

# The Language Teacher

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In this month's issue . . .

Welcome to the March/April 2017 issue of *TLT*. I hope that those of you on holiday are enjoying the time off and that everyone is ready for another academic year. To begin this issue, I would like to introduce myself. I have been involved with *TLT* for some time, first as a copy editor and then as My Share column editor. I have now left My Share in Steven Asquith's capable hands and I will once again work with Phil as *TLT* co-editor. I have enjoyed the experience of working on *TLT* to date and I sincerely hope that I can continue to help, in some small way, to ensure that *TLT* maintains its high standards.

I live and work in Nagoya, a lovely city and a place I have come to call home. I return to my other home, Scotland, during the summer months as my company, McLellan International, in addition to publishing textbooks, sets up study programs for Japanese students at several universities there. At the moment, I am also working on assessment software with a colleague, and I run Chubu branch of the Japan Scotland Association.

But I digress...

In this issue we have two fascinating Feature Articles. In the first, *Textbooks or E-Learning? Learners' Preferences and Motivations in a Japanese EFL Classroom*, **Kazunari Shimada** explores student satisfaction with each type of learning material and concludes that using a wide variety of learning materials seems to be the best way to achieve maximum student motivation.

In the second article, *The Effect of Communication Strategies on Learners' Speaking Ability in Task-Based Language Teaching*, **Yoshiko Kozawa** examines the applications of prefabricated patterns of communication strategies (PPCS) over the course of one semester on twenty-four Japanese female nursing students.

In Readers' Forum this issue **Simon Bibby** and **Anna Huson Isozaki** interview Amos Paran, a specialist in L2 reading and literature in language teaching. **Julyan Nutt** writes an interesting article on *Interview Testing*, and discusses his findings on how repetition and increased contact with a variety of teachers helped improve student language retention and reduced their anxiety.

*Continued over*



# Submitting material to *The Language Teacher*

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The editors welcome submissions of materials concerned with all aspects of language education, particularly with relevance to Japan.

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## The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

### A nonprofit organization

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) is a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to the improvement of language teaching and learning in Japan. It provides a forum for the exchange of new ideas and techniques and a means of keeping informed about developments in the rapidly changing field of second and foreign language education.

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## JALT2017

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As ever, we have some excellent ideas for teachers in My Share, and the other articles in the Praxis section contain a cornucopia of information on the latest technological advances for the classroom, and materials and useful advice to help deal with any and all classroom challenges.

Lastly, I would like to end by reiterating my gratitude for being offered the role of *TLT* co-editor, and I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a fun-filled and satisfying start to the new semester. Before that, don't forget to enjoy the blossoms. I know I will!!

Gerry McLellan, *TLT* Coeditor

**T**LTの2017年3/4月号へようこそ。休暇中の方は休暇を満喫され、また新学期への準備を皆様は万全にしている事と思います。まず自己紹介ですが、私はTLTの原稿整理編集者として、さらにMy Share コラム編集者として、以前から本誌の編集に携わってきました。本号からMy Shareコラムは有能なSteven Asquithに任せて、私自身はPhilと共にTLTの共同編集者を務めることになりました。これまでのTLTでの経験は楽しいものでした。引き続き本誌の高度な質を維持するために、微力ながら貢献したいと願っています。

私は今や「故郷」と呼ぶようになった美しい街、名古屋に住んでいます。夏の間はもうひとつの故郷スコットランドに帰り、テキスト出版や現地の大学での日本人学生の学習プログラムに関わっています。また同僚と評価ソフトウェア開発をしたり、日本スコットランド交流協会中部支部の運営も行っています。話が少々逸れてしまいました。

今月号は2本のFeature Articleを掲載しています。まずKazunari Shimadaが、*Textbooks or E-Learning? Learners' Preferences and Motivations in a Japanese EFL Classroom*で、様々な学習教材への学生の満足度を探求し、多種多様な教材を使うことが学生の動機を最大化するのに役立つと論じています。

2番目のFeature ArticleではYoshiko Kozawaが、*The Effect of Communication Strategies on Learners' Speaking Ability in Task-Based Language Teaching*で、半年間に渡るタスク中心の言語指導コースにおける日本人看護学生24名の定型表現 (PPCS) の適用を検証します。

今回のReaders' ForumではSimon BibbyとAnna Husson Isozakiが、言語教育におけるL2 readingとliteratureの専門家であるAmos Paranにインタビューしています。次にJulyan Nuttがインタビュー形式の試験に関する記事で、様々な教員との交流と繰り返し学習が、どのように学生の言語記憶力と不安解消に役立つかを述べています。

いつものようにMy Shareでは指導者への素晴らしいアイデアが掲載され、Praxisの他の記事でも、授業の最新技術の進歩に関する豊富な情報、役立つ教材や授業中の難題解決への助言が満載です。

最後にもう一度、TLT共同編集者としての機会をいただいたことに感謝申し上げます。皆さんの新学期が楽しく満足できるスタートとなることを願っています。その前に桜の花を満喫することもどうぞお忘れなく!

Gerry McLellan, *TLT* Coeditor

# Textbooks or E-learning? Learners' Preferences and Motivations in a Japanese EFL Classroom

Kazunari Shimada

*Takasaki University of Health and Welfare*

This study investigates Japanese EFL learners' attitudes and preferences towards textbooks and web-based materials in a blended learning context. Sixty-four undergraduate students of a two-semester English course were asked to complete a questionnaire, which was designed to measure their satisfaction with each type of learning material and their motivation and autonomy in learning English, especially in grammar practice. The results revealed that a greater number of students preferred web-based materials to paper-based ones. Additionally, the results of SEM analysis indicate that learner satisfaction with e-learning materials has a positive effect on their attitudes towards self-study. However, students who preferred textbooks appreciated their advantages, such as the ability to take handwritten notes and the ease of understanding grammar points with face-to-face feedback. Therefore, the findings suggest that a well-balanced blend of materials may meet a wide variety of learners' needs and promote positive attitudes towards autonomous language learning.

本研究は、ブレンディッドラーニング（ブレンド型学習）環境での教科書とeラーニング教材使用に関する日本人英語学習者の考え方と好みを調査したものである。通年の英語科目を履修している大学生64名を対象に、それぞれの教材に対する満足度、英語学習、特に文法演習への動機づけ、及び自律性を測るアンケートを実施した。その結果、eラーニング教材を好む学生の数が教科書を好む学生の数を上回った。また、構造方程式モデリング（SEM）の分析結果から、eラーニング教材に対する満足度は学習者の自主学習にプラスの影響を及ぼすことが示唆された。しかし教科書を好む学生は、手書きで書き込みができること、教師からの対面でのフィードバックで文法項目が理解しやすいこと、といった教科書使用の利点を高く評価した。従って本研究の結果から、教材をバランスよく使用することで、学習者の多様なニーズに応えることができ、学習者の自律的な言語学習が促進される可能性があることが示唆された。

**E**-learning has been integrated into language curricula and classroom activities in colleges and universities. One of the notable features is the use of e-learning in studying for English proficiency tests such as the TOEIC® Test and the Eiken Test. Many colleges and universities provide opportunities for students to access diverse web-based learning materials both in and outside classroom environments. To improve their scores, students can work on various activities and tasks using digital devices such as personal computers, tablets, and

smartphones. Additionally, they can have online feedback for each answer.

Computer-mediated learning can allow learners to study at their own pace, fostering autonomy (Blin, 2004; Mishan, 2004). Therefore, many teachers give online assignments consisting of English grammar and vocabulary practice in TOEIC® or Eiken classes. They may expect their students to develop good study habits as well as English skills through the web-based assignments. Previous literature indicates that the flexibility of e-learning may be an important factor of learner satisfaction (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen, & Yeh, 2008) and be essential to learners' autonomous learning (Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007).

However, there remains a need for traditional face-to-face teaching with textbooks. Stracke's (2007) qualitative study suggested that learners may drop out of computer-mediated second language courses due to a lack of teacher support and an absence of paper-based materials such as textbooks. With regard to the lack of printed materials, the interview data showed that some learners seemed to be frustrated partly because they obtained information from a computer screen less easily than from a textbook or dictionary, and partly because they could not write by hand on the screen like on paper. In other words, learners may be accustomed to studying with paper-based materials, and therefore have difficulty with using online materials (Avgeriou, Papasalouros, Retalis, & Skordalakis, 2003).

Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) administered questionnaires and interviews to non-native English speakers studying at a British university and found that students preferred paper-based materials to web-based ones for grammar practice in self-study settings. Additionally, the interviews showed that some students may regard the websites as resources with various contents but not presenting grammar items in a systematic way. Thus, despite the many computer-based language activities available, they may appreciate comprehensible and clear explanations of grammar rules in textbooks. However, because the contents of

the web-based materials were different from those of the paper-based materials, the students' preference may be influenced by those differences.

### Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Positioned against this contextual background, the present study investigates English language learners' attitudes and preferences towards two types of materials: textbooks and e-learning materials. Using a questionnaire, the study aimed to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: Which materials do learners prefer to learn English grammar with in the classroom; textbooks or e-learning materials?
- RQ2: How does learner satisfaction with materials have an impact on their motivation to learn English?

RQ1 is intended to re-examine the findings of Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) in a computer-assisted EFL classroom setting. In consideration of learning styles in the classroom context, the present study also investigates learners' preferences towards face-to-face teaching. RQ2 explores the relationships between learners' satisfaction with materials and their motivation or autonomy. While many previous studies (Bañados, 2006; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010) have indicated that a combination of face-to-face teaching and e-learning (i.e., blended learning) is likely to benefit language learning, little research has been conducted to investigate how learner satisfaction with materials may affect attitudes towards learning both inside and outside the classroom.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 64 undergraduates from a private university in Tokyo who took a general English class in the spring and fall semesters (from April 2012 to January 2013). They were divided into two classes. Both groups had the same course contents and were taught by the same teacher. At the beginning of the course, the teacher demonstrated how to use the e-learning program. An initial placement test ensured that all learners were at a lower-intermediate level of English proficiency, which is equivalent to a TOEIC® Bridge score of 68 to 140.

#### Materials

The main textbook used in the course was *Get Ready for the TOEIC® Test* (Matsuoka, 2005), de-

signed especially for Japanese college students. Each chapter includes TOEIC-style exercises, language tasks, and explanations of grammar concepts. In addition, ALC Net Academy 2 English Grammar and Introductory Courses were used for the e-learning materials. At the beginning of the ALC Net Academy program, the computer automatically selects grammar, vocabulary, reading, or listening questions based on learners' performance and lets them know which course level is appropriate. Each learner can work on a wide variety of exercises at the appropriate level, and the computer provides immediate feedback on performance as well as correct answers.

#### Procedure

In some colleges and universities, the curriculum stipulates that teachers should incorporate web-based self-study into their classes (Seki, 2010). The course curriculum in this study was designed to incorporate in-class computer self-study. Teachers were strongly encouraged to use e-learning materials in the course. Therefore, each class period (90 minutes, once a week) consisted of 30–35 minutes of self-study on computers with the teacher's support, 30–35 minutes of face-to-face teaching with the textbook, and the rest of the period working on communication activities. The teacher focused on improving students' vocabulary and grammar skills using the textbook and e-learning materials. He had the students practice one or two grammatical items in each session, using the textbook or e-learning materials. To minimize the influence of the different types of materials, the same grammatical items were used in part of the lesson.

After the final class of the fall semester, a questionnaire was administered to the 64 participants. Two of them were incomplete and were thus eliminated from the data analysis. The 18 questionnaire items were developed based on Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) and Bañados (2006), and were originally written and administered in Japanese. Sixteen items of them were designed to measure participants' satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants indicated to what degree they were satisfied with the textbook, e-learning materials, and course content, and whether the level of the materials was appropriate. The items were subjected to statistical analysis using the structural equation model (SEM). SEM has an advantage over other statistical methods such as factor analysis in that the relationship between several variables can be displayed as directional paths (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Additionally, the participants were also asked to identify which of

the two material types they preferred to use to learn grammar with, and to provide reasons for their choice (items 17 and 18).

## Results and Discussion

### Learner Satisfaction with Materials and Course Content

Participants first rated their computer skills and attitudes towards grammar practice, then completed questionnaire items about their satisfaction with materials and course content. The descriptive statistics for the first four items are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire Items about Learners' Computer Skills and Attitudes Towards Grammar Practice

Item No.	Questionnaire Items	M	SD	Min	Max
1.	I am good at using a computer.	3.03	1.02	1	5
2.	I think that the interface of e-learning program is easy to use and understand.	3.97	.79	2	5
3.	I think that grammar is important in learning English.	4.19	.92	1	5
4.	I work on practicing English grammar outside classroom.	2.15	1.07	1	5

Items 1 and 2 indicate that, although some students may not have confidence in using computers, they can work properly with the e-learning program because of the clear and simple user interface. As for item 3, as Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) reported, the results also revealed that most students recognised the importance of grammar in learning English. However, the results of item 4 indicate that self-study habits outside the classroom may be a challenge for many students.

Table 2 summarises the descriptive statistics for questionnaire items about participants' satisfaction with materials and course content. The mean values showed overall satisfaction with the textbook, e-learning materials, the teacher's instruction, and course content. The Mann-Whitney test was applied to compare students' satisfaction with the textbook (items 5, 7, and 9) and with the e-learning materials (items 6, 8, and 10), and revealed no signif-

icant differences between the two types of materials in terms of students' satisfaction ( $U = 17066.50, p > .05$ ). Moreover, the Mann-Whitney tests showed no significant differences between items 5 and 6, items 7 and 8, and items 9 and 10. Thus, the results indicate that, although it is uncertain which type is likely to be more useful for learners, both the textbook and e-learning materials may contribute to learner satisfaction in language learning.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire Items about Learner Satisfaction with Materials and Course Content

Item No.	Questionnaire Items	M	SD	Min	Max
5.	I think that the textbook is useful for grammar practice.	3.58	1.03	1	5
6.	I think that the e-learning materials are useful for grammar practice.	3.71	.98	1	5
7.	I think that the textbook is useful for learning English.	3.68	1.00	1	5
8.	I think that the e-learning materials are useful for learning English.	3.69	.93	1	5
9.	I think that the level of the textbook is appropriate.	3.82	.95	2	5
10.	I think that the level of the e-learning materials is appropriate.	3.79	.85	2	5
13.	I think that the teacher's instruction is helpful in class.	4.10	.95	1	5
16.	I am satisfied with overall course activities.	3.95	.80	1	5

Students' preference for materials was clearer when they were asked which type was more useful for grammar practice:

*Q17. Which do you prefer to use to learn English grammar, the textbook or e-learning materials?*

In item 17, while 22 students preferred the textbook, 40 students were in favour of using e-learning materials—a direct contrast to Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010). Additionally, in item 18, the students who chose e-learning materials wrote the following comments (translation mine):

1. The e-learning courses are divided into several different levels, so I can intensively learn items necessary for me to understand.
2. I can work on the same portion of the materials again and again.

As comment 1 indicates, some students appreciate the interface design to allow users to select learning levels. With regard to comment 2, repeating drills on the screen may be an important factor for students to increase their satisfaction. On the other hand, students who preferred the textbook offered a different set of reasons, as in the following excerpts:

3. Taking notes on the pages enables me to review the important things I learned.
4. I prefer using the textbook partly because it provides many example sentences, and partly because the teacher explains grammar points in detail.

Of the 22 students who preferred the textbook, eight pointed out the advantage of being able to take handwritten notes. In addition, some students appreciated face-to-face teaching with the textbook. Thus, comments 3 and 4 are consistent with those reported in Stracke (2007).

These comments indicate that learner satisfaction with teaching materials is related to how well those materials meet the diverse needs of individual students. Additionally, as comment 4 and the results of questionnaire item 13 show, face-to-face feedback as well as online feedback is likely to have a positive effect on learning in the classroom context.

### **Learners' Motivation and Autonomy**

The descriptive statistics for questionnaire items about participants' motivation and autonomy are shown below in Table 3.

The results of items 11, 12, and 14 revealed that many students may not be interested in self-study outside the classroom or in taking an English proficiency test. The results were consistent with those of item 4. One reason might be that some students

lack motivation due to their lower English proficiency. Another might be that some students rely on learning in class, and are not willing to learn outside the classroom. However, while 14 students selected the category of strongly disagree or disagree, 27 students responded strongly agree or agree in item 15. In other words, the positive responses suggest that blended learning may change students' approach to learning.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Questionnaire Items about Learners' Motivation and Autonomy**

Item No.	Questionnaire Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
11.	To improve my English skills, I would like to use textbooks for self-study outside the classroom.	2.97	.96	1	5
12.	To improve my English skills, I would like to use e-learning materials for self-study outside the classroom.	3.15	1.14	1	5
14.	I will take a TOEIC® test after this English course.	3.05	1.14	1	5
15.	I think that the class activities have changed my approach to learning English.	3.16	.99	1	5

Based on the results of the questionnaire, SPSS AMOS ver. 17 was used to carry out SEM analysis. As shown in Figure 1, results revealed a relationship between learner satisfaction with e-learning materials and learner's motivation and autonomy. In this model, learner satisfaction with e-learning materials and learner's motivation and autonomy were posited as latent variables. Observed variables, or indicators, were as follows: useful for grammar practice (item 6), useful for learning English (item 8), appropriate level (item 10), learning English outside the classroom (item 12), taking a TOEIC® test (item 14), and change in learning styles (item 15).

All paths were significant ( $p < .01$ ). The goodness of fit index (GFI) was .936; the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was .851; the comparative fit index (CFI) was .973; and the root mean square error of



approximation (RMSEA) was .082. The indices except for RMSEA indicate that the model fits the data reasonably. As for GFI, AGFI, and CFI, values closer to 1.0 indicate a good fit between the model and the data, although “there are no strict norms” for these indices (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006, p. 43). With regard to RMSEA, values of less than 0.05 indicate a good fit, values of 0.05 to 0.08 indicate a fair fit, values of 0.08 to 0.10 indicate a mediocre fit, and values above 0.10 show a poor fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). Additionally, all path coefficients show that the relationships between variables are sufficiently established. The results indicate that learners' satisfaction with e-learning materials is likely to have a positive effect on their motivation and autonomy in learning English.

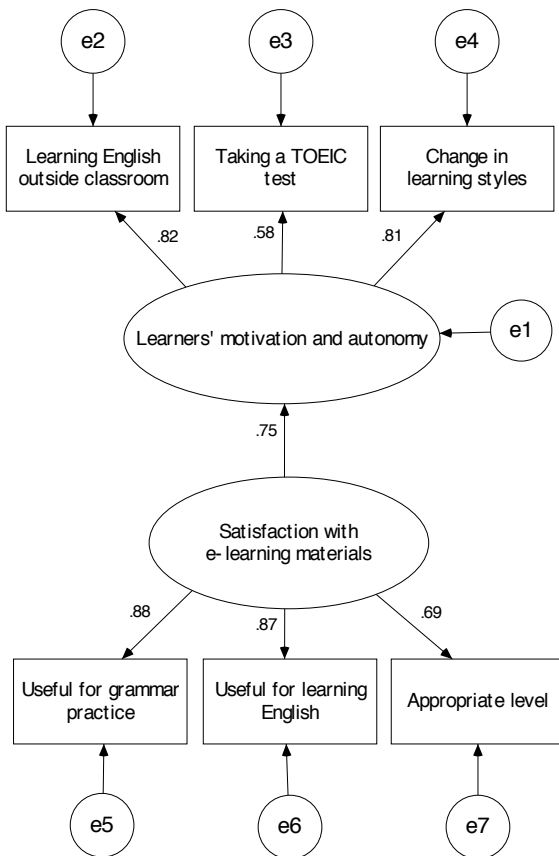


Figure 1. Relationships between learners' satisfaction with e-learning materials and their motivation or autonomy.

The same SEM procedure was applied to the relationship between learners' satisfaction with the textbook and motivation or autonomy, but the

model did not fit the data (GFI = .897; AGFI = .759; CFI = .928; RMSEA = .142). Some other factors such as kinds of materials and teacher's instructions may have an effect on the latent variables in the model.

### Conclusion

This study has two major findings. First, results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire data suggest that a combination of textbooks and e-learning materials may contribute to learner satisfaction in grammar practice. Regarding the answer to RQ1, contrary to Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010), the present study showed that many learners preferred web-based materials to paper-based ones (see the result of questionnaire item 17). In other words, many Japanese college students may have a bent for computer-based learning because they have been long accustomed to using computers and playing video games. However, some students were in favour of textbooks because they accommodate handwritten notes. Additionally, face-to-face teaching with textbooks is likely to be helpful for students. In classroom settings, blended learning may be a good solution for developing learners' basic skills in English.

Second, the present study lends empirical support to the potential of web-based materials in a blended learning context. In regard to the answer to RQ2, the results of SEM analysis indicate that learner satisfaction with e-learning materials may foster motivation and promote positive attitudes towards self-study. Teachers who make use of computer technology—in or outside classroom—can help cultivate digital-age learners' autonomy.

A limited number of materials and learners were involved in the present study. As in Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010), learner preference may be influenced by the difference of material contents. Learners at higher proficiency levels may exhibit different preferences, and a wider variety of materials may also yield different results. Additionally, the present study did not examine how well web technology can be blended with traditional teaching methods. For example, touchscreen devices, like tablets and smartphones, enable learners to take handwritten notes in a regular classroom, but the study focused only on blended learning in a computer-assisted classroom. Further research will need to investigate the effects of blended learning in a variety of teaching situations and how e-learning contents can be systematically combined with textbook ones.

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# The Effect of Communication Strategies on Learners' Speaking Ability in Task-Based Language Teaching: A Mixed Methods Analysis

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This study examines the diversity of applications of instructed prefabricated patterns of communication strategies (PPCS) by novice learners of English, the influence on speaking competence of frequent PPCS use by learners, and correlations between PPCS use and learners' development in speaking. Their perceptions about the conversation were also surveyed for this purpose. Twenty-four non-English major college students studied English in a semester long course applying Task-Based Language Teaching using PPCS learning. The results showed a propensity toward PPCS with simpler and broader applications. They used PPCS unintentionally while practicing as the class progressed. There was, for example, a significant correlation between the evaluations of learners' conversation by the teachers and the frequent uses of a previously learned "That's..." rejoinder. Learners' positive perceptions about the conversation had significant correlations with some PPCS utilizations. The number of participants and the length of the course yielded limited data and further investigations will clarify these correlations.

本論は、コミュニケーション・ストラテジーの様々な定型表現 (PPCS) が英語の初心者に指導された場合、PPCSの会話への応用の多様性、学習者がPPCSを頻繁に利用した場合のスピーキング力への影響、およびPPCS使用と学習者のスピーキング力の発達の相関関係を調査する。学習者の会話に対する認識も調査した。英語専攻ではない24名の短期大学生が、PPCS学習を含むタスク中心の言語指導のコースで半年間、英語を学習した。その結果、学生はより簡単に使用できるPPCSをより広く使う傾向があり、授業でのPPCS練習を積み重ねるにつれ無意識に自然にPPCSが使えるようになった。教員による会話の評価とそれまでに学んだ "That's ..." の短い返答の頻繁な使用には有意な相関が見られ、会話についての学習者の肯定的な認識と幾種かのPPCS使用にも有意な相関があった。本研究は参加学生数が少なく調査期間も短かったため、さらに調査を進めることが今後の課題であろう。

## **Communicative Competence: One Purpose for English Teaching**

One of the main purposes for teaching English is to improve communicative competence (CC) which is defined by Savignon (1972) as "the ability to function in a truly communicative setting" (p. 8). CC consists of grammatical competence, sociocultural

competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence according to Canale and Swain (1980). Canale (1983) adds that strategic competence "is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies" (p. 10). The idea of improving CC inspired me to use communication strategies (CSs). However, CS instruction is somewhat controversial, not because researchers are suspicious about its usefulness, but because the effectiveness of CS instruction has not yet been verified. Some researchers advocate CS instruction (Dörnyei, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983a; Tarone, 1984), though others believe CSs are transferred to L2 from the native language and it is therefore not necessary to teach them (Kellerman, 1991). Recent studies have clarified the effect of meta-cognitive CS instruction for oral communication without denying CS transfer from L1 (Nakatani, 2005, 2010; Nakatani & Goh, 2007). While language transfer of CSs from learners' L1 may occur for some CSs and for some learners, my novice students seem to appreciate and even depend on some of them.

Thus, the development of meaningful instruction of communication strategies would be beneficial for improving CC. In the next section, notable definitions of CS are first introduced then examples and classifications of CS are reviewed.

## **Communication Strategies: A Helpful Device**

Definitions: CSs are used to facilitate smoother communication by compensating for difficulties caused by a second language user's insufficient competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Cohen, 1990; Nakatani, 2005) and some researchers add systematicness or consciousness to CS's definition (Corder, 1981; Færch & Kasper, 1983b; Tarone 1983). Although they recognize CS importance in native language communication, verbalizing problems of linguistically sufficient speakers does not seem to

be included in the researchers' definitions. Moreover the purpose of this research is to investigate qualities relevant to the potential improvement of non-native learners' skills. Therefore, the definition of CS here is presupposing L2 learners' communication deficiency.

**Classifications of CSs:** Many researchers dichotomize CSs into a reduction strategy, including avoidance, and achievement strategy with some compensation (Brown, 2007; Corder, 1981; Færch & Kasper, 1983a). Some researchers involve paralinguistic strategies in achievement strategies (Bialystok, 1990; Cohen, 1990; Nakatani & Goh, 2007). Among the various nomenclature for subordinate categories of CSs by Brown (2007) are prefabricated patterns in achievement strategy. This designation would represent useful expressions utilized as achievement strategies and it would be practical for language learners to learn strategic prefabricated patterns for communication. In particular, novice learners, who experience difficulty in constructing sentences, can appreciate prefabricated meaningful expressions they can say as a whole unit. In a sense, by learning prefabricated patterns of communication strategies (PPCSs), learners can, so to speak, kill two birds—learning new expressions and strategies—with one PPCS stone.

The intention of the course investigated here is for students to learn and apply PPCSs in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) conversational tasks. A broad outline of TBLT and its practice in this non-English major course are explained in the next section.

### Task-Based Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) using the target language seems reasonable when the primary purpose of language learning is to communicate in the target language. CLT “places a premium on learning through communicating” (Ellis 2008, p. 698). CLT involves both knowledge of language “structures and forms” and “functions and purposes” in different communicative settings and emphasizes “the communication of meaning in interaction rather than the practice and manipulation of grammatical forms in isolation” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 196). In CLT classes, teachers prepare different communicative settings, which are called tasks in TBLT. This is a hyponym of CLT according to Brown (2007) and so TBLT was used with the learners in this study.

### Research Questions

The effects of PPCSs on learners' Communicative Competence need to be clarified with regard to the kinds of PPCSs utilized. For that purpose, the following research questions are presented:

1. What PPCSs do low-proficiency Japanese college students use in prompted TBLT activities after PPCS instruction?
2. How do PPCS utilizations correlate with learners' communication?
3. What correlates with PPCS utilizations in novice learners?

### Methodology

#### Teaching Implementation

TBLT was implemented based on the procedures described in Willis (1996) and Sato and Takahashi (2008): Timed conversations were utilized as a task on selected topics of introducing each other, rude behaviors, an ideal life and happiness. At the beginning of class for each topic, learners were introduced to starter questions, model dialogues, useful words and phrases, and PPCSs. Then learners practiced talking with different partners during the class. The timings of topics and PPCSs are listed in Table 1 with PPCS labels for convenience.

Table 1. *The timings of topics and instructed PPCSs*

Learning timing (topic)	PPCS	PPCS label
April-May	How are you feeling? etc.	<i>Greeting</i>
(Introducing each other)	Nice talking with you. etc.	<i>Leave-taking</i>
	Pardon me?	<i>Repetition request 1</i>
	That's interesting/surprising/etc.	<i>Rejoinder 1</i>
	When/Where/Why/How...?	<i>Wh-/how question</i>
	Really? Oh, yeah? I see. I know. OK.	<i>Approving</i>
May-June	repeating interlocutor's words	<i>Shadowing</i>
(Rude behaviors)	Me too/Me neither.	<i>Sympathizing</i>

Learning timing (topic)	PPCS	PPCS label
	Would you say that again?	<i>Repetition request 2</i>
June-July	What does . . . mean?	<i>Meaning check</i>
(An ideal life)	Sounds exciting/necessary/etc.	<i>Rejoinder 2</i>
July-August	Can you give me an example?	<i>Example request</i>
(Happiness)	That's a difficult question.	<i>Rejoinder 3</i>

Specific grammar, which students often mis-took, were extracted by the teacher from learners' conversations and introduced. Students tended to share common mistakes according to the assigned topic. Some examples are the conjugations of verbs, distinguishing infinitives, gerunds or verbs, differentiating verbs, adjectives or adverbs, and usages of tense. Students gradually understood a few specific mistakes.

After practicing once a week for a few weeks, learners recorded their conversations with a randomly assigned partner. This transcription and review was repeated for each of the different topics during the course.

**Subjects**

Subjects for the study were all Japanese female first-year junior college students studying nursing. Twenty-four of them agreed to participate in the study throughout the course in the first semester of 2012. Two of them were in their 30s and the others were 18 or 19 years old. They were at a novice level of proficiency. No student had taken the TOEIC® or Eiken Tests.

**Data Collection**

Learners' PPCS use: The data was collected from learners' reports about their PPCS use. They underlined the PPCSs in their transcriptions and marked whether they had used them spontaneously without special effort or if they had tried to remember PPCSs and utilized them intentionally in their con-

Table 2. *Criteria of learners' conversation*

Superior criterion		Criterion	Evaluation	Conversion
Interactive Communication	Initiating, responding	• <i>Initiates and responds appropriately</i>	A+	3
	Development	• <i>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support</i>	A B C	2 1 0.5
	Use of PPCS	• <i>Uses PPCS appropriately</i>		
Delivery	Intelligibility	• <i>Pronunciation is intelligible</i> • <i>Intonation is generally appropriate</i> • <i>Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed</i>	A+	3
	Volume	• <i>Can be clearly heard</i>	A B	2 1
	Fluency	• <i>Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation</i>	C	0.5
	Pace	• <i>Did not have extended pauses</i>		
Content	Cohesiveness, coherence	• <i>Uses a range of cohesive devices</i>	A+	4
	Relevance	• <i>Contributions are relevant despite some repetition</i>	A B	3 2
	Depth, extent	• <i>Can develop the topic and include support for the reasons</i>	C	1

A+: Meets all of the criteria, A: Meets most of the criteria, B: Meets some of the criteria, C: Needs improvement

versation. I counted how many times they utilized PPCSs and how many of them were intentional on the transcriptions by confirming their recorded material.

**Learners' speaking ability:** The recorded conversations were evaluated by the team teachers for the course: a native English teacher and me. Though we referred to the criteria of Sato and Takahashi (2008), the categorization was revised to divide broadly into interactive communication, delivery, and content from their fluency and content, accuracy, delivery, and strategies. Sato and Takahashi evaluated content with accuracy and definite CSs independently whereas we did not measure accuracy and included PPCSs in interactivity because we focused more on the interaction. We evaluated students as A+, A, B, or C, which were converted into numbers 3, 2, 1 and 0.5 respectively in interactive communication and delivery and from 4 to 1 for content (see Table 2).

**Learners' perceptions:** Learners reviewed their conversation after each audio recording using a 4-point Likert-scale (4 = Yes, 3 = Maybe yes, 2 = Maybe no, and 1 = No) focusing on whether or not they enjoyed the conversation, understood their partners' English, tried to communicate with their partners, could say what they wanted or whether it felt easy to speak in class. These were labeled *enjoyment, understanding, communicating, facility and easiness* for convenience. They also gave written feedback in Japanese to complement the questionnaire. Learners might have various perceptions which could not be obtained through the questionnaire and they might have different feelings than they could express in the Likert-scale answers to the questionnaire. The written comments provided information about these perceptions.

### Analysis with Mixed Methods

According to Dörnyei (2007), quantitative and qualitative methods are not necessarily mutually exclusive, so the author combined them in order to gain from both. RQ1 was analyzed using quantitative data, because the frequency of PPCS use was counted while listening to the recordings. RQ2 and RQ3 were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data because quantitative data were necessary to examine the correlations, while open-ended comments were expected to elucidate the participants' ideas and feelings. The learners' written comments could be categorized by keywords, which were converted to numerical values.

### Results

**Learners' PPCS use:** All PPCS occurrences of each student were totaled (see Table 3). The utilizations of greeting and leave-taking were almost constant from the first topic to the last topic. Rejoinder 1, Wh-/how question and approving, which were introduced in the first topic, were used the most in the recordings for the topic. Moreover, shadowing and sympathizing, introduced for the second topic, were used the most in the recording for that topic. Likewise, meaning check, rejoinder 2, example request and rejoinder 3 were employed when first instructed, though their frequencies of use were not high. Different from these PPCSs, repetition requests 1 and 2 did not show any clear tendency (see Table 3).

Most of the percentages of intentionally used PPCSs to the total of each PPCS decreased as they continued their conversations (see Table 4). The exceptions were Wh-/how question and shadowing, which kept high ratios until the last topic and repetition request 1, which was always used without any effort. Example request and rejoinder 3 were

Table 3. The frequency of PPCS utilizations in each recording

	Greeting	Leave-taking	Repetition request 1	Rejoinder 1	Wh-/how question	Approving	Shadowing	Sympathizing	Repetition request 2	Meaning check	Rejoinder 2	Example request	Rejoinder 3
April 26	24	23	2	69	64	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May 31	24	17	6	20	27	29	44	35	0	0	0	0	0
June 21	23	22	3	15	31	18	36	8	0	5	30	0	0
August 2	24	24	3	51	21	15	14	5	0	3	1	2	3

N = 24, Figures show total PPCS use of 24 students in each recording (number of times)

introduced for the last topic and the process of their acquisition and use could not be adequately examined.

**Learners' speaking ability:** The average scores of the four recorded conversations were 8.83, 7.42, 8.78 and 9.25 (*SD* = .800, *N* = 24) respectively.

**Learners' perceptions:** Learners' perceptions after the recordings and evaluation by the teachers showed similar fluctuations. That is, they began rather positively in the first topic but decreased in the second topic. They increased for the third topic, however, went down again, despite the improved

conversation evaluation by the teachers (see Figure 1) and Table 5 shows their means and standard deviations.

The results of learners' impressions written in Japanese could be mostly classified into three groups: enjoyable, difficult and stressful. A student added the reason: "I am familiar with 'This is . . .' or 'That's . . .' since my high school days but not with 'Sounds . . .' Another student admitted that "Would you say that again?" or 'Can you give me an example?' is too long and so it was difficult to say without using notes."

Table 4. Intentionally utilized PPCS in each recording

	Greeting	Leave-taking	Repetition request 1	Rejoinder 1	Wh-/how question	Approving	Shadowing	Sympathizing	Repetition request 2	Meaning check	Rejoinder 2	Example request	Rejoinder 3
April 26	12.5	8.7	0.0	31.9	48.4	57.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 31	8.3	5.9	0.0	5.0	22.2	6.9	68.2	8.6	—	—	—	—	—
June 21	4.3	4.5	0.0	26.7	35.5	5.6	16.7	12.5	—	40.0	10.0	—	—
August 2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	—	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	50.0	33.3

*N* = 24, Intentionally utilized PPCS per the total utilizations (%)

Table 5. Learners' perceptions and evaluation of the conversations by the teachers

Evaluation and perceptions (full points)	April 26		May 31		June 21		August 2	
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )
<i>Evaluation</i> (10)	9.13	(1.09)	8.46	(1.42)	8.83	(0.95)	9.58	(0.57)
<i>Facility</i> (4)	3.08	(0.57)	2.92	(0.64)	3.29	(0.61)	2.96	(0.86)
<i>Easiness</i> (4)	2.13	(0.60)	2.25	(0.60)	2.42	(0.76)	2.35	(0.76)
<i>Communicating</i> (4)	3.50	(0.50)	3.33	(0.62)	3.58	(0.64)	3.43	(0.58)
<i>Understanding</i> (4)	3.38	(0.56)	3.33	(0.75)	3.42	(0.57)	3.35	(0.63)
<i>Enjoyment</i> (4)	3.42	(0.70)	3.33	(0.75)	3.58	(0.49)	3.57	(0.50)

*Evaluation:* Conversation was evaluated by teachers.

*Facility:* I could say what I wanted to in English.

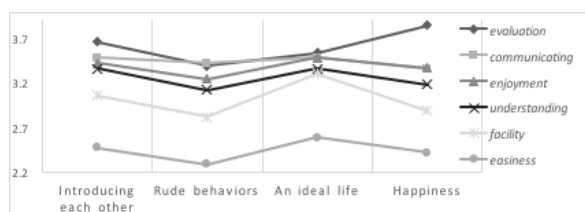
*Easiness:* It was easy to speak in English in class.

*Communicating:* I tried very hard to communicate with my partner.

*Understanding:* I understood my partner's English.

*Enjoyment:* I enjoyed the conversation.

Correlations (Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient): Significant correlations were shown between the utilization of Wh-/how question and rejoinder 1 (That's . . .) ( $r(22) = .597, p < .01$ ). There was also a significant correlation between evaluations of recorded conversations and the frequent use of rejoinder 1 ( $r(22) = .248, p < .05$ ). Other significant correlations were seen between learners' perceptions and the numbers of PPCS use: facility and total PPCS use ( $r(22) = .228, p < .05$ ); easiness and repetition request 1 ( $r(22) = .674, p < .05$ ); and enjoyment and total PPCS use ( $r(22) = .248, p < .05$ ).



*Evaluation:* Evaluations by teachers were converted into the maximum of 4.

*Others* are numbered as *Yes:* 4, *Maybe yes:* 3, *Maybe no:* 2, *No:* 1.  $N = 24$

*Figure 1.* Learners' perceptions and evaluation of the conversations by the teachers.

## Discussion

The results above show that students' interest in PPCSs shifted from previously learned ones to new ones. Learners tried to concentrate on what had been taught immediately before their conversation. Although they did not employ the previous PPCSs when they had not been conversant with them, they tended to adhere to the PPCSs they had learned prior to the newly introduced and simpler PPCSs and easily substituted the previously learned PPCSs. For example, they preferred rejoinder 1 (That's . . .) to the subsequently learned rejoinder 2 (Sounds . . .), and repetition request 1 (Pardon me?) to repetition request 2 (Would you say that again?). Students had a tendency to depend on syntactically simpler and previously-learned PPCSs if they could be manipulated with more limited expressions. While a variety of expressions are necessary to improve their English, the learners in this study need confidence that they can say what they want to in English and it is easy to speak English in class because their perceptions were not high. When they feel they can say what they want to easily, perhaps they will be ready to use a variety of more complicated and sophisticated expressions.

The low but significant correlation coefficient between the utilization of rejoinder 1 (That's . . .) and evaluation of the speaking ability by the teachers

should not be ignored because this was the most frequently utilized PPCSs. Moreover, students' intentional use of the PPCSs is low when their evaluation of the conversation is high.

In the majority of PPCS use, the more often students used certain PPCSs, the less intentionally they utilized them. Rejoinder 1 (That's . . .) is a typical PPCS of this characteristic while wh-/how question was exceptional and needed attention even after many trials. Nevertheless, there was a significantly high correlation between them.

Moreover, the strong significant correlation between easiness and repetition request 1 (Pardon me?) and significant but weak correlation between facility and total of all PPCS use are noteworthy because these perceptions of learners are the two lowest of the five items. Learners' action of asking back without overlooking what learners could not understand might have led to positive perception of easiness and by utilizing PPCS more, they might have felt that they could say what they wanted to.

## Conclusion

I would like to conclude by referring to the research questions. What PPCSs do low-proficiency Japanese college students use in prompted TBLT activities after PPCS instruction? The novice learners used simple and newly-learned familiar PPCSs which could be utilized for diverse expressions across multiple topics. However, it would be productive to encourage them to use more of a variety of underutilized PPCSs. Moreover, even in rejoinder 1, which was utilized most frequently, few of the learners used diverse adjectives in their performances. They represented their feelings by repeating "That's nice" or "That's good." Therefore, emphasis on a broader variety of adjectives would more fully exploit this PPCS potential. With better understanding and a wider variety of adjectives at their disposal, these PPCSs could make greater contributions to the success of their discourse.

The second research question, which is about PPCS utilization and learners' communication abilities, has a less definitive answer. The most frequently used rejoinder 1 (That's . . .), which was taught first, is relevant to the student speaking ability evaluated by teachers. More data could affirm the effectiveness of PPCS instruction because this study is based on only 24 students for one semester. However, the results are encouraging and I look forward to clarifying or reaffirming my current understanding and improving students' learning of a second language through application of TBLT in light of the significance of relevant PPCS use.



For the third research question, correlations between certain PPCS as well as between learners' positive perceptions and some PPCS uses are noteworthy. The significantly high correlation coefficient between rejoinder 1 (That's . . .) and wh/how questions, whose PPCS usages and intentionality were distinctive, deserves special mention. Reasons for the correlation were not investigated; however, this correlation may provide a clue to improve PPCS which required more practice. Furthermore, correlations involving perceptions of easiness and facility, which are meaningful cognition for learning L2, are an incentive, especially for novice learners to accumulate their experience in the target language using PPCSs.

Thirteen PPCSs were examined in this research. It is natural that they have diverse possibilities of utilization in authentic conversation tasks. Based on this research, some of the distinctive PPCS instruction needs to be further investigated to derive more qualitative data on PPCS utilizations from more learners.

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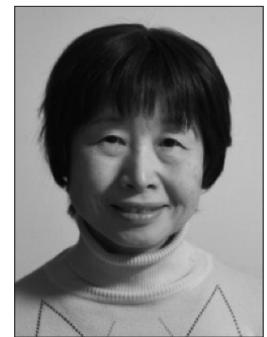
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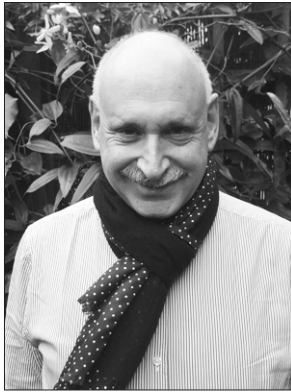
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**Yoshiko Kozawa** is a registered nurse who, after teaching English for six years to nursing students, wanted not only to understand the medical knowledge they should acquire, but also to experience their challenging conditions. She is currently teaching English to nursing students at Suzuka University of Medical Science and at Aichi Kiwami College of Nursing. She has been applying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to motivate her students. In particular, her research interests include improving nursing students' communication skills in English in a more comfortable approach using TBLT communication strategies.



## Interview with Amos Paran, Specialist in L2 Reading and Literature in Language Teaching

**D**r. Amos Paran teaches MA and PhD students at the University College London's Institute of Education. Fluent and literate in English, Hebrew, and German himself (with a bit of Spanish and French), he is probably best known for his research and writing on literature in foreign language learning. Among the recent books he has written, edited and co-edited are *Literature —Into the Classroom* with Pauline Robinson (2016), *Testing the Untestable in Language Education* (Multilingual Matters, 2010) with Lies Sercu, and *Literature in Language Teaching and Learning* (2006, TESOL).



**Simon Bibby and Anna Husson Isozaki:** Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Much of your writing has focused on literacy and literature in the EFL language classroom. How did you become an advocate of literature in language teaching?

**Amos Paran (Paran):** We really need to backtrack. I did a BA in English Literature and Linguistics, and I took a teaching diploma as an insurance policy, because I was going to be engaged in literature. One of the poems on the syllabus was W.H. Auden's *Musee des Beaux Art* (1938). It's a wonderful poem, which he wrote in 1938. It starts, "About suffering they were never wrong, the old Masters: how well they understood its human position" (p. 34). For my test lesson I taught that, and without knowing it, I devised a lesson that was task-based. I didn't know that there was such a thing as 'task-based learning'; at that time there wasn't—it was 1979. And the lesson went swimmingly. I still use that lesson, and it's in my latest book. The poem is based on the painting, *The Fall of Icarus*, by Bruegel. Most people

would start with, "Let's read the poem, let's talk about the poem," and then say, "Oh, by the way, let's look at the painting," and I put it upside down, and said, "Let's look at a painting. What do you see?" We'd discuss the painting, and at some point they would see Icarus . . . We would talk about Icarus, then I would say, "Oh, okay, let's look at a poem." So the whole thing was upside down. And it's always been an amazing success. So, that was my test lesson. From the very beginning of my work I was teaching poetry and using poetry.

In my teaching diploma class there was somebody who was teaching in a school that needed a teacher for an afternoon course for students who were proficient in English and exempt from EFL classes, a course that would focus mainly on literature. I started teaching them and I found out I loved it, and then I was offered a full-time post in that school, teaching EFL. Literature was always an important part of what we did. I used to read aloud in class . . . I remember I was reading Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* (1947), and the bell rang. I closed the book and said, "Okay, we'll continue tomorrow," and the class responded, "No, no, no, please go on reading!" These things don't happen to you when you're doing other stuff. These things happen to you when you are doing literature.

So basically I became an advocate based on two things, really. One is my own love of literature, my engagement with literature, my love of reading. And the second one is that literature goes to places you don't get to when you talk about other things. We talked about politics, important things . . . But literature is the thing people actually remember and take with them.

**SB & AI:** What general advice would you give to teachers who are putting together a curriculum centered around literature?

**Paran:** Well, my first advice would be: *Don't be afraid*. The basic condition of humans is a love of literature and literary artifacts. There is not one

person who does not love literary artifacts. They may not know it! But they do. Who doesn't love songs? Songs are also literary artifacts. I used to teach *American Pie*, which is an incredibly rich piece with elements of intertextuality, requiring background knowledge. What was "The day the music died"?

So, don't be afraid, everybody loves literature. There's always something that your learners will like. Start easy. You don't have to come in and start with Shakespeare. Although, having said that, a lot of my students in secondary school were so proud they'd read a sonnet by Shakespeare, in English. "Wow! Look at me!" There are fantastic Robert Frost poems, there are fantastic short poems by other poets—there's so much.

I suppose I've come to my second point, which is: *Choose wisely*—choose things that will work with your class. Choose things that you think your class will like.

The next principle is: *Choose something that you like*. You've got to convey your passion for the work. The most important thing is to like the literature—it's the affective response, going back to Louise Rosenblatt (1983). All you need to do is lead the horse to water . . .

Don't be afraid, choose wisely, choose easy stuff, choose things that you think they will love, choose things that *you* love, and if your learners don't like something, drop it. Do you know Daniel Pennac's *The Rights of the Reader* (2006) with illustrations by Quentin Blake? One of the rights of the reader is *not* to read, so if they don't like something, stop it.

Give your learners choice. Can you incorporate choice? Have a mixture of genres, and if things are long, don't dwell too much on anything—the most important thing is enjoyment. They've got to enjoy it. Otherwise there's no point.

**SB & AI:** Can literature fit into the communicative classroom?

**Paran:** I think there's a problem: Teachers don't get trained in teaching literature. They get trained to do language and jigsaws and all sorts of interesting stuff in teacher training programs. When you get to literature, there are two things that happen. One is, teachers think, "Oh, but do I know enough about literature?" And, "Can I really teach it?" Teachers lack confidence about teaching literature. People very often, when they come to teach literature, even wonderful, communicative people, suddenly stand there and pour in knowledge, become transmitters because "it's important that you should know this, it's important that you should know that." I don't

see it that way. I think you can do a lot of communicative stuff with literature. Most of the things that I do are tasks that the students need to do as preparation for the piece of literature. They make lists, they produce something tangible—they do it in pairs, they discuss it—and there's a lot of language learning.

So there's absolutely no contradiction. It takes more thinking, it's more difficult, you need to find an appropriate task for a text. The learners need to experience how great it is, so the teacher needs to find a task that will help them experience it. I work a lot with paintings and with visual art and with music—all ways of enhancing the learners' experiences.

**SB & AI:** What would you like to see change in EFL?

**Paran:** The big thing I'd like to talk about is what is known in education as a whole as "the apprenticeship of observation." It was a term coined by the sociologist Dan Lortie in 1975 in a book called *Schoolteacher* (2002). Lortie makes an astute observation. If you're going to become a teacher, you have spent most of your life observing teachers. From the moment you went to kindergarten, reception, nursery or whatever, until you graduate from university you have spent 13,500 hours observing teachers in the classroom, seeing what teachers do. You come in and you think that is what teaching should be.

Many of us learned foreign languages through grammar—you study the rule before you see examples. A lot of us succeed that way . . . and a lot of us don't. But people who succeed then go on to become teachers. Even if they didn't like it, it's there. They walk into the classroom, they do their communicative stuff, something goes wrong and they fall back onto what they know from before. Part of the problem is teachers fall back on teacher-centered frontal teaching, and they don't even know it. There are teachers who think they are learner-centered because they ask a question and the student has to answer. That's not being learner-centered. And for me the thing that teachers have to learn and have to understand is how to relinquish control. It is being the *guide on the side* rather than the *sage on the stage*. It's very difficult being the guide on the side when you look at something and you want to intervene and be the sage on the stage. It's very easy to fall into that trap. Partly, it is also because your students expect that. So you're working against the expectations of your students, and against your own experience. It takes a long time to be able to relinquish the control and work with your students on how they can take control of their own learning. The systems are not set up for that. Teach students to take control of their own learning. You have to

find a space where your learners live, and learn, and take on the responsibility for learning.

**SB & AI:** Recently, you've been discussing reading literature aloud. In fact you wrote in previous email correspondence with us that "... listening to literature read aloud is important in developing the connections between the phonological representation and the visual form of the word. And of course reading aloud is something that is far more natural to literature than to other texts." Can you tell us a little more about this?

**Paran:** Reading aloud is interesting—it's important for a variety of reasons. Part of our language competence is the link between the phonological representation of the word and the visual representation of the word, and the meaning. In fact, you can't read a word without the phonological representation being activated. So reading aloud serves to strengthen that link between the phonological representation and the visual, orthographic representation, and that's important. If a work is slightly above the level of the student, if the teacher reads it aloud, that's parsing it for the students, breaking it into chunks, using intonation, thereby helping them create a vision of what it's about.

I think reading aloud is not the easiest thing to do—and in fact I remember when I did my teacher training we had a session on reading aloud and how to read aloud, and I've since worked with practicing teachers on this skill, and on how to develop it. When you read aloud to a class, you can't have your face stuck in the book. You've got to read and look at the students, because that way you're communicating to them. Otherwise it looks as if you're reading aloud to yourself. It's really, really important, and not easy.

There's the question of whether the learners should read aloud. A lot of teachers get their learners to read aloud. I think there's an issue there. Reading aloud something that you've never read before is very difficult. So asking learners to do that, I think is slightly problematic. I would say, "Get your learners to prepare a dramatic reading of a piece of literature." If you are not sure of reading aloud, there are audiobooks. I did a lot of work with *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Haddon, 2003)—it's a really interesting novel. I did it in Chile in a teacher training workshop, and I wanted them to read as fast as possible, and so I put the audiobook on for about fifteen, twenty minutes. We listened to it, and they read along in their books.

Another point is that reading aloud is part of life for many people, as Sam Duncan from the UCL

IOE has shown (Duncan, 2014a, 2014b). People read aloud to their partners: bits of a book, or bits of the newspapers. It can be an important part of language teaching, but it's got to be handled with care in my view.

**SB & AI:** A criticism of using ungraded authentic literature is that the texts are too difficult and they should be graded by vocabulary level. How do you respond?

**Paran:** I think we very often give our learners things to read that are too difficult in terms of progressing reading, sight vocabulary, and fluency. You need to read something that is below the level you're at. Readers really need to know most of the words in the text, as Batia Laufer (1992) has shown. I think the percentage Paul Nation (1990), Bill Grabe (2002) and others quote now is 98%. Otherwise you stop. If you're trying to enjoy a book, if you've got more than two or three unknown words per page, you're not going to enjoy it, and if these words are crucial, then you won't understand it. If you're reading for pleasure you're going to put it aside.

When you're doing extensive reading, I'm a real believer in "read easy and read a lot." It's more important to read a lot at a low level than to struggle with something that is above your level or even at your level, but you need to work hard to understand it. If you want to get *flow*, if you want to get enjoyment, it's got to be easy. Csikszentmihalyi's point about flow (1990) is that you've got to do something that will be slightly challenging. In terms of reading, in terms of language, I'm not sure about it. I think the language needs to be non-challenging. Maybe the content can be interesting and challenging, but the language itself—if the language becomes challenging most of us wouldn't go on. You would have to have a very high level of interest in the subject.

**SB & AI:** What are you working on these days?

**Paran:** I'm doing a number of things. Andrea Révész and Myrrh Domingo and I have just finished recording and constructing a MOOC, "Teaching EFL/ESL Reading: A Task Based Approach." A book has just come out, *Literature—Into the Classroom*, with Pauline Robinson (Paran & Robinson, 2016). I'm editing a book on Shakespeare in the language classroom, and I've just edited a special issue of the *ELT Journal* on language teacher associations, because I'm quite active in IATEFL.

I am also working on a big study of literature in language teaching, across a variety of languages, for the International Baccalaureate organization (an international body offering programs of school study)

together with Sam Duncan (e.g., Duncan (2014a, 2014b) on adult literacy and reading for pleasure). We've interviewed teachers and students, observed classes and recorded classes. We've got interviews with about 25-30 teachers, in three different schools in three different countries, and we're looking at what they say about literature in language teaching, the role of literature in language learning and acquisition, and the advantages of using literature in the language classroom.

**SB & AI:** Well, you certainly are a busy man. Thank you very much for the interview and for your time.

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**Anna Husson Isozaki** teaches at Juntendo University in Tokyo. She holds an MA in Advanced Japanese Studies from Sheffield University UK, a Journalism certificate from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA, and an MA TESOL from Kanda University of International Studies. Her research interests are mainly focused on second language literacy, orature, translation, and critical media literacy. She has been slipping literature into EFL classrooms in Japan for twenty years, and bringing Japanese literature to the West by co-translating two bestselling Japanese novels and editing several more.



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## Interview Testing: Focusing on Repetition and Increased Contact with a Variety of Teachers to Improve Language Retention and Reduce Anxiety

Julyan Nutt

*Tokai Gakuen University*

Faced with students who were unable to cope with basic communication in English, a curriculum was devised that focused on repetition and increased contact with a variety of teachers to improve retention and overcome anxiety. Students were asked ten pre-taught questions on a variety of topics, in an interview test conducted by a teacher with whom they were not familiar. When responding in a Likert-type questionnaire at the end of the course, the majority of students felt they were better able to converse in English with World English speakers. Teachers and students were both supportive of the method. Benefits included increased impartiality and standardization.

英語の最も基礎的なコミュニケーションにもうまく対処できない大学生に対し、記憶力を増進し不安を克服するために、反復練習とさまざまな教師とのコンタクトを増やすことに焦点を当てたカリキュラムを考案した。2学期にわたり、学生たちとはあまり面識のない教師が、事前に知らせた質問群の中から無作為に選んだ話題について10個の質問をするインタビュー形式の試験を行った。課程終了時に実施したリッカート形式のアンケート結果から、多くの学生が英語圏の英語話者と英語で話すことがより良くなるようになったと感じ、試験の方法に賛成していたことがわかった。教師たちからはこの方法に対して賛同や支持を得ることが出来た。加えて、試験の公平さ、標準化を推進することもできた。

**“Why can't our students speak English?”** was the question my predecessor was asked by a professor who had recently returned from a study abroad tour with a group of students. In truth, the question is perhaps unfair. Our students are non-English majors, have been let down by the six years of English education they received before entering college, and have even less exposure to English at college than at high school. When I was put in charge of coordinating the English conversation program, I was determined to improve this situation. I believe that, at the end of the eighteen-month English conversation course, at the very minimum our students should be able to answer simple questions about themselves in English when asked by someone they do not know. The course attempts to mirror the scenario of a student on a study abroad program.

Two main areas had to be dealt with. First, students needed to be able to retain the knowledge of the basic grammar concepts they had learned in order to be able to reproduce them on demand. Second, they needed the confidence and the tools to overcome anxiety when dealing with native English speakers with whom they were unfamiliar, in this case a teacher other than their main classroom instructor.

### The Study Group

The study group comprised 434 first-year and 173 second-year students. Their average TOEIC Bridge score was 102 (SD: 19.75). Our first-year students have to take a compulsory one-year English conversation course. In the second year, English conversation is a one-semester course, with half the students taking the course in the first semester and half taking it in the second. The second-year students who took part in this study took the English conversation class in the second semester having had no English conversation classes in the first semester.

Our faculty consists of fifteen native English teachers (twelve of whom took part in the study) from the USA, UK, and Canada with a diverse range of accents, personalities, and teaching styles. There were approximately twenty students in a first-year class and fifteen in a second-year class.

Interview tests made up 40 percent of the final grade, with a further 40 percent for the written part of the exam and 20 percent for quizzes given during class. In the interview test students were awarded two points for a grammatically correct full-sentence answer, one point for a word answer or an answer containing grammatical mistakes, and no points for an incorrect answer or an answer containing Japanese. When students asked for repetition in Japanese no points were given, but if they asked in English, they were awarded points. The written

exam was based on the textbook, which was chosen to give grammatical support of a similar level to the interview test questions.

### Spiral Learning and Repetition for Reinforcement

Retention of language is difficult for students who have low proficiency, poor motivation, and limited exposure (Harley, 1994). The program was therefore designed to overcome this with its emphasis on repetition. At the beginning of the first year, five topic areas were chosen—name, hometown, occupation, free time, and family—with one opening question and one follow-up question for each topic asked in the interview test. Various model answers were provided, which the students personalized, and ample class time was dedicated to memorizing answers and roleplaying the test scenario. In the next test a further two questions for each topic were added to develop the themes in more depth. With each additional interview test more follow-up questions were asked, and two more topics related to the past and future were also added.

My hope was that the ease of the initial test would alleviate some of the anxiety of being tested by a teacher they were unfamiliar with. In the second test, ten out of a total of twenty questions were asked; in subsequent tests, ten questions from the

increasing pool of questions (totaling 36 questions in the final test) were asked, with the students not knowing which questions would be used. At the end of the second semester students were expected to answer questions that they had been asked at the beginning of the first semester. This approach was extended into the second year. Owing to the attrition expected after a spring break and a semester without any English conversation classes for half of the students, the same questions were asked in the second year albeit condensed into one semester.

### Increased Contact and Classroom Language

Retention was only half of the problem; the other problem was that of students being able to reproduce language on demand when asked by someone with whom they were unfamiliar. By increasing the contact time between our students and the experienced and varied teaching faculty, I attempted to create a close approximation of the scenario of meeting someone abroad. Each bi-semester an interview test was conducted by a teacher other than the regularly assigned teacher, which was organized by rotating classes. In order to better prepare the students, class teachers were encouraged to equip them with the appropriate classroom language: for example, how to ask someone to slow down their speech, speak more clearly, and repeat questions. These scenarios were again simulated in the classroom.

**Table 1. Frequency of Response (%), Means and Standard Deviations: 1st year Students' Attitudes Towards the Interview Testing method**

	M	SD	4	3	2	1
			SA	A	D	SD
1. I feel interview tests are a good way of evaluating an English conversation course.	3.27	0.56	30.3	63.0	6.63	0
2. I think being able to communicate in English is important.	3.56	0.60	58.0	39.7	2.33	0
3. I feel that now I am better able to talk about myself in English than at the beginning of the course.	2.97	0.64	17.5	62.6	19.4	0.5
4. Because my teacher is not testing me, I consider he / she is there to help me pass the test.	3.17	0.66	30.3	57.3	11.5	0.9
5. I am happy to continue being tested this way.	2.97	0.66	17.8	61.5	20.7	0
6. Having different teachers interview me has made me feel more confident speaking to foreign people.	2.83	0.76	15.3	54.4	28.3	1.9
7. I think we should only be tested on new questions, not the old ones as well.	2.08	1.13	5.3	12.4	70.0	15.3
8. I believe that repeating questions from previous tests has helped me remember them.	3.11	0.71	29.7	53.1	15.8	1.4
9. I would prefer my class teacher conduct the interview tests.	2.86	0.83	23.1	42.5	32.1	2.6
10. I don't understand why we are doing interview tests.	2.09	1.17	4.3	18.5	59.2	18.0

Note: <sup>a</sup> n=210 <sup>b</sup> SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

**Table 2. Frequency of Response (%), Means and Standard Deviations: 2nd year Students' Attitudes Towards the Interview Testing method**

	M	SD	4	3	2	1
			SA	A	D	SD
1. I feel interview tests are a good way of evaluating an English conversation course.	3.37	0.50	38.3	60.1	0.9	0
2. I think being able to communicate in English is important.	3.69	0.49	69.0	30.2	0.8	0
3. I feel that now I am better able to talk about myself in English than at the beginning of the course.	2.96	0.58	14.8	66.1	19.1	0
4. Because my teacher is not testing me, I consider he / she is there to help me pass the test.	3.20	0.65	33.0	53.9	13.0	0
5. I had already learned the first-year questions so did not want to be tested on them again.	2.15	0.66	4.39	16.7	68.4	10.5
6. Having different teachers interview me has made me feel more confident speaking to foreign people.	2.83	0.74	16.4	53.5	26.7	3.45
7. I think we should only be tested on new questions, not the old ones as well.	2.02	0.59	4.5	4.5	79.5	11.6
8. I believe that repeating questions from previous tests has helped me remember them.	3.26	0.65	35.7	56.5	6.09	1.74
9. I would prefer my class teacher conduct the interview tests.	2.80	0.67	11.5	59.3	26.6	2.6
10. I don't understand why we are doing interview tests.	1.81	0.69	0.9	12.9	52.6	33.6

Note: <sup>a</sup> n=117 <sup>b</sup> SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

**Table 3. Frequency of Response (%), Means and Standard Deviations: Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Interview Testing method**

	M	SD	4	3	2	1
			SA	A	D	SD
1. I feel interview tests are a good way of evaluating an English conversation course.	3.41	0.51	41.7	58.3	0	0
2. I think that the way the course is graded (40%, 40%, 20%) is appropriate.	3.33	0.49	33.3	66.7	0	0
3. I feel that the students are better able to talk about themselves in English than at the beginning of the course.	3.25	0.45	25.0	75.0	0	0
4. Because I am not testing my own students, I feel that they consider me to be there to help them pass the test.	2.92	0.79	25.0	41.7	33.3	0
5. Taking into account the additional work required, I feel that this is a worthwhile exercise.	3.58	0.51	58.3	41.7	0	0
6. Exposing the students to a variety of native English speakers makes them better able to deal with the differences in English pronunciation, accents, etc.	3.75	0.62	83.3	8.3	8.3	0
7. I think students should only be tested on new questions, not the old ones as well.	1.75	0.62	0	8.3	58.3	33.3
8. I believe that repeating questions from previous tests has helped the students remember them.	3.42	0.51	41.7	58.3	0	0
9. I would prefer to interview my own students.	2.10	0.74	0	30.0	50.0	20.0
10. Overall, I feel that the questions are suitable.	3.43	0.51	41.7	58.3	0	0

Note: <sup>a</sup> n=12 <sup>b</sup> SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree



There are pros and cons to using a teacher other than the regular class teacher. While the conflict of interest brought about by a teacher examining his or her own students is removed, thereby improving impartiality and standardization, there is also an increase in anxiety. Anxiety in language acquisition is well documented (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), but not all of it is harmful. With poorly motivated students, I hoped that by having someone other than the regular class teacher, students would be more motivated to study rather than having the nonchalant attitude to tests observed in previous years. Brown (2007) notes that this “facilitative anxiety ... over a task to be accomplished is a positive factor” (p. 162). I wanted this anxiety to be harnessed and the class teacher to be seen as an enabler, a tool to help the student pass the test, as opposed to an adversary. Furthermore, the test was designed to help students manage this anxiety through familiarity.

### Evaluation

Students and teachers alike were asked to evaluate the interview testing method by means of Likert-type questionnaires (see Tables 1 – 3) that were in Japanese for the students and English for the teachers. The questionnaires were originally produced in English, then translated back into Japanese and checked by a native Japanese speaker who was familiar with the study. The teachers were also given the opportunity to write comments on the interview test method.

I found that there was little difference between first- and second-year students. Accordingly, for this analysis they have been considered as a whole unless otherwise mentioned. Students and teachers alike agreed that interview testing was an appropriate method of evaluating the course and the students understood why they were being tested this way. They felt that being able to communicate in English was important and 80 percent of the students felt they were better able to communicate in English at the end of the course. Students do have a tendency to respond positively in questionnaires, but in the absence of any objective analysis exactly how much they improved cannot be confirmed. However, the fact that all twelve of the teachers concurred lends the students’ response a certain degree of validity.

### Retention Through Repetition

Statements seven and eight dealt with repetition and essentially asked the same thing but from different angles: a negative response in statement seven corresponds to a positive response in statement

eight. This was designed to be a control mechanism. Once students get the general gist of a questionnaire there can be a tendency for them to check all the positive responses if they like the teacher, and all the negative responses if they do not, without reading the questionnaire properly. Accordingly, students who checked exactly the same response for all the statements were removed from the analysis: 13 percent and 6 percent of first- and second-year students respectively. Similarly, students who responded positively or negatively to both question seven and eight were also removed: a further 39 percent of first-year and 27 percent of second-year students. Over 80 percent of the remaining respondents (90 percent for second-year students) felt that being tested on questions taught earlier helped them remember those questions. Also, nearly 80 percent of second-year students agreed that they wanted to be tested on the same questions they had learned in the first year, and this showed the value of repetition.

### Exposure to Different Teachers

Despite the majority of students (70 percent) preferring to be interviewed by their class teacher, over 70 percent felt that because they had been interviewed by different teachers, they were more confident in speaking to foreign people. This was confirmed by 90 percent of the teachers, who felt that this exposure had made students better able to deal with varieties of World English. A large percentage (80 percent) of first-year students were happy to continue with this method of testing, despite saying they would prefer to be interviewed by their own teachers. The teachers also agreed in spite of the additional work required of them. Second-year students had already finished the course, so they were not asked this question. Approximately 90 percent of students felt that their usual teacher’s role was to help them pass the test as they would not be their examiner, and over 60 percent of teachers agreed.

### Teacher Comments

The teaching faculty was encouraged to comment freely on the interview testing approach. They were told that any comments would be taken on board and if there was a general consensus that the interview testing method needed changing, it would be adapted accordingly. The teachers were supportive of the approach, or otherwise held their criticism back. One of the teachers felt that it was a little unfair for students to be expected to be able to respond to a different teacher in the test, although interestingly the same teacher strongly agreed that

this makes them better able to deal with differences in pronunciation and accents. Another teacher was 'won over by the interview method. She stated that she "used to want to interview her own students, but now (saw) the value of having another foreign teacher do it," adding that it is a "more formal and an authentic 'test'" as opposed to "classroom 'practice.'" An unexpected benefit of testing each other's students was also revealed. One teacher felt that "it is very important for all of us to see the strengths and weaknesses in our teaching approach." Presumably, working as a team had encouraged discussion on teaching methods. On the benefit of repeating questions in subsequent tests, the same teacher wrote: "the students need a core knowledge or ability with English communication. Asking some of the same questions has a lot of value."

For the most part, the teachers approved of the testing method; however, there was some input regarding content. Two of the teachers of lower-level classes felt that there were too many questions for the students to handle. Also, there were two requests for more opinion-based questions. In the following year, the number of questions in the test were not reduced, but some of the questions were changed to opinion questions.

### Conclusion

Teaching poorly motivated, beginner-level non-English majors does not have to be a thankless task. By properly assessing students' needs, designing the curriculum accordingly, and setting appropri-

ate goals, there is plenty that can be achieved by students and teachers alike. This course shows that the language attrition expected over the duration of the year could be reduced, and the anxiety generated from contact with English speakers could be overcome and even harnessed to better motivate the students. At the same time, impartiality and standardization were improved, as was the interaction between the teaching faculty.

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**Julyan Nutt** has been teaching in Japan for twenty years. He is a full-time lecturer at Tokai Gakuen University. His research interests include peer assisted learning and improving motivational issues in the ESL classroom. Outside of the classroom he is an avid vegetable gardener who is striving towards his ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.



## [JALT PRACTICE] TLT INTERVIEWS



### Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

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

Email: [interviews@jalt-publications.org](mailto:interviews@jalt-publications.org)

Greetings! From this issue and beyond, we will have the pleasure of serving as the column editors for TLT Interviews. As you may already know, this is a brand new column for 2017 that will bring you insightful dialogues with some of the top experts in the field of language learning, teaching, and education. This issue's featured interview is with Annamaria Pinter from the University of Warwick, a specialist in English education for young learners and one of the distinguished plenary speakers at the JALT2016 conference. She was interviewed by Lesley Ito, a teacher, teacher trainer, school owner, and

award-winning materials writer based in Nagoya. Lesley's 20-year experience teaching young learners made her the ideal person to interview Annamaria Pinter. Her school for young learners, BIG BOW English Lab, has a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) curriculum with a strong focus on literacy. Her ELT writing credits include interactive graded readers, online support materials for interactive graded readers, teacher's guides, workbooks, and an e-book on tips for teaching young learners. So without further ado, to the interview!

# An Interview with Annamaria Pinter

Lesley Ito

*BIG BOW English Lab, Nagoya*

I had the privilege to interview JALT2016 plenary speaker Annamaria Pinter, a leader in the field of teaching English to young learners, child second language learning, and teacher



development. An associate professor at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, she has published widely in the area of teaching English to young learners and is the author of *Teaching Young Language Learners* (Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers) (2017) and *Children Learning Second Languages* (2011). She is also an editor of an e-book series titled, *Teaching English to Young Learners*.

**Lesley Ito:** *You are known for your work on how to best do research on young learners. When Caroline Linse was a JALT plenary speaker in 2013, she said young learners make up about 70 percent of English language learners, yet are subjects in only about 30 of the research. In your opinion, why is there so little research on young learners?*

**Annamaria Pinter:** First of all, I think this is changing. There is a lot more research, certainly a lot more research that I am aware of being done. I think this is because, in the last few years, we can see new countries making the commitment to starting English at earlier ages. I know this is the case in Japan. Also, there is just a little bit more awareness now about how important it is to get the foundation right. Without good, solid knowledge about what happens in primary schools, we will struggle in the secondary sector.

Soon there will be a huge handbook coming out on young learner research by *Routledge*, something that Fiona Copland and Sue Garton are editing. I think that will be a collection of empirical studies which will be unparalleled in our field in terms of bringing together so many aspects.

I think there are reasons why fewer people do research on young learners. This is quite upsetting, I'm afraid, but it's true, that once you're very good in the primary sector, you're moved up. For doing a good job in the primary sector, whether you're a textbook writer, inspirational teacher, or teacher trainer, in many contexts, to get more money or more prestige, you get moved up to the secondary or tertiary level. I know of projects I've worked on, an inspirational group of primary specialists came out with a great product and five years down the line, none of them are in the primary sector anymore. This is a real trend. We also see this reflected in research grants and sponsorships. In master's programs, it is rare to find someone who wants to specialize in young learners. In some countries, having an MA in TESOL, specializing in young learners actually closes doors, rather than opens them. Having a general TESOL degree means you have a chance to teach younger or older learners, but in some countries having one that specializes in young learners is considered lower status. In the face of this, I think it is quite normal that a lot of research students who are sponsored or MA students on scholarships will go for adult related research. I think it is a real problem across the world that primary teachers have lower status and a lower salary, and as soon as you are good, you get moved up.

*Your book, Teaching Young Language Learners, is recommended in my Teaching English to Young Learners master's program, and one I believe every teacher of children should have on their bookshelf. I heard a new edition is coming out. Congratulations! Could you tell us some more about the book and your new edition?*

Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to know that you are using it and it is useful to you. The new edition is coming out in January in the UK and obviously, every chapter has been updated. So, there's new research inserted in every chapter. Research is handled exactly as before, in a very reader friendly manner. As you remember, at the end of every unit there were tasks for teachers to do. There is a set of 25 new tasks. In addition, there is a whole new chapter, which is about intercultural education for children, what English teachers can do in this area. The classroom research chapter has been fully updated, including lots of ideas from my new projects where I'm trying to get children much more involved in research. So, there are examples of child research, and ways for teachers to encourage children to explore classrooms together.

*Your book is very all encompassing, touching on every aspect that teachers of young learners need to know. If*

*you were trying to tell a brand new teacher about your book, how would you characterize it?*

My book is exactly like that. It doesn't go into very much detail into any one topic area but gives a comprehensive overview. This book is very readable for those who are new to teaching. It doesn't use a lot of terminology or jargon. I've been told by teachers, "In my course, I was told to read Vygotsky and sociocultural theory and after reading about this in your book, I could understand some of the basics and this helped me make the next step to tackle reading academic journal articles." The main advantage of this book is that it is for people who don't have much experience and everything is explained step-by-step in a way that is easy to follow.

*Yes, I thought your book took a lot of difficult educational concepts and brought them down to earth, making them easy to understand.*

*You have worked with teachers from many countries, including Japan. Some teachers in Japan say that sometimes the European perspective on young learners does not apply in their EFL classrooms. What's your opinion on this and how can we bridge the gap?*

I think one could argue that every teaching situation is unique and every country is unique. I think every teacher should be in the position to decide for themselves what is possible and desirable in their own classrooms. I think it is important for teachers everywhere to familiarize themselves with debates around the world, theoretical ideas, and practical ideas, not to copy them or take them on board uncritically, but to engage with the ideas and see whether any aspect of it may be suitable. Sometimes we find it difficult to step outside our comfort zones because we believe that there is a reason for the way things are. I always say to teachers, "Ask the learners. Find out from the learners what they feel and what they enjoy and start from there. Don't pre-judge it or assume you already know what is best."

*I was very interested to see that you have recently become interested in children who need to adjust to life in their own countries after living overseas with their families for a short time. Helping returnees, or kikokushijyo, adjust to life back in Japan after being in international or local schools where the language of instruction was English, is an issue that affects teachers here more and more. What advice could you give them?*

My advice for classrooms with different learners, whether they have different backgrounds or languages, or are returnees, is that teachers should try

to include everyone and appreciate what everyone can bring to the classroom because those returnee children will be very good at certain things. They could be used as a resource, maybe as English language users, or for wonderful cross-cultural activities that would speak to everyone because returnees would perhaps know about other cultures in more depth. Any student can benefit from these lessons, as I say, you can't really understand about other cultures until you understand your own. So, to have those intercultural interactions in a meaningful way, for example taking a cue from what the returnee children actually notice, say, and comment on what is different or what they found surprising about their country when they returned. Those can be excellent starting points for raising intercultural awareness. For those children who have never been away, I think it is still important to contemplate the idea that they might someday go away and what it feels like.

Recently, I visited a primary school in my local area where 80+% of the children use English as a second or third language and some children come to the school without any previous education at all. Typically these schools would be considered as difficult. Indeed this school used to really struggle until some years ago when a new headmistress turned it all around. Now all children are encouraged to talk about and celebrate their different languages and cultures they come from. The school also cultivates ambition at every level, all children are encouraged to aim high, and they are all told nothing is impossible. The head teacher employs an English as a second language specialist, not just to do remedial work in English, but to work with children to prepare them in advance proactively in terms of their English skills for tasks and content coming up in the curriculum.

Children are trusted to take control of important decisions, and they talk to visitors with enthusiasm and pride about what kinds of activities are happening in their school. This positive attitude about all cultures, all languages, and all possible backgrounds is infectious and inspiring.

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## Steven Asquith

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

Email: [my-share@jalt-publications.org](mailto:my-share@jalt-publications.org) • Web: <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare>

Hi, and welcome to the March/April edition of My Share. Early spring is always an exciting time in the school year as new people arrive and old friends depart. And similarly, change is in the air behind the scenes here at My Share as my fabulous co-editor Gerry McLellan has moved to another section of TLT. Don't be concerned though, readers, the talent and ingenuity of the authors who contribute to this column never changes, and this month's edition is no exception.

First we have **Ryan Pain** and **Gareth Humphreys** who provide us with the wonderfully adaptable and practical activity of using stamp rallies to practice multiple communication skills. Upon reading the article I immediately tried this activity for myself, and it received a really glowing endorsement from my freshmen students. The next idea is a creative and innovative project, in which students design Choose Your Own Adventure stories, and this is introduced by **James Taylor et al.** A fun, competitive, board game with similarities to the JHS classroom mainstay Battleships is suggested by **Armando Duarte**. While in the final article, **Shannon Mason** and **Neil Millington** explain a speed chat activity incorporating smart phones, which encourages spontaneous spoken production in order to improve oral fluency.

In the online edition, **Charles McLarty** suggests re-leasing learners from the confines of the classroom to play a bit of Vocabulary Frisbee, and **Julia Raina Sevy-Biloon** explains a memorable way of practicing adjectives by holding a taste test which uses real food.

## Stamp Rallies

### Ryan Pain and Gareth Humphreys

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#### Quick Guide

- » **Keywords:** Stamp rally, differentiation, learning variety, learner engagement
- » **Learner English level:** All levels

- » **Learner maturity:** All ages
- » **Preparation time:** 30 minutes
- » **Activity time:** 1 hour +
- » **Materials:** A stamp sheet, station instructions, stamps and ink pads (optional)

Stamp rallies involve setting up learning stations in the classroom, each containing a different task to be completed in a 5-minute period. The number of stations will depend on the class size and duration. For our large classes (28 students+) of 90-minute length, we typically set up ten to twelve. Students work in pairs or groups of three at each station to complete the task. The tasks at each station should be easy to understand, contain variety, and aim to incorporate different language skills. Example tasks include: communication tasks, free reading, small group chat, short free write, investigative stations, picture stations, role-playing stations, iPad games, listening tasks (see Appendices for task examples). A timer and buzzer are useful here which can be displayed via the projector to add time-pressure to each activity. After completing the task, students should stamp their answer sheet (see Appendices) and then move on to the next station until they have visited all of them. The stamping of stamp sheets helps learners see which tasks they have completed as well as provide a sense of achievement.

Stamp rallies provide a lively, student-centred and effective means to differentiate learning by engaging students of any age or level in a variety of learning tasks around a topic or language point. They offer a range of language practice opportunities across all skills and are also an effective way to enhance student engagement in large classes.

#### Preparation

**Step 1:** Prior to the class, the teacher first prepares the tasks for each "station". These can be broad or narrow. However, we find it works well if they cover a variety of skills and task-types. Print these along with any accompanying materials needed for each task.

**Step 2:** Design the answer sheet and make enough copies for each student.

**Step 3:** Buy stamps and ink pads. Alternatively, students could sign their name instead of using a stamp. When students finish each task they should stamp their answer sheet to indicate that they completed the task.

### Procedure

**Step 1:** Students choose their own partner, or the teacher designates groupings. Distribute answer sheets.

**Step 2:** Display a countdown timer with a projector if possible. Alternatively, have your own timer and countdown the time on the board by writing when students have 2 minutes, 1 minute remaining, etc.

**Step 3:** Instruct students firstly to read the station instructions. When students are ready, press start on the timer. Monitor and assist at all stations as necessary. When the time is up, students should move with their partner to the next station in the room.

**Step 4:** After students have completed the tasks at each station, either collect the answer sheets for marking or go through any answers with them.

### Conclusion

The purpose of stamp rallies is to facilitate learning by offering a range of language practice opportunities through the various tasks. They are an effective way to differentiate learning in a classroom through the variety provided, and they can support both learner engagement and output. They are particularly effective as a review activity towards the end of a unit. Finally, they enable the teacher to provide individual attention and monitoring to all students.

### Appendices

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

**IWATE JALT CHAPTER  
Michinoku English Education  
Summit in Hachinohe  
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*Hachinohe Gakuin University*

Sunday, June 18 2017

<http://jalt.org/groups/423>

## Choose Your Own Adventure

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### Quick Guide

- » **Keywords:** *Project work, teamwork, technology, storytelling*
- » **Learner English level:** *Low intermediate and above*
- » **Learner maturity:** *High-school or university*
- » **Preparation time:** *30 minutes*
- » **Activity time:** *Eight 50-minute lessons (varies depending on learners and institution)*
- » **Materials:** *Laptops, whiteboard, projector/TV/interactive whiteboard, worksheets*

Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) stories are increasingly being used in language classrooms. Having students work together to create a story where the class participates in the retelling increases student interest and motivation. This project requires students to collaborate and use their imagination within a structure to create their own CYOA using presentation software such as PowerPoint (PPT).

### Preparation

**Step 1:** Watch the YouTube video (*'The Time Machine'*).

**Step 2:** Teacher makes his/her own brief PPT story (see Appendix A for an example).

**Step 3:** Print Appendices B-F and photos of famous characters.

### Procedure

**Step 1:** Introduce the concept of CYOA stories. Distribute Appendix B and explain that you will watch a CYOA video and the class will map out the story together. Play the video, pausing regularly to discuss

what happened. Students fill in the worksheet, and vote on each choice. Then ask students “who, what, when, where” and write their answers on the board. Show a brief teacher-made PPT story, and again have students vote and elicit the core details of that story (who, what, when, where, goal).

**Step 2:** Tell students that they will make a short CYOA story as a class. Distribute photos of famous characters and ask students to select the heroes and villains for their story. Have students first think of the core details, then they can add further details of the plot, choices, and consequences, which the teacher writes on the board. Retell the story as a class, generating answers from students.

**Step 3:** Distribute Appendix C. Explain that most stories have a goal, and have students complete Part 1. Students then form pairs and complete Part 2, brainstorming ideas for a CYOA story they will make in PPT.

**Step 4:** Distribute Appendix D. Students write a draft, with the teacher making comments and corrections. Then distribute Appendix E. Students plan their adventure in more detail; the teacher helps as necessary.

**Step 5:** Have the students bring laptops to class (or move to a computer room) in order to make the PPT, incorporating images or photos. Have students insert hyperlinks into their PPT to facilitate the presentation of the story. The teacher may need to demonstrate how to do this.

**Step 6:** Complete PPTs with text, images, and hyperlinks. The teacher gives feedback. Once complete, students practice reading their story, then record themselves and insert audio files into their PPT. The teacher may need to demonstrate how to do this.

**Step 7:** Share the adventures with the class on a big screen. While watching, students vote on each course of action and complete Appendix F. Grade students according to the conventions for CYOA stories (goal, good choice/bad choice) and their PPT (hyperlinks, audio, images).

### Variations

Potential variations include focusing on a particular grammatical point, making video-based adventures, or a low-tech project. If more than one class is doing this project, teachers can show PPTs made by students from other classes.

### Conclusion

Students were active and engaged while developing their stories. In an informal end-of-project survey 97% of students asked said they enjoyed the project.

### Reference

Chadmattandrob. (2008). The Time Machine: A Chad, Matt & Rob Interactive Adventure. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8rj1WML60Y>

### Appendices

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

## Gold, Silver, and Bronze (GSB)

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### Quick Guide

- » **Keywords:** *Task-based, speaking, pair work*
- » **Learner English level:** *Junior or senior high school*
- » **Preparation time:** *30 minutes*
- » **Activity time:** *15-25 minutes*
- » **Materials:** *Handout (see Appendix)*

This *Battleship*-like board game, done in pairs, combines listening and speaking. Students take turns verbally constructing sentences in an effort to “hit” marks on their partner’s board and deny him or her points. Although students (and teachers) unfamiliar with the activity face a steep learning curve, once they learn the ropes, the activity will basically run itself. As this activity doesn’t lend itself well to explanation, it is strongly advised to follow along with the documents in the appendix. This activity works best in a team-teaching setting, as it requires demonstration, but teachers working in other contexts are encouraged to try it if interested.

### Preparation

**Step 1:** Write the sentence halves which will make up the game board. For example, a lesson on the relative clause might include question stems like “Do you know how to” and “Does she know how to”. These sentence halves populate the leftmost column. The question endings might include “make a crane?” and “play the guitar?”, which line the top row.

**Step 2:** Prepare a 6x6 game board (see Appendix for example).

**Step 3:** Copy enough handouts for all students in your class.

### Procedure

**Note:** This procedure is a walkthrough of how to demonstrate the activity with a co-teacher.

**Step 1:** Both teachers will write one G, one S, and one B on each row of the game board (see Appendix for example). A random distribution is best.

**Step 2:** Review the sentence components for both pronunciation and meaning.

**Step 3:** Begin the demonstration. The winner chosen by rock-scissors-paper will verbally compose a sentence corresponding to a blank space on their game board. Both players will cross out any sentence that is called out by either player.

**Step 4:** Alternate turns. The second player will state a sentence which corresponds to a blank space on their own board, and both players will cross this space out.

**Step 5:** Continue alternating turns until there are no more blank spaces available to call out. On a 6x6 game board, set a turn limit of 10 turns per player. The game will end when 20 turns have been taken and both players have 20 spaces crossed out on their boards.

**Step 6:** Calculate how many points each player will have at the end of the game. Set a point value for Gs, Ss, and Bs. I usually give Gs a point value of 50, Ss 30 and Bs 20 points. Only spaces which have not been crossed out can be counted towards that player's score.

**Step 7:** Find the overall class winner by asking students to raise their hands if they have over 200 points or 300 points, etc. Distribute rewards if a rewards system is in place in your classroom.

**Step 8:** For classes with an odd number of students, the game can be played in groups of 3. For a turn-limited game of 20 turns, each player in a group of 3 will state about 6 sentences.

### Conclusion

This activity gives students a chance to practice speaking and listening using a variety of sentences of a certain type (giving advice, ordering fast food). However, speaking takes place in an inauthentic environment because these sentences are removed from the context in which they would normally appear. Make sure to connect the content that appears in your GSB game with actual communicative speech used in real-world situations.

### Appendices

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

## Smartphones for Sustaining 'Spontaneous' Communication

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### Quick Guide

- » **Keywords:** *Speaking, communicative learning, smartphones*
- » **Learner English level:** *Beginner to advanced*
- » **Learner maturity:** *High school to university*
- » **Preparation time:** *5 minutes*
- » **Activity time:** *10 minutes to 45 minutes*
- » **Materials:** *Smartphone or tablet*

Providing students with opportunities to speak in the target language is one of the main principles of communicative language teaching. This can be difficult for teachers to facilitate in large classes. It can also be a challenge for teachers in Japan, where many learners have little experience of spontaneously chatting in English, and therefore need scaffolded activities to help students develop their skills and confidence.

'Speed chat using your smartphone' is a concept which involves students having a quick conversation using their smartphones as a prompt, before moving on to a new partner and repeating the process. Students use their smartphones to show a photo or video to a partner. This can be prepared by the learner in advance or done spontaneously.

### Preparation

This strategy works best if it is complemented with activities to improve students' spontaneous oral communication skills, including how to create follow-up questions, how to react and interrupt, and how to use strategies to overcome limitations in language knowledge.



## Procedure

**Step 1:** Give the students a topic. An example topic would be, 'My favorite place at this school.' The students then go out of class for 10 minutes to take photographs or a video of that place. Alternatively, give the students a topic to talk about, for example, 'A beautiful beach', or 'My favorite restaurant'. Students use their smartphones to find images or videos from their library or from searching online.

**Step 2:** Have students sit in rows so that they are in pairs facing each other. Playing background music might help to create a more relaxed atmosphere, and to give students the feeling that they are not being listened in on.

**Step 3:** Students talk to their partner using their photos and videos as prompts. Students aim to talk for the duration of the set time, which will depend on the level of the students, and the chosen topic.

**Step 4:** The teacher can choose to be a participant in the speed chat, move around and join in various conversations, or sit back and observe. The aim of the activity is not for students to produce perfect English, but to communicate their ideas using the

images or videos on their smartphones as prompts. While the teacher may listen out for common grammatical errors or misused vocabulary, they should be addressed at a different time.

**Step 5:** For the last round of the 'speed chat,' increase the length of the conversation slightly. As a rule, students do not notice this, and this is likely because they have collected stories, vocabulary, questions and confidence along the way, to be able to cope with a longer conversation.

## Conclusion

We have had a lot of fun incorporating smartphones in our 'speed chat' activities. Utilizing the technology which is ubiquitous with learners seems to really engage them in their conversations. We have also noticed a gradual easing of concern that many students exhibit about making errors in front of teachers and peers. Over a 15 week period students generally increase their speaking time by two or three times. We encourage you to try this strategy in your classroom if you haven't already, and share your thoughts and ideas.

## [RESOURCES] TLT WIRED



### Edo Forsythe

*In this column, we explore the issue of teachers and technology—not just as it relates to CALL solutions, but also to Internet, software, and hardware concerns that all teachers face. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.*

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## Setting up an Effective Google Scholar Profile

Steve McCarty

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Researchers and students use Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com>> to search for published sources of information that are peer-reviewed and reliable to cite in academic writing. Less well known is the role of automatic Google Scholar algorithms in a global system of publishing, connecting citations and other data with authors, and providing measures to evaluate the academic output of individual scholars and

their institutions. There is a way for authors affiliated with higher educational or research institutions to curate and optimize the incomplete data that Google Scholar finds, by registering for a free online Profile. This article thus focuses on precisely how and why career scholars should set up and maintain a Google Scholar Profile.

### Why Set Up a Google Scholar Profile?

Higher educational institutions are evaluated, relative to their peers, largely in terms of the aggregate accomplishments of individual faculty members. The controversial yet widely publicized global or national rankings of a university affect the quality of students and staff the institution can attract, as well as potential funding and resources. For example, foreign students often look up prospective universities on global ranking websites when deciding their priorities for studying abroad, so universities cannot rest on their regional laurels.

In the search for objective evaluation criteria, universities as well as global ranking organizations look to quantifiable measures of scholarly output. Google Scholar, with its limited database of reputable publications and academic websites, powered by the Google search engine, and interoperable with research repositories, is in the strongest position to provide data on publications and citations thereof. It handles languages other than English, listing papers in other languages and counting citations to them from other such papers. Citations per faculty member tend to be weighted heavily in the global rankings, as citations are considered the gold standard of peer review, or the best available measure of research influence and the impact of publications.

Japan's MEXT provides incentives for Japanese universities to achieve higher global rankings through original research that is cited (*Daigaku sekai ranku*, 2013). McCarty (2015) provided an in-depth look at the connection between Google Scholar Profiles and university rankings. Some universities go so far as to evaluate individual academics for promotion or tenure based largely on the functions found in Google Scholar Profiles, which curate publications of individual authors and count citations to them from selected academic sources. Such universities urge all teachers and researchers to set up and maintain a Google Scholar Profile, which can serve as a lasting e-portfolio or online list of publications. Moreover, one's Profile can be edited and optimized to correct the incomplete results of the Google Scholar algorithm, which may not count some citations because of typos or different spellings of one's name. Without a Google Scholar Profile, much of the same data is scattered in the public domain. However, optimizing one's Google Scholar Profile can make the information more effectively serve one's purposes, such as increasing citations, academic recognition, networking and collaboration. One's Profile becomes a node in a global system of interconnected publications and scholars.

### How to Set Up a Google Scholar Profile

In order to create your own Google Scholar Profile, sign in to your Google account (or create a new account, if necessary), then go to: <http://scholar.google.com> (or in Japanese, <http://scholar.google.co.jp>). Click on *My citations*. Fill in *Step 1. Profile* with your information. (Tip: Keep your name consistent for all publications so the Google Scholar algorithm does not miss any.) Your e-mail address must end in *.ac.jp* or the like, as your affiliation must be confirmed by Google Scholar to be an academic or research institution. Fill in up to five areas of interest (more

generic areas make it easier to link with others for research or collaboration).

Click *Next step* to go to *Step 2. Articles*. Click on *See all articles* and Google Scholar offers publications in its database that seem to be yours. Be sure to uncheck ones that are not yours, then click on *Add articles*. This generates a list including the total number of articles and citations to them. (Please note that Google Scholar draws from a limited database of publications, academic sites, and research repositories, so your publications and citations will probably be undercounted at this stage). Go to *Step 3. Updates* where you can choose automatic updates or to receive an e-mail to approve all additions of citations or publications to your Profile. Read the explanation of some available customization options, and then click on *Go to my profile*. The first draft of your Profile page appears on the web at a permanent URL, unless you choose to keep it private. Notice all the parts of the page, with actionable functions highlighted (please note that visitors will only be able to browse this information). The Profile page will probably need editing and customizing to be more effective, particularly in finding citations to your publications.

### How to Optimize a Google Scholar Profile

Google Scholar automatically maintains and updates each Profile with publications and citations it finds from its limited sources, such as journals, academic book publishers, and university websites. Online campus research repositories in formats such as DSpace, and independent sites such as Academia.edu automatically feed new entries into the Google Scholar database. If permission can be gained by a university library to not only list abstracts and information about faculty publications, but also to make them wholly available as PDF files, then the writings tend to be more widely read and cited as well as to be curated by Google Scholar. Google Scholar's algorithm is proprietary, but inferences can be made about how it works. In the experience of this author, adding items to repositories, or editing to make the Profile more complete or accurate has resulted in an uptick of citations found by the algorithm. Some possible customizations of a Profile are illustrated with Figure 1.

1. After setup, the author's introduction can be edited any time by clicking *Edit*, but the space is limited. Up to five research interests link to authors with the most citations in those areas. Add a homepage URL and upload a photo to enhance the Profile as an e-portfolio. The *Follow* button is to receive e-mail notifications if desired whenever new cita-

tions or publications are found. 2. Total citations are listed, with indexes for productive years, and a bar graph of the trend over roughly the past decade. 3. Any publications or presentations that Google Scholar has not found among its approved sources can be added manually, so the Profile can serve as an online list of publications. In that case click on *Add*, then *Add article manually* (see Figure 3 below). 4. By clicking on *Year*, the sorting changes from most cited items to reverse chronological order. 5. Limited details are listed under the title of each publication, including all authors, and if some information is missing (like in this example), click on the title and *Edit* to complete the information, as in Figure 2 (below). Clicking boxes to the left of items makes it possible to delete entries by other authors with the same name, and all mistakes should be corrected. Clicking two boxes makes it possible to merge more than one version of a publication, as each citation found by Google Scholar accrues to only one item. 6. Co-authors who also have Google Scholar Profiles can be easily added, and found by the search box under number 2 in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Some points to notice in the author's Google Scholar Profile as of July 1, 2016.

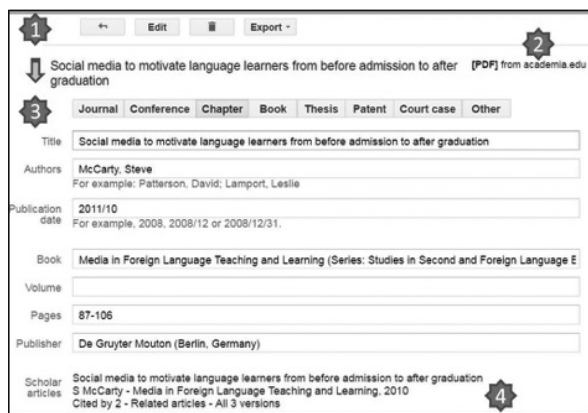


Figure 2. Example of information in a Google Scholar Profile entry that the author can edit.

1. Clicking on a publication title in anyone's Profile page shows more detailed information,

which only the author can edit. Figure 2 shows the top part of the screen and the actions available. 2. If the whole article is available online from a research repository that feeds into Google Scholar, links to the file automatically appear in the author's Profile. Clicking on the *Edit* button by number 1, the next screen appears. 3. Select the genre of the publication, or check that the automatic entry is categorized correctly. The fields to fill in or correct will be different depending on whether the item was published in a journal or periodical, conference proceedings or presentation, book chapter, authored book, or graduate school thesis. Note the correct format for names of authors and the publication date, which affects the reverse chronological listing. 4. The *Scholar articles* section is produced automatically by Google Scholar. The title of a publication in this section links to one version, while there is another link at the bottom that opens to a page with all versions (in this case Google Books, a campus research repository, and Academia.edu). Clicking on *Cited by* leads to the Google Scholar entries for the articles that cited one's publication, while *Related articles* are entries that the algorithm finds with similar content. In such ways authors can find related research or authors researching similar areas to follow or seek out for collaboration.

When D. J. Mills set up a Profile, some items were incomplete or missing. His editing to add the article manually is shown below in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Example of D. J. Mills manually adding a co-authored article to his Google Scholar Profile.

The article was evidently among Google Scholar's sources, but not readily matched to his name among the multiple authors. After editing, Mills' Profile reflected the changes from the original automatically generated Profile in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Google Scholar Profile of D. J. Mills as of July 1, 2016 reflecting the newly added article.

1. The *JALT CALL Journal* article now appears in the Profile, and Google Scholar tentatively found a citation to it. 2. The bottom two items were edited to add details including the year of the last item, but the venue of two items could still be added where nothing appears below the author's name. Co-authors who have a Google Scholar Profile may also be added.

## Conclusion

This article has shown briefly how to create an effective Google Scholar Profile that curates one's

publications, maximizes the number of citations credited to one's works, and facilitates academic networking.

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*Editor's Note: As many people take the time to polish their resume during the spring vacation, you may want to consider adding a Google Scholar Profile to your professional portfolio. In addition to his up-to-date Google Scholar Profile, you can check out Steve McCarty's publications—including his recent book, Implementing Mobile Language Learning Technologies in Japan—at <http://steve.waoe.org>. As preparations for PanSIG 2017 and JALTCALL 2017 continue, I hope that all of our readers have a great spring vacation and recharge your batteries so that, in the coming school year, your classes will be even more Wired!*

# [JALT PRAXIS] YOUNG LEARNERS



## Mari Nakamura

The *Young Learners* column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editor at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.

Email: [young-learners@jalt-publications.org](mailto:young-learners@jalt-publications.org)

## A Path to Promote Reading Comprehension Part 2: Towards the Goal of Literacy Independence

Hello colleagues,

We have now reached the final leg of our journey in our exploration of the field of literacy education for young EFL learners. It has been quite an inspiring and enlightening journey, having some great contributors, such as Chiyuki Yanase, Cynthia Akazawa, Laura Macfarlane, Lesley Ito, and Ruthie Iida, and exchanges of insights and practical ideas on our Facebook page. In this final article of this series, let me share an approach

I take to promote literacy skills and independence in older children, from ages 10 to 15.

The same way I do with my younger children, I adhere to these five key principles to keep older students engaged and motivated: skills integration, interaction, gradual release of responsibility, discrete use of the first language, and personalization. Please refer to the previous issue of this column for a detailed explanation of these principles.

Once I decide that a group of children have become used to the routine of Reading Race, which is also described in the previous article, and have developed confidence in sharing their responses to literature with their peers and me, I let them move onto the next project, Reading Spy. This two-year program for fifth and sixth graders is similar to Reading Race in that children choose a book to read at the beginning of each lesson, read it at home, and

return it in the following lesson. The main difference between Reading Race and Reading Spy is that in the latter program, children show their responses to what they have read in a written form.

In the first four months of this program, each child receives a size A5 reading record sheet, either Story Spy or Non-Fiction Spy, for each book he or she checks out. Each sheet shows the following questions.

### Story Spy

- Who is in the story?
- Where is it?
- What happened?

### Non-Fiction Spy

- What is the book about?
- Copy your favorite part.
- What do you think of this book?

These sheets also have a section for children to note some key words from the books and their translation. Usually they write from one to three words they have looked up in a dictionary.

These forms help each child show their comprehension without the pressure to write a cohesive piece by themselves. Each week, I check all the children's writing while they are picking the next book to read, and give them oral and written feedback. In the first month, we spend about 20 minutes of the lesson time on this project, but it becomes smoother and quicker over time. A benefit of this project is that it allows me to adjust my expectations and feedback depending on each student's proficiency and needs. As the project proceeds, they gradually learn how to add details to support their claims and to express the connection they have made between the text and their personal experiences.

Having worked on this project for several months, children become ready to write a book report on their own. My students get overjoyed when I tell them that they don't need these forms anymore because they are now independent writers. This is a big milestone in their literacy journey.

Typically, they write several sentences to summarize the content and share their response to what they have read in their notebooks. I read all these book reports, either in class or after class, and give them written feedback. As the main aim of this program is to give children opportunities to read books for meaning and to share their response with me and their friends, my feedback is mostly on the content and it is given in English. I correct grammatical errors when a certain error is recurring frequently

in basic grammar such as subject-verb correspondence and tense, which I consider to be important for this age group to learn.

Reading Spy is a mandatory program for all the children up to Grade 6. However, once they reach Grade 7, I make it voluntary. This is because the main part of my lessons for junior high school students has a strong focus on reading and writing, and they work on the same cultural reading textbook every week, with which they improve reading comprehension, expand vocabulary and respond to text through speaking and writing. To my surprise, all the students keep on checking out books every week in spite of their busy lives. Many of them check out two or more books even before their school tests! They say that it is fun and refreshing for them to read these books between studies.



Figure 1. Grade 7 students choosing books to read.

I do not ask them to read the text aloud or to use a dictionary anymore because they have become fluent readers by now. So, at this stage, my reading program takes the form of Extensive Reading. Most of the students write a book report every week on a voluntary basis. From their reading behavior and book reports, I can see that they are reading for meaning and pleasure.

Once every few months, the students make Book Report Posters. They pick one of the books they have read, and create a size A4 poster to recommend the book to their friends. The aim of this project is to give them opportunities to express their ideas in a creative manner, to share them with their friends in a relaxed atmosphere, and to feel a sense of accomplishment. It also helps them improve their writing and presentation skills.

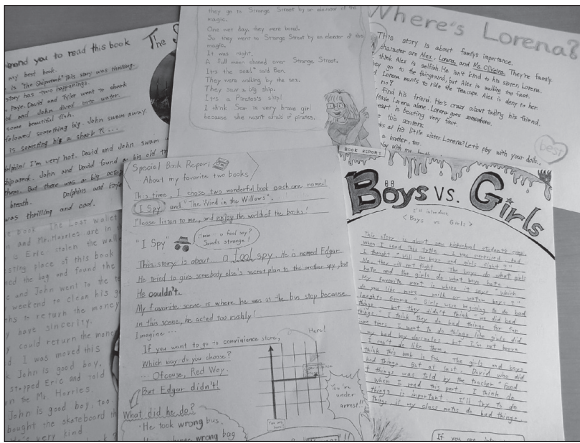


Figure 2. Posters created by G7 students.



Figure 3. Grade 7 students talking about their favorite books with friends.

Here are several ways to use the posters to improve multiple skills in an integrated manner:

- Students form pairs and share their posters with each other. They discuss the books and their response to the stories.
- Students form pairs and do the activity above. Then they switch partners and repeat it with two new partners. Each time they work with a new partner they feel more comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas. This builds speaking fluency and confidence.
- Students exchange their books and posters, and give written feedback to their friends. Then they have a brief discussion time.
- Students do presentations using their posters. The audience gives comments and asks questions to the presenter.
- I record the presentations using a video camera, put it on Youtube with the “unlisted” setting, and send the link to the students with some comments. They watch the video at home, brush up on verbal and non-verbal skills, and do the same presentation again in the following lesson.

It is truly rewarding for me to see my students grow up to be autonomous learners who enjoy their literacy experience in English by engaging in the activities described above. I have been making an effort to improve my literacy program over the years, and it will never cease to evolve. By the time this article is published, I may have already made some minor changes! I am sure that you are always working on professional development and never stay the same as well. Why don't you share your experiences and innovation in this column or on the JALT Teaching Younger Learners SIG Facebook Page? <http://facebook.com/groups/jshsig/>

PanSIG 2017 • <http://www.pansig.org>

“Expand Your Interests”



## Robert Taferner

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

Email: [reviews@jalt-publications.org](mailto:reviews@jalt-publications.org) • Web: <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/book-reviews>

This month's column features Branden Kirchmeyer's review of *Positively English! Developing Speaking Fluency* and Sayaka Karlin's evaluation of *Interactive Writing: Practical Writing Skills for the Digital Age*.

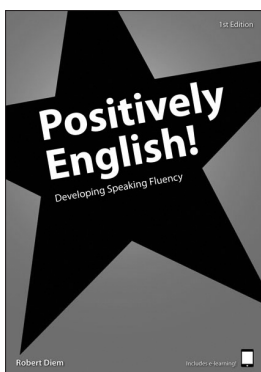
## Positively English! Developing Speaking Fluency

[Diem, Robert. Location: Carpe Diem Learning Solutions, 2013. (Media files available online) pp. 99. ¥2,160. ISBN: 9784905299486.]

Reviewed by Branden Kirchmeyer, Sojo University

**P**ositively English is a speaking-focused course book aimed at young-adult learners at the false-beginner and low-intermediate levels. The text is organized into twelve topic-oriented lessons, each of which follows a sequence based on Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) (Rowan, 2014). A companion website also includes a teacher manual, graphic organizers, and several resources for students. Stated in boldface on the first page in a letter to students, the aim of this text is to help students become more confident and fluent in English.

The text opens with three ice breaking activities. Straightforward and simple, these can be re-used with different student pairings in the early weeks of a course. Similarly, the text concludes with three pages of scaffolding materials aimed at helping students practice follow-up questions, new vocabulary, colloquial phrases, and classroom language.



While the topics covered in the text are familiar to this type of conversation course book (*Meeting People, Family, Hobbies, My Schedule, etc.*), the pedagogical foundation of the lesson structure sets it apart from the others. A relatively new and underrepresented method of language teaching, TPRS prioritizes repetition of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) and structured, student-focused content to facilitate language development (Ray, 2013). The connection to TPRS is clearly visible in the highly structured format of the lessons, which also follow an established process of raising awareness and facilitating appropriation and autonomy (Thornbury, 2005).

During the warm up, students are asked to read roughly twenty statements (sometimes one of their own crafting) and decide whether or not they are true for the student (e.g., *I've never eaten snake*). Then students listen to very brief conversations before practicing a similar conversation with a partner in which much of the warm-up content is recycled. After an optional presentation of personal information, the lesson moves into the main activity wherein students read short stories to each other line by line. Finally, students are prompted to select a research question and conduct a class survey (e.g., *Have you ever seen a ghost?*), with the intention of presenting the results to the class. Various extensions are also included at the end of the lesson, and serve to provide confidence-building experiences with using the targeted language features.

For the current review, this book was trialled in several non-major communicative English classes with first and second year university students. As these classes had prior curriculum requirements, the trialling did not involve every lesson, nor were the lessons always followed in the prescribed manner, it was discovered that the individual activities in this book can be selected and adapted to suit such teaching situations. Most students found the difficulty level to be a good fit for speaking practice, and I was genuinely impressed with the lesson's ability to retain student attention and engagement. These students seemed to appreciate the lesson structure, as it provided a high degree of scaffolding to get through to the final survey activity. Surveys

of student attitudes towards the book were overwhelmingly positive, with specific praise given to the *yasashi* structure and student-focused content.

As a teacher, I also found this course book to be a positive addition to my resource collection. The lessons, which are self-sufficient and can be used as-is in a pinch, are flexible enough to be adapted to existing curricula, and model a reliable and effective method of teaching false-beginners with little ability or confidence in using English. Also of note is the teacher's manual, found on the companion website. Everything is clearly laid out, even sample teaching styles and techniques, suggestions for classroom seating and assessments. Especially for teachers starting out in their careers, this packet of information should be very useful. Unfortunately, not much else can be said of the companion website. Links for extra practice point to privately-run websites that often are not at an appropriate level. Extension videos present awkward though clear recordings, and while comprehension quizzes provide immediate feedback to responses, pop-up blockers will block this feedback if enabled. Most frustrating of all, links to language practice games simply do not work in any browser. Certainly, the book functions well enough on its own, and it is the opinion of this reviewer that the website should all but be disregarded.

Overall, *Positively English* is a great speaking development resource for false-beginners and low-intermediate students. Structured and straightforward, students will find it easy to use as a scaffold for conducting extended conversations, and teachers will appreciate the blend of consistency and flexibility it offers as a course book or as a supplementary resource.

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## Interactive Writing: Practical Writing Skills for the Digital Age

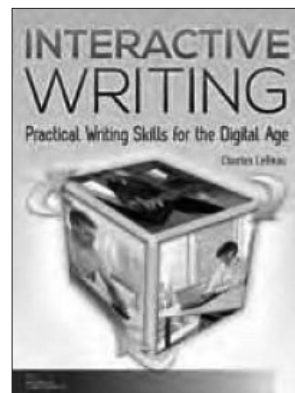
[Charles LeBeau. Tokyo: Macmillan Languagehouse, 2014. pp. 114. ¥2,300. ISBN: 978-4-7773-6476-3.]

Reviewed by Sayaka Karlin, Tokyo International Business College

*Interactive Writing: Practical Writing Skills for the Digital Age* is recommended for beginner to low-intermediate students. The textbook has 12 units that are thematically organized as a study-abroad experience in the United States, with units based on visiting a campus, finding a roommate, and writing a summary for a friend who has missed a class.

Each unit is focused on an end goal of students being able to write about that unit's target theme, such as an advertisement for a roommate. Activities in each unit build gradually from more structured activities to free writing at the end of each unit. The consistent use of examples gives students a foundation on which to build, and provides enough support to confidently move on to more challenging activities. The first-year engineering students with whom I used this textbook appreciated the gradual buildup in each unit, which helped them to succeed even though they had limited ability and confidence. They also liked the opportunities for pair-work, indicating that it was more enjoyable than solitary writing and grammar textbook activities.

For teachers, this textbook is easy to use because every unit is organized in the same way. As teachers become familiar with the textbook, the consistency of every unit's organization will allow for minimal preparation time. Also, although the purpose of this textbook is to improve students' writing skills, it also contains activities that require other skills, particularly communicative pair work. The author suggests pair work for cloze and survey activities in each unit. Writing textbooks can sometimes emphasize solitary writing activities, but this textbook





has endeavored to take a more socio-constructivist approach, with learning constructed through interaction between peers rather than passively acquired, in order to keep learners motivated and to deepen learning (Swain, 2000). Socio-constructivists believe that interaction challenges learners to generate high-quality output as well as pressing them to repair communication breakdowns.

Additionally, the textbook balances these pair activities with some solitary correction activities that focus on errors. Students can develop awareness of their mistakes and are likely to improve their form when prompted with correction exercises (Lyster & Mori, 2006). For example, the first sentence of the mistake correction activity in Unit 4 reads “Three student are renting a large house near campus and are looking for one another roommate” (p. 35). There are two mistakes in the example: the lack of plural form for *student* and the superfluous use of *one* in *one another*. Both of these basic mistakes, which can be distinguished from errors in that mistakes are the result of a lack of focus by the learner that results in faulty language rather than the result of incomplete knowledge, should be familiar to students, and as such, are easily identifiable and treatable.

As evident in the title, this textbook focuses on writing with a digital theme, which primarily takes the form of emails. As the author notes in the prologue, it is more likely that one of his students will need English to write an email rather than have a conversation, so the focus of this textbook seems especially relevant for a Japanese context.

In addition to improving their writing skills, students may also learn about American culture, which may be especially motivating for students who are interested in other cultures (Aubrey & Nowlan, 2013). In their research, Aubrey and Nowlan compared two groups of Japanese university students, one that interacted with a foreign university student and one that had no interaction with foreign students. Their research indicated that the group which interacted with the foreign student experienced significant gains in motivation, while the other group did not, suggesting that materials that attempt to replicate this foreign interaction or experience may generate increased motivation amongst students.

If there is one suggestion for this textbook, it is that perhaps there is too much focus on writing emails and not enough of a focus on other aspects of digital writing, such as social media posts, writing reviews for Amazon or Yelp, or making travel suggestions on Tripadvisor.

To sum up, teachers should find this to be a useful writing textbook for beginners. The gradual progression of difficulty within each unit, the consistency of each unit’s organization, and the interactive nature of some of these activities are all appealing aspects of this textbook.

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## Recently Received

Steve Fukuda & Julie Kimura

[pub-review@jalt-publications.org](mailto: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 column editors at the Publishers’ Re-

view Copies Liaison address listed on the Staff page on the inside cover of *TLT*.

## Recently Received Online

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

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

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

Contact: Julie Kimura — [pub-review@jalt-publications.org](mailto:pub-review@jalt-publications.org)

\* *Building TOEIC® Skills* — Janzen, A. Seoul, Korea: Seed Learning, 2017. [3-level course focusing on vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening skills incl. mini and practice tests, transcripts, and audio CD].

*Communicate Abroad* — Cookson, S., & Tajima, C. Tokyo: Cengage Learning, 2016. [12-unit travel and study abroad preparation course incl. classroom audio CD and teacher’s manual].

*Communicate in English with The Devil Wears Prada* — McKenna, A. B. Tokyo: Shohakusha, 2016. [12-unit communicative course w/ transcripts incl. teacher’s manual and classroom CD and DVD].

- Donald J. Sobol: Solve the Mystery 2 and Improve your English Skills** — Various Authors. Tokyo: Eihosha, 2016. [24-unit course based on readings incl. review tests, teacher's manual, and audio CD].
- ! English through Drama: Creative Activities for Inclusive ELT Classes** — Hillyard, S. Crawley, UK: Helbling Languages, 2016. [Handbook for using drama activities in elementary to advanced classes].
- ! Focus on Basic English for Communication** — Higuchi, C., & Fukutomi, K. Tokyo: Shohakusha, 2016. [24-unit course for beginner level students incl. teacher's manual and downloadable audio].
- \* **Final Draft** — Lambert, J (ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016. [3-level academic writing skills course incl. teacher's manual and online practice].
- ! IELTS Testbuilder (2nd Ed.)** — McCarter, S., & Ash J. London, UK: Macmillan Education, 2015. [Examination preparation course incl. audio CDs and answer keys w/ explanations].
- Listening Express** — Pilgrim, J. UK: Compass Publishing, 2017. [3-level listening course for intermediate and advanced learners in secondary school incl. vocabulary and sentence building mobile application].
- \* **L2 Selves and Motivations in Asian Contexts** — Apple, M. T., Da Silva, D., & Fellner, T. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2017. [Discussions on Asian applications of current motivational theories].
- Make it Simple** — Morita, K., Takahashi, J., & Kitamoto, H. Tokyo: Sanshusha, 2015. [13-unit course on daily topics for students for false beginners incl. downloadable teacher's manual and audio files].
- ! My New York Sketchbook: Version 2** — Mitsufuji, K., & Uesugi, M. Tokyo: Sanshusha, 2015. [20-unit reading course incl. online teacher's manual, YouTube channel®, and classroom audio CD].
- \* **Serious Fun: Engaging Academic English** — Jensen, J. C. Seoul, Korea: Global Stories Press, 2016. [12-unit course for the intermediate learner incl. teacher's manual w/ quizzes and extra activities].
- ! TOEIC® Skills** — Graham-Marr, A., Anderson, J., & Howser R. Tokyo: Abax, 2015. [3-level series designed as a test preparation course incl. online teacher's notes and audio CDs].
- ! Vocabulary for Law** — Racine, J. P., & Nakanishi, T. Tokyo, Nan'un-do, 2016. [10-unit course using corpus-driven vocabulary incl. quizzes and vocabulary notebook].
- \* **Which Side are You on? Forming Views and Opinions** — Flaherty, G. Tokyo: Seibido, 2017. [15-unit 4-skills debate course incl. teacher's manual and audio CD].
- World Link: Developing English Fluency (3rd edition)** — Various Authors. Hampshire, UK: Cengage Learning, 2016. [4-level series incl. workbooks, lesson planner, classroom DVD and assessment CD].
- \* 「グローバル人材育成」の英語教育を問う — Various Authors. Hituzi, Publishing, 2016. [Discussion on global human resource development and its relation to English language education].

**Books for Teachers (reviewed in JALT Journal)**

- Contact: Greg Rouault — [jj-reviews@jalt-publications.org](mailto:jj-reviews@jalt-publications.org)
- \* **Beyond Repeat After Me: Teaching Pronunciation to English Learners** — Yoshida, M. T. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 2016.
- Educating Second Language Teachers** — Freeman, D. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Making and Using Word Lists for Language Learning and Testing** — Nation, I.S.P. Amsterdam, NL: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016.

## [JALT PRAXIS] TEACHING ASSISTANCE



### David McMurray

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

Email: [teach-assist@jalt-publications.org](mailto:teach-assist@jalt-publications.org)

In this issue's Teaching Assistance I interview Nathaniel Reed, a veteran Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). ALTs work in schools all over Japan, in locations that range from quite rural to heavily urban. At times they may be required to act as a main teacher in the classroom or assist a Japanese teacher to help teach English pronunciation, vocabulary and communication skills. I ask him about the changes he has seen take place since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Course of Study for senior high schools was enacted in April 2012. That change requires English classes to be conducted in English to

create locations for real communication to take place. Reed claims that recently there has been a significant rise in direct hire and private company ALTs.

When I checked on what skills ALTs needed with Meron Mesfin, a recruiter for a private company (personal communication, January 17, 2017), he suggested that ALTs need to be "friendly, outgoing, adventurous individuals, who are patient, personable and open minded. They need to be independent workers capable of living in a full immersion Japanese environment with little supervision, and able to diplomatically handle daily work and life challenges with a cool, customer-service type

attitude." ALTs are also expected to take part in various aspects of school life, including school cleaning, eating lunch with the students, sports events and cultural activities.

To meet employer expectations, Reed suggests that current ALT training practices could be more efficient. He claims that an online training and professional development system for ALTs would improve the quality of language education in public schools and foster better relationships among teachers. He has already started to enact his idea by developing a MOOC, a massive open online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. Figure 1 reveals an introductory page to the course. Reed also intends to offer interactive user forums as part of the MOOC, which could be extremely useful in building a community of ALTs around Japan. When well-designed, MOOCs with such user forums can enable the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed teachers and students and create virtual locations for real communication to take place.

## An Interview with Nathaniel Reed on ALT Training Systems

David McMurray

International University of Kagoshima

**David McMurray:** Lately, I haven't heard too much about what ALTs are doing these days in Japan. What's new with ALTs this year?

**Nathaniel Reed:** Good question, and my answer is: Nothing much is new. The hiring procedures and training of ALTs, as well as our position and influence has largely gone unchanged since 1987. This year has been no different: The same decades old issues of role confusion, reliance on *yakudoku* (grammar translation methodology), one-shot recruitment and short training are as widely discussed as they always have been. However, in view of emerging research (e.g., Kano, Sonoda, Schultz, Usukura, Suga, & Yasu, 2016) that shows increasing numbers of ALTs actively seeking professionalism, some proactive change looks to be bubbling up.

**DM:** With an eye on curriculum changes suggested by MEXT to create all-in-English junior high school classes by 2020, university majors in education are gearing up for tougher Ministry of Education examinations over the next 4 years. What do ALTs think about the new curriculum proposals?

**NR:** Well yes, it's an exciting time to be teaching in Japan. There is a lot going on in the ever-stepping-up Courses of Study, and some real potential for the future of youth in the Japanese education system and the wider society. A response to what ALTs think about policies is not so straightforward though, being the mixed bunch that we are.

Of the 16,000 or so ALTs currently working in Japan, we all stand somewhere along a spectrum of interest in and knowledge of policy evolution. In general some ALTs may be in Japan for a kind of gap year, have no background or interest in teaching, and are here to soak up some culture and travel or maybe to learn a little bit of the language. On the other side are professional teachers: ALTs with backgrounds and qualifications in something ELT related, some level of Japanese fluency, and who have been an ALT for decades and have a house, family or some other roots in Japan. Obviously the ones at this end of the spectrum will have more views, opinions and insight than others.

**DM:** Please introduce your ALT online training system.

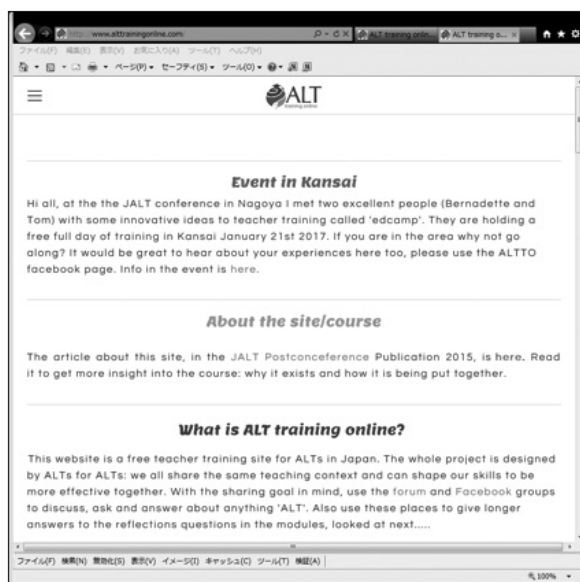


Figure 1. Clip-shot from the ALT Training Online MOOC.

**NR:** The ALT Training Online (ALTTO) system was born in 2015 following research I conducted as part of my MA in Applied Linguistics. I concluded, like many others, that the potential of ALTs is often unrecognised, but this could be rectified through ongoing in-service training, as previous initiatives have shown (e.g., Crooks, 2001; K. Hill, personal

communication, October 20, 2016; Kushima, Obari, & Nishihori, 2011).

ALTTO is an open-ended MOOC, meaning it can be started/completed at any time. There are 22 modules divided into three categories: Contextual, Teaching, and Professional Development. The course brings together successful elements from previous ALT training initiatives and ideas from the wealth of research-based recommendations specific to training ALTs with online learning data and adult learning theories. The primary aims are to help ALTs to teach the Course of Studies effectively, improve team-teaching partnerships, and build a community of ALTs (Reed, 2016). The training is linked to social networks and supplemented by accessible resources that we have been permitted to use by various organizations, including JALT.

**DM:** How do you know it is actually helping ALTs?

**NR:** Well, teacher training is hardly a new idea, even for ALTs. Since the website's inception in 2015 the challenge has been to make content relevant to all ALTs. It's been a case of reading and re-reading the wealth of research on ALTs, whilst using a number of means to understand who the ALTs are, in order to deliver a course that will be actively used. This can be seen in the categories of modules. The Contextual modules exist because a high number of ALTs are in the job for a limited number of years; these modules provide an understanding of the teaching context that would otherwise take a lot longer to realise. The Teaching modules are a result of data that show a high number of ALTs are more interested in practical teaching advice they can use in their classrooms immediately. Lastly the Professional Development modules cater to ALTs wishing to further their career, providing the tools to research, write, and publish. In the midst of this, I have been assembling a team of writers that are professionals in their field to prepare modules. As the ALTTO is completely free, maintaining a high standard has been challenging. If there are any writers out there interested in joining and supporting ALTs please email (alttrainingonline@gmail.com). It would be great to have more writers on board.

**DM:** Can you share an interesting anecdote about what someone wrote on your site?

**NR:** As the course is being developed I'll just share an email that is representative of the kind of messages I receive, and how a large percentage of ALTs feel: "I am a first year ALT rotating around seven schools. I had the unfortunate luck of being placed with a difficult JTE with high expectations and very

little time to talk to me. Any training I could receive would be great. I have no idea where to begin or what to even do. I feel very helpless at the moment."

**DM:** What are other important issues you'd like to raise about your MOOC training?

**NR:** I've mainly talked about educational factors, but of course the ALT system is a policy and so it is connected and orchestrated by wider sociocultural factors, such as the economy. One result of this is the ongoing fluidity of the types of ALTs that are hired. There are three main types: direct hire, private company and JET; the boards of education make decisions on the number and types of ALTs they hire. A mix of economic factors and teaching experience has, for example, resulted in a significant rise in direct hire and private company ALTs and a reduction in JET-hired ALTs.

Year	JET	Non-JET	Source
2006	5,057	5,067	Kashihara, 2008
2013	4,089	11,343	Kano et al, 2016

This development not only signals unsystematic and unstandardized hiring and training practices, but also brings to the forefront humanistic factors of connectivity. A primary aim, as mentioned, is to bring all ALTs together, not only for professional growth and to improve standards of education, but also for human relations, peer support, and to provide a listening ear.

**DM:** Will your training MOOC be operating in 2020? How do you see it regenerating?

**NR:** Yes, ALTTO will absolutely be operating in 2020. In fact, the course will be complete by the 2017/18 academic year in time for the 20,000 ALTs that are due to be employed for the 2019/20 academic year. Currently modules are being put together that have been tried out by ALTs and readers before going online. The website is continually being updated, supplementary materials are regularly being researched, authors are being contacted, and other behind the scenes activities are taking place.

During this start-up time, and from 2020 onwards, ALTTO aims to grow organically through comments and discussions by ALTs themselves on the forum, in their responses to reflection questions in the modules and social media. Other plans include forming a writing circle and possibly to make the course accredited. Regeneration to continually improve the course and site will ultimately come from how the site is used and from feedback by users.

**DM:** How can TA readers gain access to your site?

**NR:** Go to <http://alltrainingonline.com> and have a look around, it won't cost them anything.

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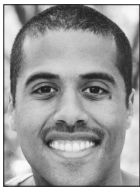
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# [JALT PRACTICE] WRITERS' WORKSHOP



## Vikki Williams and Charles Moore

*Writers' Workshop is written on a collaborative basis with the members of the Peer Support Group (PSG). In each column, topics are shared that provide advice and support for novice writers, experienced writers, or nearly anyone who is looking to write for academic purposes. If you would like to inquire about submitting a paper for review, or are interested in joining the PSG team, please contact us using the following information.*

Email: [peergroup@jalt-publications.org](mailto:peergroup@jalt-publications.org) • Web: <http://jalt-publications.org/psg>

## Some Tips for Managing Stress in the Publication Process

David Ockert

Toyo University

The theme of this issue's column will focus on stress and how it can intrude on the writing process from the standpoint of submitting a paper to a peer-reviewed journal. The column begins with some practical advice on how to handle, and possibly reduce, stress in daily life in general. The latter sections focus on submitting, rewriting, and resubmitting a manuscript.

### Dealing With Daily Stress

There are several ways that writers and researchers can work to minimize stress in our lives in general. First, I would like to recommend an excellent book by psychologist Richard Carlson, PhD., titled *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff...and It's All Small Stuff*. The book consists of 100 anecdotes and explanations of

how they can be incorporated into one's life. One especially relevant story is titled "Give up the Idea that Relaxed, Gentle People can't be Super Achievers, too". Within our profession, people often get rather frazzled and caught up in so many activities at the same time that it boggles the mind—all too often quite literally!

Let me give you an example. Many people try to combine lunch with meetings, perhaps for 30 to 50 minutes. Think about this: Eating lunch requires the combination of biting, chewing, swallowing, breathing, and drinking, and the process sends a lot of the body's blood to the stomach. Think about adding a discussion to this task. Now each person involved is trying to eat, chew, swallow, drink, breath, listen to and focus on the speaker, think of a reply, and then comment without choking! Also, a lot of their blood, which would normally have been available to help the thinking process, is now in the stomach trying to handle the digestive functions! No wonder so many people finish such 'meetings' mentally distressed—almost certainly due to a lack of oxygen necessary for the healthy functioning of the brain.

Here is an alternative: Spend 10-15 minutes eating in a relaxed state, then when everyone has finished, clear the plates and focus on the meeting topic(s)

only. Although this may be a more prudent alternative, many people cannot discipline themselves enough to do this, to their own detriment. One possible reason may be the overconsumption of caffeine—a central nervous system stimulant that often makes behavior erratic. Instead, by learning how to recognize your emotional state, you can learn to be in control of your feelings rather than allowing them to control you. Not many people can do this, but with practice, it is possible.

### ***The Importance of Positive Self-Talk***

We all have 'self-talk': That little voice inside our heads that analyzes everything, fantasizes about the future, and brings up the past (none of which exist outside of your own mind, by the way). Without getting into the psychology of it all too deeply, this 'little voice' exercises enormous control over our emotional state. Here is a simple task for grins and giggles: The next time someone says something to you, avoid replying immediately. Just look at the person and think calmly about what was said. If you are like most people, you will respond almost instantaneously before thinking. On the other hand, if you can take a moment to think first, you will begin to notice your 'little voice'. And once you can do that, you will begin to be the master of your own thoughts.

Once you begin to recognize your own thoughts, you can begin to use them to your advantage. When you think about writing, try to realize what you typically say to yourself. Is it positive? Do you think 'Oh, darn I have to work on that paper today...' If so, try to focus on a positive outcome, for example, if you are interested in career advancement (for example, see Miller, 2013), try substituting a larger goal to focus on, rather than the immediate task of paper writing. In other words, it may be helpful to focus on the positive result of career advancement, which should be benefited by having your paper finished and submitted.

### **The Writing Process**

#### ***Focus on Writing What You Want, When You Want***

There are many different ways to get experience writing and publishing besides writing for academic journals. Conference reports, JALT Chapter reports, and book reviews are just a few examples of ways to accumulate experience. Be an early riser—for myself, I have found it much easier to get to the office early, review my writing, and then write what I want while my mind is still fresh. This may be easier than

struggling to focus on a topic at the end of a long day when the body or mind is already exhausted.

#### ***Quantity of Outcome vs. Quantity of Time***

In general, people like to quantify their time and the results of their efforts. In order to accomplish both, I highly suggest trying to sit down and write a predetermined amount of writing, instead of writing for a predetermined length of time. For example, try to write three pages in contrast to writing for three hours. At the end of the former, you have accomplished something tangible. Sadly, with the latter option—in this day and age of ubiquitous wireless distractions—the use of three hours often gets squandered reading emails, tweeting, checking out Facebook, or playing any of the myriad tableaux of online games.

### **The Submission Process**

#### ***Organizing Your Submission***

First, I strongly emphasize the importance of keeping your files organized. This means both organizing files on your computer and keeping a clear file for each paper you are working on. In the clear file I suggest keeping journal submission guidelines for easy reference. Many journals use an online submission system, which will require you to provide a user name and password. My advice is to write down your user name and password on a sheet of paper and put it in your clear file along with a copy of the paper you wish to submit, submission guidelines, and any other resources you consider necessary.

However, if you are targeting a specific journal, just submit the paper when you are ready and inform the editor exactly how you feel in very direct, clear and polite language. Let the editor know that you would welcome the reviewers' comments if the editor agrees to send it out for review. Also, politely request the editor to explicitly state any reasons for deciding not to send it out for review. Then relax, cut back on the caffeine, and start to work on something different so that your anxiety gets channeled into something productive.

When the editor responds, I recommended printing out the email and setting it aside for at least an hour before reading it. When you do read the message, read it from the perspective that the editor does not know you personally, and is responding to your submission only. Also, never forget that everyone involved is at least as busy as you are and is volunteering their time. The submission process is also about building professional relationships.

### Handling Reviewer's Comments

Finally, before you even look at the reviewer's comments on the paper, remember that it is your choice how you respond. Don't take it personally. Think of it this way: You buy a new shirt and wear it to a party, where someone makes a positive comment on your new shirt, essentially complimenting your taste in clothes. How do you feel? Pretty good, probably. But have they actually commented on your taste in clothes, or are they just talking about the new shirt you bought? This is an example of how the human ego works—believing nice things said about one's apparel are personal compliments. Unfortunately, the same thing happens when negative comments are made about our writing; we tend to take the comments as personal, when they are not. Instead, by taking a more detached approach and recognizing that the reviewer does not personally know you and is commenting impartially on your work, you can save yourself a lot of unnecessary self-abuse.

### Resubmitting a Manuscript With Corrections

Start at the beginning of the paper and go through and make the corrections that you agree with, and ignore those you do not agree with, leaving those corrections unchanged. Then, copy and paste all of the corrections you were asked to make into the right side of an Excel file and then list the changes you have made on the left hand side. Believe it or not, several journals require this second step when dealing with reviewers' comments. Finally, I suggest

doing any edits and re-writes in private, as this will allow you to specifically focus on the task.

### Submitting a Rejected Manuscript to a New Journal

Finally, what should you do if your manuscript is rejected? Remember, just because a specific journal rejects your paper for publication or doesn't even send it out for review does not mean the paper is unpublishable—it simply means that it is not appropriate for that journal. It is then time to roll up your sleeves and target another journal, keeping a record of the journal(s) to which you have submitted the paper, perhaps on the same sheet of paper with your user name / password that you have kept in your clear file for this manuscript.

Lastly, it may be wise to keep a list of all journals to which you have submitted a paper so as not to resubmit the same paper a second time to the same journal after having been rejected once. Also, never give up! To use a basketball analogy, 'keep bouncing that ball until you get it through the hoop', then put the points on the old CV and keep moving forward. Good luck!

### References

- Carlson, R. (1997). *Don't sweat the small stuff...and it's all small stuff*. Hyperion: New York, NY.
- Miller, R. (2013). Publishing options to enhance your CV. *The Language Teacher*, 37(3), 72–73.

## [JALT PRACTIS] DEAR TLT



Tiernan L. Tensai

Got a teaching problem you can't solve? Need some advice about classroom practice? Stressed out from living in a different country? Then Dear TLT is the column for you. Be it serious or comical, our panel of experts will endeavour to answer all your queries. Send your questions to the email address below.

Email: [dear-tlt@jalt-publications.org](mailto:dear-tlt@jalt-publications.org)

## Tips for Teaching Academic Writing

Dear TLT,

I've been teaching in Japan for a few years, and from this April I'll be starting a new job at a university near my home. I'm really

excited about this opportunity overall, but one thing I'm worried about is this academic writing class they have me teaching. While I have lots of experience in teaching conversation, I've never actually had the chance to teach writing skills. I'm feeling kind of lost, so I'm hoping you can help me out! What are some best practices for teaching academic writing to Japanese university students? You know, stuff that I should definitely keep in

mind when I'm planning and conducting the course...

(Writer's) Blocked in Beppu

Dear Blocked,

Thanks for your message. Our first thought upon reading it was "wow, great topic—but also huge." As a result, we'll take up this subject in two parts. In this issue we'll give you a broad overview of the writing process and a few tips and tricks for your writing classes that have worked really well for us. In the next issue, we'll take a closer look at the issues of error correction and assessment.

Of the four skills, writing seems to be the hardest. Just because you're good at speaking English doesn't automatically mean you'll be good at writing it. The reverse is also true—those who have trouble speaking or don't like to speak in front of others may find they shine when it comes to writing. In fact, from our experience, it's usually the more quiet and reserved students who turn out to be better writers, while gregarious, extroverted types have more trouble expressing themselves in the written word.

As you know, there are differences between spoken and written English. Writing is a slow process, and you have to be much more careful about grammar. When we speak, however, we can instantly make corrections, and the person listening can make adjustments. While this may seem like a basic point, it's something that many of our students have not fully realized yet. It's therefore important to disabuse them from the notion that spoken and written English are the same.

At its core, academic writing is a process of **thinking, planning, writing, and revising**. In the first stage, it's helpful to get your students working in groups to brainstorm ideas. This can be an informal thing, or you could organize peer workshops where students share their research, ideas, goals, and frustrations. If need be, these groups could function in Japanese if you are able to monitor them to make sure they are on-task. By working with a partner or in a group, students can more easily create a list of as many ideas as possible that fit whatever genre of writing you happen to be working on at that moment. Alternatively, students could create mind maps centered on a general theme. Mind mapping is a proven technique for brainstorming and generating ideas that is featured in many writing textbooks. Students could also use their smartphones to access important background information online. Finally, if you're lucky, your textbook may be of help at this stage, with various idea-generation activities

and lists of suitable ideas. Finding the right topic off the bat is a key point! If a student goes down a wrong alley, they will waste their time and yours. So, vet their topic choices carefully! Give them freedom, but within certain parameters.

In the **planning** stage, using some sort of graphic organizer or essay map can really help the students organize their ideas. It's important that students understand the correct shape and structure they'll need to follow, primarily because western academic prose differs greatly from typical Japanese patterns. In addition, a clear structure will give them guidance and confidence. The aim should be for all of your students to be crystal clear on what they need to write and where. For example, if you want them to do a *compare & contrast* paragraph, they will need to understand how to create an effective *hook* (interesting first sentence), topic sentence, body sentences, and conclusion. If they are writing a short essay, they will need to know what each paragraph should consist of. For example, if they need to write a three-paragraph *for & against* essay, they should know that in the first paragraph they will need to introduce the issue and provide some background, focus on arguments in favor in the middle, and end by surveying arguments against and providing their own opinion. A good exercise to do for learning proper structure is to have students read a passage and try to reproduce it from memory. This will draw their attention to finer organizational details.

Personally, we think these thinking and planning stages are the most important, especially with lower level students. At this point, it's all about process over product. A final composition does not just appear, but requires lots of weeding out, tweaking, clarifying, and restructuring. The final product makes itself known throughout the process, and it is not always arrived at in a strictly linear manner. As a result, it may be helpful to repeat the thinking and planning stages several times with different topics before students actually begin writing full compositions. Be aware that some students may rush through these steps and want to finish quickly, either because they are busy or simply just want to finish the assignment as soon as possible. However, students who rush always produce terrible stuff. In writing, one of the primary lessons is patience.

Once a suitable topic has been thoroughly brainstormed and planned, the next step is to begin **writing**. Here it's important to remind students that they'll be going through a number of drafts—at least two, and maybe more. Once they produce a first draft you'll be able to see if they are on the right track. It may help to not be so strict with minor errors at this stage. Priority should be on the quality and develop-



ment of ideas and opinions. Nevertheless, it's vital to flag incomprehensible bits at this point.

Once a first draft has been submitted, the next step is **revision**. This is basically all about polishing the composition until it's smooth and as error-free as possible. The amount of revision is up to you—ideally you'd like to go through as many drafts as needed, but it's also important to keep your workload manageable. If you are constantly taking papers home to mark during your off time, it may be a sign you need to rethink your marking approach to make it more practical.

How you end up handling the revision process is directly linked to your course objectives. If it's a lower-level class, you could have your students go for volume by producing many short compositions. With a higher-level group, you may want to emphasize process and quality by doing only one or two very polished papers that each require multiple drafts. To what degree you correct their errors is a big topic that we'll take up in more depth next time, but for now, one quick thing we can recommend is creating a handout of editor marks. This will greatly speed up your marking process and also give students something to think about. For example, *WW* stands for *Wrong Word*, *Sp* equals a *Spelling* mistake, and *VT* indicates a *Verb Tense* error. Again, these kinds of marks draw attention to errors but force the student to reflect on them, thus supporting the learning process.

Beyond the overall process of academic writing, there are a number of things you can do to help your students learn. Here are a few ideas for you that have worked really well for us over the years:

Begin each class with freewriting exercises. Freewriting, if you don't know, is the process of writing stream-of-consciousness style for a short period of time without any thought given to accuracy. The idea is to write as much as possible to empty the mind and enhance creativity. It's also a great technique for generating ideas or getting through a bout of writer's block. Five or ten minutes is enough if done regularly. Word counts can be tracked, and you can vary topics or keep them the same. No dictionaries should be allowed during this activity.

End each class with some reflection writing, preferably in a journal. Topics for this sort of writing could include what was done in class, something new or interesting that was learned, or identifying and overcoming any difficulties.

Encourage your students to write every day in their journal. Shoot for small goals, such as 100 words a day. Students can X out the days on a calendar in red ink to help them stay motivated. Also,

having students talk about what they are writing about will help them establish and maintain this habit. Perhaps some of your class time could be given over to this.

Have your students read their writing aloud. This can be done alone to help spot errors during the revision stages, and it's also a great way to share finished projects with classmates. To facilitate some group discussions, require students to write three discussion questions at the end of their papers.

Get your students to generate some good model paragraphs. This can be done in groups of four. For homework, each student writes their own version on a given topic or theme. Then, in the next class, they share their work with their group, and they all decide on the best one. Best paragraphs from each group get put up on a screen. Each one can then be analyzed and learned from.

Show students some early drafts of your writing projects to show how far things evolved from first to final draft.

Learn about peer-assessment techniques and utilize them with your students. Teaching them how to assess others' writing will help them become better writers.

Show students how to paraphrase and cite sources correctly in order to avoid plagiarism. We recommend following APA standards, but there are other viable ways to go. The *Purdue Online Writing Lab* ([owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)) is a great resource for this issue.

So, these are a few of the things we have done that have brought us a lot of success in our academic writing classes. There is still a lot more to say about this subject, so we're going to revisit it in our next column. Until then, good luck, and may you and your students write smoothly!



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Sponsored by East Shikoku JALT, Matsuyama JALT, and Oxford University Press

Saturday, May 13 (1:00-5:30)

Kochi University

Keynote Speaker: Terry Laskowski  
Plus many other great presentations!

# JALT MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

## The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

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

<http://jalt.org>

## Annual International Conference

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

<http://jalt.org/conference>

## JALT Publications

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

<http://jalt-publications.org>

## JALT Community

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

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

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

<http://jalt.org/main/groups>



## JALT Partners

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

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

## Membership Categories

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

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

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

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## Joining JALT

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



Scott Gardner [old-grammarians@jalt-publications.org](mailto:old-grammarians@jalt-publications.org)

## Oppa Grammarian Style

I was playing a solo gig at a Halloween dance party last fall, dressed as a vampire and singing Bob Dylan songs (I had to take the plastic fangs out to sing “Mr. Tambourine Man” properly), when I noticed Freddie Mercury hopping around near the back wall, making distracting air-guitar gestures. Later I learned that, not only was he NOT Freddie Mercury, and not only was he simply dressed as Freddie for Halloween, but he was in fact the lead singer of the Queen cover band that was next on the bill that night. He had been trying to demonstrate his enjoyment of my show.

As his band was setting up it was my turn to get excited, because I’m a big fan of old 70s Queen rockers like “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “We Will Rock You.” I can even tolerate their disco-y “Another One Bites the Dust” from around 1980. But my stomach lurched when the cover band instead launched into “I Was Made to Love You,” a soppy feel-good anthem from Freddie and Company’s twilight years that here in Japan has somehow come to represent “Queen music.” I thought about jumping on stage in costume and dentally assaulting the singer’s neck, but I could see that the rest of the crowd were getting into the song. And it’s easy to understand why, when “I Was Made to Love You” is practically the only Queen tune you ever hear in Japan as background music in malls and other public places, unless you specifically ask the Muzak people if they take requests.

(Speaking of which, I remember one night long ago playing in a bar band in Seattle when, after we had just wrapped up a cover of Billy Ray Cyrus’ “Achy Breaky Heart”, a girl came to the foot of the stage and asked, “Do you take requests?” I smiled and said, “Of course!” “Please don’t ever play ‘Achy Breaky Heart’ again.”)

Much in the same way I’ve felt my authority over the English language slip in the years since I left the USA—“manspread”?; “YOLO”?—so have I lost my presumed superior sense of Western music culture. Of course English-speaking Anglocentric mu-

sicians continue to score hits here in Japan, from Aerosmith to Taylor Swift, but I can no longer nod with authority when someone at karaoke suggests I sing a “popular” English song: “Can you sing ‘Uptown Funk’ (2014)?” “Uh, no, but if you like I can take you to ‘Funkytown’ (1980)!”

It’s not just an age thing. But mostly it is. One of the biggest hits of 1983, the year I graduated high school, was “Pass the Dutchie ‘pon the Left Hand Side,” which I thought at the time was a social justice manifesto for southpaws like myself. It had a multicultural beat and a *vérité* message that deserved to live longer in our collective conscience than it did. (Maybe too many dropped “dutchies” helped blot it out of our memories.)

Since then songs topping the charts internationally seem to have become more and more vacuous. In 1994 there was “Macarena,” the pulsing beat of which was actually stolen from a prototype sonic cannon being developed by the Spanish navy as a deterrent against Mediterranean pirates; in 2003 we had “All the Things She Said” by a pair of Russian high school girls called t.A.T.u. who apparently said it all in that song and were never heard from again. (Some of you might remember Japan’s failed attempt at a worldwide hit around that time: a samurai in a gold lamé kimono dancing the “Matsuken Samba.”) You would think in this instant digital gratification age that we would be able to locate, somewhere in the world, more substantive music to obsess over. But no: Between live acts at the above-mentioned Halloween party, at which “Freddie” had showed that he was made to disappoint me, the house DJ was wowing the crowd with Pikotaro’s “PPAP” song. For those who don’t know, its lyrics are a basic English language practice dialogue:

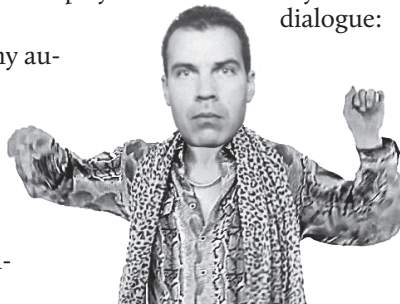
A: I have a pen. I have a apple.

B: You have no grasp of indefinite article usage.

A: I have a pen. I have pineapple.

B: I have a taser and I’m not afraid to use it.

A: Uh!



MARYBETH KAMIBEPPU • JALT Junior Program Chair

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