, well-documented, and researched articles. Analysis and data can be quantitative or qualitative (or both). Manuscripts are typically screened and evaluated anonymously by members of *The Language Teacher* Editorial Advisory Board. They are evaluated for degree of scholarly research, relevance, originality of conclusions, etc. Submissions should:

- be up to 3,000 words (not including appendices)
- have pages numbered, paragraphs separated by double carriage returns (not tabbed), and subheadings (boldfaced or italic) used throughout for the convenience of readers
- have the article's title, the author's name, affiliation, contact details, and word count at the top of the first page
- be accompanied by an English abstract of up to 150 words (translated into Japanese, if possible, and submitted as a separate file)
- be accompanied by a 100-word biographical background
- include a list of up to 8 keywords for indexing
- have tables, figures, appendices, etc. attached as separate files.

Send as an email attachment to the co-editors.

日本語論文: 実証性のある研究論文を求めます。質的か、計量的か(あるいは両方)で追究された分析やデータを求めます。原稿は、匿名のTLTの査読委員により、研究水準、関連性、結論などの独自性で評価されます。8,000語(資料は除く)以内で、ページ番号を入れ、段落ごとに2行あけ、副見出し(大文字かイタリック体)を付けて下さい。最初のページの一番上に題名、著者名、所属、連絡先および語数をお書き下さい。英文、和文で400語の要旨、300語の著者略歴もご提出下さい。表、図、付録も可也です。共同編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Readers' Forum** articles are thoughtful essays on topics related to language teaching and learning in Japan. Submissions should:

- be of relevance to language teachers in Japan
- contain up to 2,500 words
- include English and Japanese abstracts, as per Features above
- include a list of up to 8 keywords for indexing
- include a short bio and a Japanese title.

Send as an email attachment to the co-editors.

読者フォーラム: 日本での言語教育、及び言語学習に関する思想的なエッセイを募集しています。日本での語学教師に関連している、6,000字以内で、英文・和文の要旨、短い略歴および日本語のタイトルを添えて下さい。共同編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Interviews.** If you are interested in interviewing a well-known professional in the field of language teaching in and around Japan, please consult the editors first. Lengths range from 1,500-2,500 words. Send as an email attachment to the co-editors.

インタビュー: 日本国内外で言語教育の分野での「有名な」専門家にインタビューしたい場合は、編集者に最初に意見をお尋ね下さい。3,600語から6,000語の長さです。共同編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Conference Reports.** If you have attended a conference on a topic of interest to language teachers in Asia, write a 1,500-word report summarizing the main events. Send as an email attachment to the co-editors.

学会報告: 語学教師に関心のあるトピックの大会に出席された場合は、4,000語程度に要約して、報告書を書いてください。共同編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

## Departments

**My Share.** Submissions should be original teaching

techniques or a lesson plan you have used. Readers should be able to replicate your technique or lesson plan. Submissions should:

- be up to 700 words
- have the article title, the author name, affiliation, email address, and word count at the top of the first page
- include a *Quick Guide* to the lesson plan or teaching technique
- follow My Share formatting
- have tables, figures, appendices, etc. attached as separate files
- include copyright warnings, if appropriate.

Send as an email attachment to the My Share editor.

マイシェア: 学習活動に関する実践的なアイデアについて、テクニックや教案を読者が再利用できるように紹介するものです。1,000字以内で最初のページにタイトル、著者名、所属、電子メールアドレスと文字数をお書き下さい。表、図、付録なども含めることができますが、著作権にはお気を付け下さい。My Share担当編集者に電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Book Reviews.** We invite reviews of books and other educational materials. Contact the Publishers' Review Copies Liaison <pub-review@jalt-publications.org> for material listed in the Recently Received column, and the Book Reviews editor if you wish to review unlisted material, including websites or other online resources. Review articles treating several related titles are particularly welcome. Submissions should:

- show a thorough understanding of the material reviewed in under 750 words
- reflect actual classroom usage in the case of classroom materials
- be thoroughly checked and proofread before submission.

Send as an email attachment to the Book Reviews editor.

書評: 本や教材の書評です。書評編集者<pub-review@jalt-publications.org>に問い合わせ、最近出版されたリストからお選びいただくか、もしwebサイトなどのリストにない場合には書評編集者と連絡をとってください。複数の関連するタイトルを扱うものを特に歓迎します。書評は、本の内容紹介、教室活動や教材としての使用法に触れ、書評編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**JALT Focus.** Submissions should be directly related to recent or upcoming developments within JALT, preferably on an organization-wide scale. Submissions should:

- be no more than 750 words
- be relevant to the JALT membership as whole
- encourage readers to participate more actively in JALT on both a micro and macro level.

Deadline: 15th of month, 1½ months prior to publication. Send as an email attachment to the JALT Focus editor.

JALTフォーカス: JALT内の進展を会員の皆様にお伝えするものです。どのJALT会員にもふさわしい内容で、JALTに、より活動的に参加するように働きかけるものです。1,600字程度で、毎月15日までにお送り下さい。掲載は1月半後になります。JALTフォーカス編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**JALT Notices.** Submissions should be of general relevance to language learners and teachers in Japan. JALT Notices can be accessed at <www.jalt-publications.org/lt/focus/>. Calls for papers or research projects will be accepted; however, announcements of conferences, colloquia, or seminars should be submitted to the Conference Calendar. Submissions:

- should be no more than 150 words
- should be submitted as far in advance as is possible
- will be removed from the website when the announcement becomes outdated.

Submissions can be sent through the JALT Notices online submissions form.

掲示板: 日本での論文募集や研究計画は、オンライン<www.jalt-publications.org/lt/focus/>で見ることができます。できるだけ前もって掲載いたしますが、終了次第、消去いたします。掲示板オンライン・サブミッション形式に従い、400字以内で投稿して下さい。なお、会議、セミナーはConference Calendarで扱います。

**SIG News.** JALT's Special Interest Groups may use this column to report on news or events happening within their group. This might include mini-conferences, presentations, publications, calls for papers or presenters, or general SIG information. Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> of month, 6 weeks prior to publication. Send as an email attachment to the SIG News editor.

**SIGニュース:** SIGはニュースやイベントの報告にこのコラムを使用できます。会議、プレゼンテーション、出版物、論文募集、連絡代表者などの情報を記入下さい。締め切りは出版の2か月前の15日まで。SIG委員長に電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Chapter Events.** Chapters are invited to submit upcoming events. Submissions should follow the precise format used in every issue of *TLT* (topic, speaker, date, time, place, fee, and other information in order, followed by a 60-word description of the event).

Meetings scheduled for early in the month should be published in the previous month's issue. Maps of new locations can be printed upon consultation with the column editor. Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, 2 months prior to publication. Send as an email attachment to the Chapter Events editor.

支部イベント: 近づいている支部のイベントの案内情報です。トピック、発表者、日時、時間、場所、料金をこの順序で掲載いたします。締め切りは、毎月15日で、2か月前までに、支部イベント編集者に電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Chapter Reports.** This column is a forum for sharing synopses of presentations given at JALT chapters around Japan. Submissions must therefore reflect the nature of the column and be written clearly and concisely. Chapters are limited to one report per month. Submissions should:

- be interesting and not contain extraneous information
- be in well-written, concise, informative prose
- be made by email only – faxed and/or postal submissions are not acceptable
- be approximately 200 words in order to explore the content in sufficient detail
- be structured as follows: Chapter name; Event date; Event title; Name of presenter(s); Synopsis; Reporter's name.

Send as an email attachment to the Chapter Reports editor.

支部会報告: JALT地域支部会の研究会報告です。有益な情報をご提供下さい。600文字程度で簡潔にお書き下さい。支部名、日時、イベント名、発表者名、要旨、報告者名を、この順序でお書き下さい。支部会報告編集者まで電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。ファックスや郵便は受理いたしませんので、ご注意下さい。

**Job Information Center.** *TLT* encourages all prospective employers to use this free service to locate the most qualified language teachers in Japan. The notice should:

- contain the following information: City and prefecture, Name of institution, Title of position, Whether full- or part-time, Qualifications, Duties, Salary & benefits, Application materials, Deadline, Contact information
- not be positions wanted. (It is JALT policy that they will not be printed.)

Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> of month, 2 months prior to publication. Send as an email attachment to the JIC editor.

求人欄: 語学教育の求人募集を無料でサービス提供します。県と都市名、機関名、職名、専任か非常勤かの区別、資格、仕事内容、給料、締め切りや連絡先を発行2ヶ月前の15日までにお知らせ下さい。特別の書式はありません。JIC担当編集者に電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。

**Conference Calendar.** Announcements of conferences and their calls for papers as well as for colloquia, symposiums, and seminars may be posted in this column. The announcement should be up to 150 words. Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> of month, at least 3 months prior to the conference date for conferences in Japan and 4 months prior for overseas conferences. Send within an email message to the Conference Calendar editor.

催し: コロキウム、シンポジウム、セミナー、会議のお知らせ、論文募集の案内です。Conference Calendar編集者に400語程度で電子メールの添付ファイルでお送り下さい。締め切りは毎月15日まで、日本、および海外の会議で3ヶ月前までの情報を掲載します。

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## 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
- over 3,000 members in Japan and overseas  
-国内外で約 3,000名の会員がいます

Annual international conference 年次国際大会

- 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

JALT publications include:

- *The Language Teacher*—our monthly publication -を毎月発行します
- *JALT Journal*—biannual research journal  
-を年2回発行します
- Annual Conference Proceedings  
-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

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、生涯語学教育研究部会、試験と評価、教材開発。

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]:

- IATEFL—International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
- JACET—the Japan Association of College English Teachers
- PAC—the Pan Asian Conference consortium
- TESOL—Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

### Membership Categories 会員と会費

All members receive annual subscriptions to *The Language Teacher* and *JALT Journal*, and member discounts for meetings and conferences. 会員は *The Language Teacher* や *JALT Journal* 等の出版物を購読出来、又例会や大会にも割引価格で参加出来ます。

- Regular 一般会員: ¥10,000
- Student rate (undergraduate/graduate in Japan) 学生会員(日本にある大学、大学院の学生): ¥6,000
- 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): ¥17,000
- Group (5 or more) ¥6,500/person—one set of publications for each five members 団体会員(5名以上を対象とし、JALT出版物は5名につき1部): 1名6,500円

For more information please consult our website <jalt.org>, ask an officer at any JALT event, or contact JALT Central Office.

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Use 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 on-line signup page located at <<https://jalt.org/joining/>>

...by Scott Gardner

<old-grammarians@jalt-publications.org>

## OG guest contributor tackles important social issues



**M**Y name is JJ. When my hosts are feeling literate and snooty, they tell people JJ stands for James Joyce, maybe because I wander around the house in the middle of the night, shouting non sequiturs like a roaming drunk in the streets of Dublin. But at more lowbrow times, like when I'm lying legs-up on my back, staring at the ceiling and taking up 2/3 of a sofa cushion with my blubbery body, they say JJ is short for "Jiggles." (By the way, I'm open to negotiations for an official *JALT Journal* mascot position.)

Amateur sociologists who do their research via the weekend TV talk shows like to stand around the water cooler at work on Monday and declare that there are two types of people in the world: dog people and cat people. For you cats out there it might help you to understand sweeping generalizations like these by imagining that there are, say, two types of cats in the world—those that like wet food and those that like dry food—when of course we know that there are as many cat food preferences in the world as there are prickly parts on a cat's tongue. In the dog/cat preferers debate,

for example, you can immediately see at least two glaring omissions: (1) people who prefer cats with Olympic sprinting ambitions (I train in the hallway three or four times a day, with no advance notice), and (2) people who prefer dogs that think they're pelicans (you may laugh, but have you ever seen how most dogs behave in water?). Please don't take what I say as advocating or dismissing anyone's particular pet fixation; I'm just saying that these either/or issues are more complicated than most humans think.

Maybe another example will highlight my argument. Ask any dog lover "What *kind* of dog do you like?" and they'll rattle off a short list (if you're lucky) of particular breeds they favor: collies, Labradors, Finnish spitzes, Rhodesian ridgebacks, yadda-yadda-yadda. In short, they're content with mere *categories* of dogs. Ask a cat lover the same question about felines, however, and they will find it difficult to describe in just a few words their Konzept of the Konsummate Kitty. Characteristics may come to mind—cuddly, friendly, frisky, cute—but simply naming a breed is, in the case of cats, no more helpful than naming the number of legs it has.

The reason is that we are *individuals*. We don't fit into stereotypes about breeding or trainability. We are aware—and downright proud—of our identities and free will. Dogs and their trainers who are into behavioral conditioning are scary, if you ask me. There's something ominous and un-animal-like (maybe the word is *inanimate*?) about a pet that will jump up and perform a trick every time its master calls. As Pepper Big-Face, my old kotatsu buddy, used to say: "Shake hands? Yeah, I'll shake hands. Just as soon as I've scratched around in my litter box for a few minutes."

Obviously no one is *just* a dog person, or *just* a cat person—or just a dog-and-cat person, for that matter (sometimes called *bi-petual*). Some people don't like animals at all, if you can believe that, and spend their free time doing other things like collecting 18th century French bedpans. But if you're into diversity, individual freedom, personal hygiene, and eyes that glow in the dark (and if you're *not* into big ugly cow bones with slobber all over them), then I'd say there's a good chance you're into cats as well.

*(Old Grammarians is not responsible for the guest opinions expressed in this column. We welcome contrasting points of view, but please refrain from making them known to us.)*