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JALT Praxis

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In this month's issue . . .

Welcome to the May/June 2017 issue of *TLT*. We at *The Language Teacher* hope you have had a fantastic start to the new academic year, and continue to find inspiration for your classes from all our columns. My role as *TLT* Assistant Editor means that I am particularly involved with the JALT Praxis and Focus columns, so I would like to take this opportunity to remind you not to forget the great content that follows our academic articles each issue. I organise the copyediting and proofreading of our regular columns, so I am lucky enough to enjoy working with this team, and also the *TLT* column editors, on every issue. I also guide new proofreading and copyediting volunteers through the training process. Last year I set up the new TLT Interviews column, which was an immensely satisfying experience, and now that it is in James Nobis and Torrin Shimono's capable hands, I really enjoy reading it every issue. Such "promotion" from the copyediting and proofreading team means that we are always looking for new members, so if you would like to get involved, please contact the editors, and start training with me. Volunteering with *TLT* is rewarding, fun, and a great way to enhance your CV!

In this issue we start with two thought-provoking Feature Articles examining effective classroom activities. In the first, *Investigating the Effects of Short In-class Extensive Reading on Improving English Proficiency*, **Mitsuko Tanaka** uses a standardized placement test to compare the impact of supplementing classes with graded reading or dictogloss, concluding that both activities can be equally beneficial for English language learning. In the second, *General English or ESP for Liberal-Education? What Students Want and Why*, **Mark Rebuck** surveys pharmacy students at his university about their teachers' various approaches to the English language curriculum. He concludes that a mix of General English and ESP is preferable to focusing exclusively on either one, as students appreciate they need to learn the English of their major but may find this too difficult without also spending time practicing basic English skills. In his Readers' Forum article, *Delving into Dysfluency: Identifying the Most Problematic Issues of Japanese Learners*, **Robert W. Long III** investigates the factors affecting the speaking fluency of low intermediate level EFL students, finding that the main issue was the amount

Continued over



TLT Editors: Philip Head, Gerry McLellan
TLT Japanese-Language Editor: Toshiko Sugino

students actually say in English, but also that higher speaking rates resulted in both greater fluency and disfluency.

Following on from our academic articles we have a fascinating interview with J. D. Brown, who talks about classroom assessment and why and how it should differ from norm-based testing, plus some great ideas for teaching activities in My Share, as well as columns discussing technology, young learners, academic writing and much more.

To end, I would like to thank all the copyediting and proofreading volunteers, past and present, whose important work may go unnoticed by our readers, but whose commitment is vital to keeping *TLT* looking as good as possible each issue, and wish you all a very happy Golden Week.

Caroline Handley, TLT *Assistant Editor*

*TLT*の2017年5/6月号へようこそ。皆様は新学期を順調にスタートされたことと思いますが、これからも*TLT*の様々な記事が、皆様の授業のアイデアにつながる刺激になるよう、*TLT*スタッフ一同切望しております。*TLT* Assistant Editorである私は、特にJALT PraxisやFocusの編集に関わっていますが、この機会に、毎号の学術記事の後に続くこれらのコラムもぜひ読んでいただきたいと思います。定期コラム原稿の編集、校正作業を企画整理することも私の仕事ですので、各コラム編集者を含むすべてのTLTスタッフチームと仕事を共有できるのは私の大きな喜びでもあります。また、proofreadingやcopyeditingのボランティアスタッフの研修もしております。昨年、私は*TLT* Interviewsというコラムを立ち上げましたが、それは、私にとって非常に満足のいく経験になりました。現在は、優秀なJames NobisとTorrin Shimonoに引き継ぎすることができ、毎号楽しみにその記事を読んでいます。このように、copyeditingやproofreadingのチームからコラム編集者への「昇進」は、我々が常に新メンバーを探していることを意味しますので、ご自分も試してみたいと思う方は、編集チームに連絡し、私と一緒に訓練を始めてください。*TLT*でのボランティア活動は、やりがいがあり、おもしろく、履歴書の質を上げるのにも役立ちます。

今月号では、有効な授業内容を検証する2本の示唆に富むFeature Articleを掲載しています。まず、Mitsuko Tanakaが、*Investigating the Effects of Short In-class Extensive Reading on Improving English Proficiency*で、標準プレースメントテストを使い、段階別読本とディクトグロス（教育法の1つ）での授業補足の効果を比較し、どちらの方法も英語学習に同様に役に立つと結論づけています。次の*General English or ESP for Liberal-Education? What Students Want and Why*では、Mark Rebuckが、彼の大学の薬学部学生が履修している英語科目群の担当教員の様々なアプローチについて調査しています。Rebuckは、どちらかの方法に集中するより、一般英語とESPの混合が学生には好まれると結論づけています。学生たちは専攻に関する英語を学ぶ必要性を理解しているが、基礎英語の勉強にある程度時間をかけないと、専門英語は難しすぎると感じているというのがその理由です。Readers' Forumの*Delving into Dysfluency: Identifying the Most Problematic Issues of Japanese Learners*では、Robert W. Long IIIが、初中級のEFL学生のスピーキング能力に影響する要素について研究し、学生が実際に英語で話す量が主な問題点であり、また発声速度が早くなると、結果として流暢性と非流暢性の両方に影響すると述べています。

学術論文の後に続くインタビュー記事では、J. D. Brownが、授業評価について、標準的なテストとは、なぜどのように違うのかを説明しています。また、My Shareや technology, young learners, academic writing を扱うコラムなどでは、教授法に関するいくつかの優れたアイデアをご紹介します。

最後に、現在の、そしてこれまでのcopyediting/proofreadingのボランティアすべての方々にお礼を申し上げます。あまり読者の目には触れませんが、毎号の内容を充実させるには、ボランティアの方々の献身的な仕事が必要かつ不可欠です。皆様、楽しいゴールデンウイークになりますように。

Caroline Handley, TLT *Assistant Editor*

Retraction

The article entitled "*Time for a fresh coat of new paint on the blacklist of Japanese universities*", published in October 2009, has been retracted by the editors of *The Language Teacher* in consultation with the JALT Board of Directors. We are unable to confirm the identity of the author. We apologize for the error.

撤回のお知らせ

2009年10月に出版された*Time for a fresh coat of new paint on the blacklist of Japanese universities*と題する記事は、JALT理事会と協議の上、*The Language Teacher* の編集者によって撤回されました。著者の身元の確認がとれないためです。ここに手違いをお詫び致します。

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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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Investigating the Effects of Short In-class Extensive Reading on Improving English Proficiency

Mitsuko Tanaka
Ritsumeikan University

This study investigated the effects of short in-class extensive reading (ER) on English proficiency. The participants (N = 322) were first-year Japanese students at a private women's university. The ER group (n = 160) did 20 minutes of ER once a week. The control group (n = 162) dedicated 20 minutes to a dictogloss every other week. In the remaining class time, both groups received task-based language teaching instruction. English proficiency tests were also administered at the beginning and the end of the academic year. The results of a mixed design MANOVA showed that both groups significantly improved their vocabulary and reading comprehension scores over the year but there were no differences in the gains made by the two groups. These findings suggest that short in-class ER might be effective in developing vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills but does not yield significantly better effects than dictogloss.

本論は授業時に短時間行う多読学習（ER）が英語熟達度の伸びに及ぼす効果を明らかにすることを目的とする。参加者は日本の私立女子大学1年生322名である。多読群（n = 160）は毎週1回20分間の多読学習を行い、統制群（n = 162）は隔週で20分間のディクトグロスを行った。多読・ディクトグロス以外の時間は両群とも同じカリキュラム（TBLT）に基づく英語学習を行った。また、学年の始めと終わりにプレイスメントテストを実施し、そのスコアを英語熟達度の伸びの指標として使用した。二元配置多変量分散分析の結果、両群とも年間を通じて読解力・語彙力を伸ばしてはいるが、両群の英語熟達度の伸びには差がないことが明らかになった。このことから、授業時に短時間行う多読学習は読解力・語彙力を伸ばすのに効果的であり得るものの、ディクトグロスよりも英語力を伸ばす効果が高いとは言えないことが示された。

Extensive reading (ER) with graded readers has become increasingly popular in Japanese higher educational institutions. Although one of the top ten characteristics of successful ER stipulates that "*Students read as much as possible*" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 7, italics in the original), it is sometimes difficult to allocate a large amount of time for ER due to other requirements in the English learning curriculum. As a result, some institutions may only spare part of the class time (e.g., one-third or one-fourth of a class) for ER using graded readers. The present study aims to examine the effects of short in-class ER on the development of English proficiency in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.

The Effects of Extensive Reading on English Proficiency

Although ER is defined as "reading in quantity ... in order to gain a general understanding of what is read" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 193), the conceptualization of ER varies considerably between different researchers (Waring & McLean, 2015). The present study adopts the definition of ER put forth by Waring and McLean (2015, p. 165), who have suggested the following to be the core ER elements:

- Fluent, sustained comprehension of text as meaning-focused input
- Large volume of material
- Reading over extended periods of time
- Longer texts, requiring comprehension at the discourse level

ER has positive effects on the development of various English proficiencies including reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, which are the primary areas of focus in the present study. For example, Yamashita (2008) demonstrated that over one semester, ER conducted both inside and outside the classroom had significantly improved Japanese university EFL students' reading ability (N = 31). Takase and Otsuki (2012) also reported that a semester of in-class ER increased remedial students' reading proficiency at a Japanese university (N = 81). Furthermore, Horst (2005) found that after a 6-week ER program, the vocabulary knowledge of adult ESL learners in Canada (N = 21) had increased. ER's efficacy was also reported in other studies (e.g., Hayashi, 1999; Lai, 1993). Although the positive effects of ER on learning outcomes are evident, these studies do not have a control group; it is therefore unclear whether the gains are solely attributed to ER.

Studies with control groups have also shown significant gains in the aforementioned areas but the superiority of ER over the other pedagogical approaches has been equivocal. Some researchers have shown that ER groups improved learners' reading comprehension significantly more than non-ER

counterparts. For example, Bell (2001) investigated the effects of in-class and out-of-class ER over two academic semesters in Yemen (N = 26) and found that the ER group outperformed the intensive reading group in both reading speed and reading comprehension. Sheu (2003) examined the effects of in-class ER over an academic year with Taiwanese junior high school students and showed that students who did ER with graded readers had better developed vocabulary and reading comprehension than the other students.

On the contrary, some studies have shown that gains in reading comprehension were not differentiated between an ER group and a control group. For example, Nakanishi and Ueda (2011) demonstrated in an EFL setting with Japanese university learners (N = 89) that although year-long in-class and out-of-class ER improved the reading comprehension of two ER groups, the two control groups also showed similar gains in reading comprehension. Matsui and Noro (2010) found that 10 minutes of in-class ER significantly improved reading speed and reading comprehension of both the experimental and the control groups of Japanese EFL junior high school students (N = 122). The superiority of the ER group over the experimental group, however, was observed in reading speed but not in reading comprehension.

Thus far, research on the superiority of ER over the other instructional approaches has yielded mixed results. Furthermore, the efficacy of *short* in-class ER on English proficiency has scarcely been investigated. To address this gap in the literature, the present study investigates the following research questions:

1. To what extent does short in-class ER improve English proficiency?
2. Is short in-class ER more effective than dictogloss in improving English proficiency?

Method

Participants

The participants (N = 327) were first-year students at a private women's university in Japan and were majoring in child science (n = 193) or psychology (n = 134). They took three mandatory English classes per week (90 minutes per session), which were taught by three EFL instructors. The classes were taught using task-based language teaching (TBLT) with *Interchange Intro* (Richards, 2005) and *Touchstone Level 1* (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2005) as the main textbooks. Two intact freshmen cohorts from different academic years acted as the ER and control groups. The ER group (n = 163) engaged in 20-minute ER once a week in the 2010 academic year, which was when ER was first incorporated into the university's English curriculum. The control group (n = 164) dedicated 20 minutes for a dictogloss every other week in the 2009 academic year. Their initial proficiency level ranged from 65 to 263 on the Assessment of Communicative English (ACE) placement test, with a mean score of 134.13 (SD = 29.78). The score of 140 on the placement test is estimated to be equivalent to a score above 340 on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Furthermore, learners who passed Eiken Grade 3 Level had an average score of 150 on the placement test (ELPA, 2015). Thus, the participants of the present study had relatively low English proficiency.

Instrument

As a measure of the participants' English proficiency, ACE placement tests (versions 0277 and 0328) were conducted at the beginning and the end of the academic year. The ACE placement test was developed by the Association for English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), which provides educational institutions (e.g., junior and senior high schools and universities) with four types of English proficiency tests. It targets learners with Eiken Grades 2 to 3 or who have TOEIC scores between 300 and 700. The assessment consists of three sections (listening, vocabulary and grammar, and reading) with a total maximum score of 300. Scores in the listening and reading sections range from 0 to 100. Vocabulary and grammar section is further classified into two parts (vocabulary and grammar, each of which range in scores from 0 to 50). The learner's English proficiency is estimated using data from over 200,000 test takers using the item response theory (ELPA, n.d.).

Procedure

Tests

The pretest was conducted at the beginning of the academic year in April as part of an English course placement for the first-year English courses; the posttest was administered in January at the end of the academic year for placement in the second-year English courses. The results of the posttest were also used as part of the students' final course grade. Participation in the tests was mandatory for all students.

ER group

The ER group (n = 163) from the 2010 academic year did in-class ER once a week for about 20 minutes, starting in Week 6 and ending in Week 27. There was no ER in Weeks 14–16 and 28–30 due to other requirements in the English curriculum. As a result, the participants experienced a total of 19 ER sessions over the year. Each student bought two graded readers to share in class. A class consisted of 12 to 14 students, which resulted in the class's library of 24–28. Although English curriculum coordinators selected the books to be purchased, each student chose and read her preferred book from the class library. The books were Macmillan Readers at Level 2: Beginner (600 headwords) and Penguin Readers at Easystarts and Level 2 (200 and 600 headwords respectively). See Appendix for a list of book titles.

The students read their preferred book(s) at their own pace in a 20-minute ER session. When they finished one book, they returned it to the library and selected a new one. As ER was a part of the students' final course grade, students were required to read to obtain their course credit. The students kept a brief record of their reading in most classes, including book titles and short comments on each book. According to the reading record, the students in the highest English proficiency class achieved the following results: on average 10.67 books (SD = 2.1) and 23,219 words (SD = 5,242) were read by students of the Department of Child Sciences and 10.42 books (SD = 2.6) and 28,940 words (SD = 10,113) were read by students of the Department of Psychology. In general, they tended to choose easier books. Approximately half of the students rated one or sometimes two books as relatively difficult or difficult. However, students rated most of the books they read as easy, relatively easy, or appropriate for their level; thus, meaning-focused reading was sustained most of the time. As the books were collected at the end of each ER session, the learners did not read outside the classroom.

Control Group

Instead of ER, the control group (n = 164) from the 2009 academic year did a dictogloss for 20 minutes every other week (11 dictogloss tasks in total). A dictogloss is a group dictation task devised by Wajnryb (1990). Learners listen to a short text several times, write down what they hear, and reconstruct the whole text collaboratively with their peers. Typically, students can only retrieve fragments from the text while listening. As such, they are required to get the gist and use their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to reconstruct the remainder of the text. The 11 texts used for the dictoglosses were taken from *Interchange Intro* (Richards, 2005), which is the main textbook for the English course. The students participated in the activity in groups of three to four.

The Remaining English Learning Activities

Both groups spent the remaining time receiving the same TBLT class instruction. Each lesson comprised the three principal phases of TBLT: pre-task, main task, and post-task (Ellis, 2003). During the main task phase, the students engaged in speaking activities in pairs and groups. The time difference in the ER and dictogloss treatments was adjusted by the time length of activities in the TBLT session. In addition to the in-class English learning activities, the students in both groups were assigned out-of-class online exercises to reinforce the listening comprehension, vocabulary, and grammatical patterns taught in class.

Preliminary Analyses

The final sample size utilized for the main analysis was 322 (160 and 162 for the ER and control groups, respectively) after data screening (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, pp. 60–116; for detailed explanation on data screening). To ensure the two groups had similar levels of English at the start of the study, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with four dependent variables (listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar) using SPSS 19.0 (IBM Corp., 2010). The results showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in all the four sub-categories of English proficiency, Wilks's lambda ($\wedge$) = .992, $F(4, 317) = .604$, $p = .660$.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the four sub-categories of English proficiency at the pretest and posttest. Figures 1 to 4 plot changes in the scores for the four sub-categories of English proficiency. To address the research questions, a 2 x 2 mixed design MANOVA was conducted with SPSS 19.0 (IBM Corp., 2010). The dependent variables were the students' test scores on the four sub-categories of English proficiency. The between-subjects factor was the instruction groups with two levels (the ER and the control groups). The within-subjects factor was the testing time with two levels (pretest and posttest).

The results of MANOVA showed that the main effect for groups ($\wedge$ = .978, $F(4, 317) = 1.766$, $p = .136$)

as well as testing time x group interaction effect ($\wedge$ = .996, $F(4, 317) = .305$, $p = .875$) were not significant. On the other hand, the main effect for testing time ($\wedge$ = .654, $F(4, 317) = 41.969$, $p < .001$, partial η^2 = .346) was significant.

The follow-up univariate analyses of variances (ANOVA) were conducted to clarify in which sub-categories of English proficiency the learners showed improvement. The alpha level of .05 was corrected with the Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure to avoid Type I errors. The results showed that that the effects of testing time were significant for reading, $F(1, 320) = 130.960$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .290$, and vocabulary, $F(1, 320) = 24.545$, $p < .001$, partial η^2 = .071, but not for listening, $F(1, 320) = .346$, $p = .557$, and grammar, $F(1, 320) = 2.060$, $p = .152$. It should be noted that although the ANOVA result was significant, the gains achieved between the pretest and posttest were very small for vocabulary (1.66 and 2.05 for the ER and control groups, respectively).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest and Posttest*

	ER Group (n = 160)		Control Group (n = 162)	
Factor	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Reading				
M	40.93	48.84	39.98	47.53
SE	.94	1.01	.98	1.08
95% CI lower bound	39.06	46.86	38.06	45.40
95% CI upper bound	42.79	50.83	41.92	49.66
SD	11.92	12.73	12.44	13.72
Vocabulary				
M	21.41	23.07	20.80	22.85
SE	.57	.57	.60	.54
95% CI lower bound	20.29	21.95	19.61	21.79
95% CI upper bound	22.53	24.19	21.99	23.91
SD	7.17	7.16	7.67	6.83
Listening				
M	49.74	50.14	50.23	50.66
SE	.92	.88	.87	.99
95% CI lower bound	47.93	48.41	48.52	48.71
95% CI upper bound	51.55	51.87	51.94	52.61
SD	11.60	11.08	11.02	12.58
Grammar				
M	21.73	20.84	21.99	21.81
SE	.54	.49	.59	.52
95% CI lower bound	20.66	19.86	20.83	20.78
95% CI upper bound	22.80	21.81	23.15	22.85
SD	6.86	6.24	7.47	6.67

Note. N = 322. Scores in the listening and reading sections range from 0 to 100. Scores in the vocabulary and grammar sections range from 0 to 50.

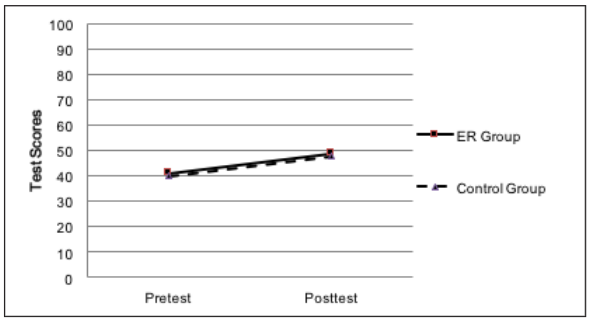

Figure 1. Graphic representation of changes in mean scores for the reading section. Scores range from 0 to 100.

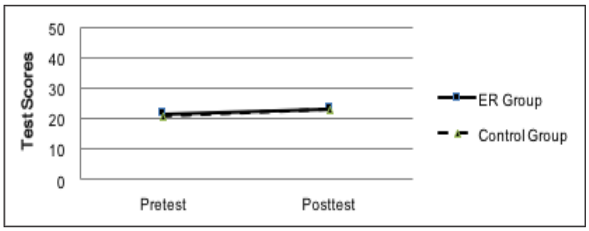

Figure 2. Graphic representation of changes in mean scores for the vocabulary section. Scores range from 0 to 50.

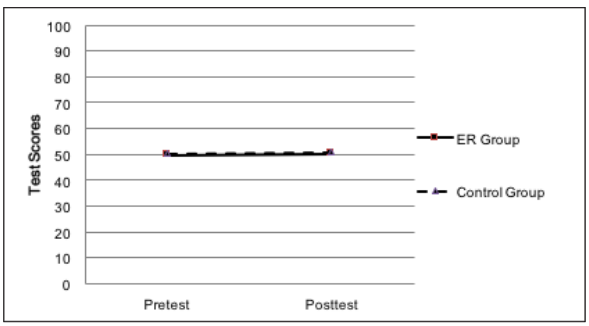

Figure 3. Graphic representation of changes in mean scores for the listening section. Scores range from 0 to 100.

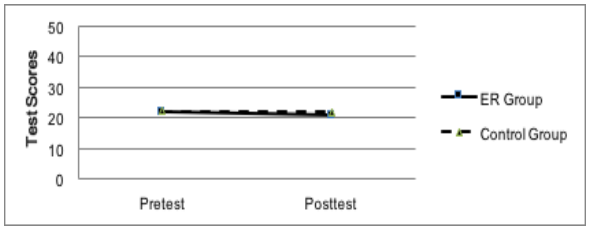

Figure 4. Graphic representation of changes in mean scores for the grammar section. Scores range from 0 to 50.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the effects of ER on improving learners' English proficiency. With respect to the first research question—the extent to which short in-class ER improves English proficiency—the results of the ANOVAs showed that the ER group significantly improved their vocabulary and reading comprehension scores over the year. The findings indicate the possible effectiveness of short in-class ER just as the previous research has demonstrated the efficacy of ER on reading comprehension and vocabulary development (e.g., Bell, 2001; Hayashi, 1999; Lai, 1993; Sheu, 2003; Takase & Otsuki, 2012; Yamashita, 2008). However, it is impossible to attribute the gains to ER without a control group. As the learners did a 20-minute reading activity over the year, they were logically expected to improve reading-related skills merely because they spent the time on the task. In order to clarify the effects of ER, the second research question—whether short in-class ER is more effective than dictogloss in order to improve English proficiency—was set in this study. The results of the ANOVAs revealed that both groups showed similar gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge over an academic year regardless of the instruction type. Therefore, short in-class ER does not yield significantly better results than dictogloss does.

One possible explanation for this is the duration of ER. As out-of-class ER was not assigned to the participants, they were engaged in ER for only 20 minutes every week. Although Day and Bamford (1998) suggest a 15-minute minimum for ER activities, Nishizawa, Yoshioka, and Fukada (2010) reported that 300,000 words is the "threshold for the subjects to feel at ease while reading English texts" (p. 632). Given that, in the present study, students with a higher proficiency level read only approximately 26,000 words on average, it might be necessary to continuously conduct 20-minute ER over a longer period of time to yield significant effects. In other words, different findings may be obtained if 20-minute ER sessions are conducted over two or more years. Secondly, it might take more time to transfer the skills cultivated through reading graded readers to reading comprehension tasks found in standardized tests. Whereas the participants read graded readers that used simplified English (with 200-600 headwords), the ACE placement tests used more complicated grammar and lower frequency words. Additional reading skills are required in order to improve learners' reading comprehension in a standardized test.

This study has several limitations. The first limitation derives from the use of the intact classes. Although the ER group engaged in 20-minute ER every week over a year, they completed a total of 270 minutes of English instruction per week (i.e., three 90-minute English classes) in addition to online out-of-class assignments. Although the ER group significantly developed their reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, the English instruction students received in addition to ER is assumed to have affected the results. Furthermore, the control group spent less time on reading activities but showed similar gains in the two domains the ER group improved most on (i.e., reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge). This finding indicates that the gains in the ER group are not solely attributed to ER. The second limitation relates to external validity. The participants of the present study were female first-year Japanese university students and had relatively low English proficiency. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings beyond learners similar to those in this study should be limited.

As the present study used a quasi-experimental research design with intact classes, some variables were not controlled. However, the present study clearly revealed that although short in-class ER might be effective in developing vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills, it does not yield significantly better results than other instructional approaches (i.e., dictogloss) when it is used for less than a year.

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Appendix

A List of Book Titles Available to the Students

Publisher	Level	Title	Word Count
Penguin	Easystarts	*The Last Photo*	800
Penguin	Easystarts	*Who Wants to Be a Star?*	911
Penguin	Easystarts	*The Pearl Girl*	949
Penguin	Easystarts	*Marcel and the White Star*	962
Penguin	Easystarts	*Maisie and the Dolphin*	973
Penguin	Easystarts	*Simon and the Spy*	978
Penguin	Easystarts	*The Troy Stone*	996
Penguin	Easystarts	*Marcel and the Mona Lisa*	999
Penguin	Level 2	*Moonfleet*	5,390
Penguin	Level 2	*White Fang*	7,746
Penguin	Level 2	*Kidnapped*	9,104
Penguin	Level 2	*Black Beauty*	9,390
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Picture Puzzle*	1,171
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Money for a Motorbike*	2,200
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Newspaper Boy*	2,240
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Marco*	2,245
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The Long Tunnel*	2,523
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The House on the Hill*	3,053
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The Mill on the Floss*	5,865
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The Last of the Mohicans*	6,514
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Northanger Abbey*	7,337
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The Man in the Iron Mask*	9,055
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*Hawk-eye the Pathfinder*	9,237
Macmillan	Level 2-Beginner	*The Prizoner of Zenda*	9,567

Note. Book selection varies slightly according to class

General English or ESP for Liberal Education? What Students Want and Why

Mark Rebuck
Meijo University

First-year students in Japanese universities take a variety of liberal education classes. While pharmacy/medical English classes are incorporated into most pharmacy-course curricula, the content of liberal-education English classes is usually more general. This study examines what students desire from their liberal-education English reading classes: ESP (English for Specific Purposes), GE (General English), or combinations of the two. A questionnaire was completed by 511 first-year pharmacy students over two years. Results showed that only a small minority desired wholly GE classes, with the highest percentage of students favoring ESP-orientated lessons. It also emerged that there was a degree of concordance between desired class type and (perceived) actual class type. Students' responses to an open-ended question illuminated the merits and demerits of ESP and GE for liberal education. Comments from interviews with the teachers of the reading classes added a further perspective to the study.

日本の大学1 年生は様々な教養教育の授業をうける。ほとんどの薬学課程のカリキュラムには薬学・医療英語が盛り込まれている一方、教養教育の英語授業の内容は通常一般的なものである。本論では、1年生の教養教育の英語リーディング授業に学生達が何を望むかを検証した。ESP（特定の目的の英語）、GE（一般英語）、そしてESPとGEを組み合わせた授業型を選択肢とし、薬学部1年生511人に2年にわたりアンケートを行った。その結果、完全なGEを望んでいた学生はわずかであり、最も高い割合で望まれていたのはESPだった。しかし、学生が実際に受けていた授業形式と、希望する授業形式が一致する傾向がある程度見られた。学生の自由記述の回答では、教養教育におけるESPとGEそれぞれの長所と短所が明らかになった。本論にさらなる視点を加えるものとして、リーディング授業担当の教師達へのインタビューも行った。

In the author's office are 60 envelopes, each containing one lesson. Half of the envelopes are pink, while the other half of them are brown. The pink lessons have titles such as "What makes you annoyed?" and "Asking about jobs." Suitable for students in various disciplines, they could be classed as General English (GE) lessons. In contrast, the brown ones are tailor-made for pharmacy students, covering topics such as "Aspirin's Mechanism of Action" and "Opioids in Palliative Care". These lessons follow a language-teaching approach known as ESP (English for Specific Purposes), a key feature being that "the content and aims . . . are fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 198). Further, targeting future healthcare professionals, the lessons belong to an ESP branch called EMP (English for Medical Purposes). While EMP courses are generally included at some point in pharmacy programs in Japanese universities, first-year *kyoyo kyoiku* (liberal or general education) English classes often focus on general topics.

Employed as a faculty member at a pharmacy school in 2013, the author was required to teach a reading course for *kyoyo kyoiku eigo* (KKE), or English for liberal education. University guidelines for the *kyoyo* education, stipulated that "some medical/science content" be included in these courses, but left it to individual teachers to decide the amount. With an EMP textbook (Noguchi, Kagota, & Nishikata, 2005), the author shaped his course around predominately medical-related content. By 2014, the other four (part-time) reading teachers were also using EMP textbooks. However, their respective emphasis on GE and EMP differed. To inform possible future curriculum changes, the author considered it important to ascertain what students desired from KKE reading classes, in terms of the relative GE and EMP mix.

Background

ESP places priority on the learners' needs and is often contrasted with GE, which as Harding (2007) writes, is "sometimes, perhaps unfairly, labelled English for No Obvious Purpose" (p. 6). Shi (2009) defines EMP as the "teaching of English needed by . . . medical personnel . . . and students" (p. 207), and stresses that EMP teachers, as "content-orientated educators," need to have some content knowledge (p. 221). How much knowledge is "a common topic of ESP literature" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 182).

There are several reasons for teaching EMP to pharmacy students. The most obvious is that pharmacists may need to communicate with foreign English-speaking patients. Moreover, an important part of the pharmacist's job is providing medication information to other healthcare professionals, and much up-to-date information is in English (Osawa, Yamashita, & Laforge, 2014). During university, students will also need to navigate English journal articles for specialist courses.

Little has been written on the role ESP should play in KKE, but Shimizu (1999) explored whether English education should concern itself mainly with "*kyoyo*" (education for cultivation of the mind) or "*jistuyo*" (education with a practical application). She described the concentration in university on the intensive reading of literary works, often criticized as *tsukienai eigo* (English that is useless in real life). Shimuzu, concerned that her medical students' needs were not being met, details how she combined medical topics with more general ones (for example, a reading on kidney dialysis is followed by a passage on the Trojan War) to create a curriculum that would "foster health professionals with a rich humanity" (p. 31).

The Study

Participants and Instruments

This study was conducted in the pharmacy faculty of a private Japanese university. First-year students responded to a questionnaire (shown in Appendix A) on the KKE reading courses. The questionnaire was distributed at the end of the second semester in 2014 and 2015 during a mandatory EMP course (not the KKE reading classes). A total of 511 students completed the questionnaire.

For Item 1, students circled their teacher's name. For Item 2, they indicated which of the following best described their reading class: (a) General English (GE); (b) GE with limited ESP (GE^{+ESP}); (c) All ESP (ESP); or (d) ESP with limited GE (ESP^{+GE}). Item 3 required students to mark the class/course type (CT) they most wanted, using the same categories as for Item 2. A student who, for example, circled GE for Item 2, but ESP for Item 3, indicated that a disparity existed between the CT they perceived they were getting and that which they desired. Item 4 is an open-ended question that asked students their reason(s) for their Item 3 choice.

Interviews

In order to gauge the reading teachers' views on KKE content, the author interviewed each of the teachers. Space does not permit a detailed reporting of their responses, but their comments are referred to where appropriate (see Appendix B for the main interview questions).

Results and Discussion

Data from the Closed Questions

ESP or GE? Students' Perceptions

Table 1 shows how students perceived their reading class. Each teacher is represented by a letter. It shows ways that students in the same class differed in their perception of lesson type. However, the degree to which these perceptions diverged varied with each teacher. Comparing M and R, for example, it is clear that there was less agreement amongst students as to M's CT. In 2015, approximately 60% of M's lessons were perceived to be GE or GE^{+ESP}, and for R, 100% of students judged this teacher's lessons to be either ESP or ESP^{+GE}. In the interviews, M described his/her CT as GE^{+ESP}, explaining that the reading passages in the EMP textbook were mainly used to revise "grammar and

Table 1. *Students' Perception of Class Type (CT)*

	Teacher (*n* =)	Total (*n*)	GE	GE^{+ESP}	ESP	ESP^{+GE}
2014	W (ESP)	*45*	4.4	8.9	35.6	51.1
	T (ESP)	*48*	2.1	14.6	54.1	29.2
	K (ESP^{+GE})	*53*	0	35.8	39.6	24.5
	M (GE^{+ESP})	*52*	28.8	50.0	13.5	7.7
	R (ESP)	*54*	0	1.8	89.1	9.1
	All Students	*252*	7.2%	22.6 %	46.7 %	23.5 %
2015	W (GE^{+ESP})	*41*	19.5	75.6	0	4.9
	T (ESP)	*45*	0	11.1	73.3	15.6
	K (ESP^{+GE})	*64*	4.7	18.8	40.6	35.9
	M (GE^{+ESP})	*67*	9.0	50.7	17.9	22.4
	R (ESP)	*42*	0	0	90.5	9.5
	All Students	*259*	6.6 %	31.7 %	42.1 %	19.7 %

vocabulary students had done in high school" (the parenthesized abbreviations in the Teacher column of the table indicate each teacher's evaluation of their own class type, as revealed during interviews). Some students probably considered that intensive reading of a passage on a medical-related topic constituted ESP; others did not. In contrast to M, R used the texts as a springboard to explore the content itself (see Rebuck, 2015, for an example of this in practice).

Another point of interest from Table 1 is how W's categorization of his/her class changed greatly between 2014 and 2015. In 2014 only 13% of students considered W's lesson to be either GE or GE^{+ESP}. In 2015 this rose to 95%. This change was likely due in large part to W switching textbooks, from a pharmacy-English textbook in 2014 to one on British culture and history in 2015. This raises two points pertinent to the teaching of ESP in KKE. The first concerns the teaching of content by teachers without a specialized background, which Rebuck (2016) argues is necessary for such instruction. When asked why the course textbook was changed, W replied:

> Many students couldn't understand the contents of the [pharmacy English] textbook. It was not just the English, but they didn't have the background knowledge. Also, it was difficult for me to teach the book because I don't have a science background…. Students didn't seem happy, so I changed books to teach what I'm more familiar with. (Personal communication, October 25, 2015)

In addition to a lack of background knowledge, by both students and the teachers, another reason for focusing on GE concerns the purpose of *kyoyo kyoiku*. M offered the following reply:"When students do EMP courses they need to learn specialist vocabulary, but during the first year it's more important for them to broaden their horizons". (Personal communication, October 13, 2015)

The above comment by M on the priorities of KKE could be seen in the context of a wider debate over the role of liberal education. Ikegami (2014) for example, argues that:

> [learning] that is immediately useful, will often quickly become obsolete in the real world, while that which is not useful immediately will be most useful in the long term… Therefore, genuine liberal education could be said to be that which is not useful in the short-term. (Ikegami, 2014, p. 30)

Ikegami's view was echoed by Hibi (2015), who stressed that universities "must not become vocational training schools" (p. 17). While few would argue with this sentiment, the reality facing pharmacy students should be addressed: At the end of a demanding six-year pharmacy course, students take the national pharmacy examination; without passing this they cannot become pharmacists. Can they really afford to spend time learning about Henry IV (as they do in one of W's lessons)?

ESP or GE? The Students' Desires

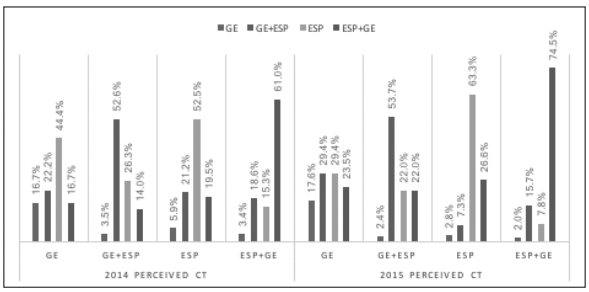

Figure 1. Relationship between Perceived Class Type (CT) and Desired CT (vertical axis)

Figure 1 shows that the narrowest discrepancy between actual and desired CT was for ESP^{+GE}. Thus, of the students who perceived their lesson to be ESP^{+GE}, 61% (*n*=36) and 74.6% (*n* =38) most desired this CT in 2014 and 2015, respectively. On the other hand, of the students who regarded GE as their CT, only 16.7% (n=3) in 2014 and 17.6% (n=3) in 2015 desired GE.

While Figure 1 indicates that in 2014 and 2015, the largest percentage of students desired ESP and the smallest percentage GE lessons, Table 2, which shows the CT desired for each teacher, suggests students may tend to desire the class they perceived to have received. This is exemplified by W. In 2014, as Table 1 shows, most (57%) of W's students judged his/her class to be ESP^{+GE}; Table 2 indicates that the largest percentage (48%) of W's students also desired ESP^{+GE} In 2015, as mentioned in the previous section, W switched to a textbook with topics on British history, and the majority (75%) of W's students in that year perceived the class to be GE^{+ESP}. Again, the largest percentage (63%) also considered GE^{+ESP} to be the most desirable. Perhaps students cognitively justify the class they are in or imbue their teacher's philosophy (implied or expressed explicitly in class).

Table 3 is an overview of the data with the four CT merged into two columns, with both years combined (GE indicates GE and GE^{+ESP}; ESP indicates ESP and ESP^{+GE})

Table 2. *Class Type (CT) Desired by Students for Each Teacher*

	Teacher	Total (*n*)	GE	GE^{+ESP}	ESP	ESP^{+GE}
2014	W (ESP)	*45*	4.3	23.9	23.9	47.8
	T (ESP)	*48*	4.2	29.2	35.4	29.2
	K (ESP^{+GE})	*53*	3.8	26.4	41.5	24.5
	M (GE^{+ESP})	*52*	7.7	44.2	32.7	15.4
	R (ESP)	*54*	7.3	14.5	49.1.0	27.3
	All Students	*252*	5.5	27.6	37.0	28.3)
2015	W (GE^{+ESP})	*41*	7.3	63.4	14.6	14.6
	T (ESP)	*45*	4.4	17.8	44.4	33.3
	K (ESP^{+GE})	*64*	3.1	7.8	42.2	46.9
	M (GE^{+ESP})	*67*	3.0	31.3	29.9	35.8
	R (ESP)	*42*	0	11.9	54.8	33.3
	All Students	*259*	3.5%	25.1%	37.1%	34.4%

A chi-square test showed a significant difference between the two merged classes (GE-perception and ESP-perception) in their desire for GE or ESP-orientated lessons (χ^2 (1) = 63.67, p <.01). It is clear that most students who considered their class to have a substantial ESP content also wanted this CT to be provided.

Table 3. *Data for 2014 and 2015 with Class Types (CT) Merged*

Perceived CT	Desired CT		Total
	GE-orientated	ESP-orientated	
GE-perception	54.1% (94)	45.9% (80)	174
ESP-perception	19.4% (65)	80.6% (272)	337
Total	31.2% (159)	68.8% (352)	*N* = 511

Response to Open-Ended Question

Based on the responses to Items 2 and 3, the questionnaires were placed into two groups: (1) responses from students who wanted more ESP or less GE, and (2) responses from students who wanted less ESP or more GE. Students whose Item 2 and Item 3 choice matched were placed into one of these groups, depending on whether the match was ESP-orientated (ESP or ESP^{+GE}) or GE-orientated (GE or GE^{+ESP}). Through highlighting the main points in the students' responses to Item 4, a number of themes emerged. Under the two main categories, further subcategories were created according to the reason(s) contained in the comments. The main reasons are described below and Appendix C outlines others.

Reasons for Desiring ESP

The most frequent response was that ESP will be useful in students' professional careers, for example, to help in communicating with foreign patients.

The second most common reason could be classed as commensurate to status. That is, students felt ESP was something they should be doing. The following comment falls into this category (the code in parentheses indicates the teacher, the actual lesson form, and desired lesson form). The main reasons are described below and Appendix C outlines others. All the students' comments in the following sections were translated by the author.

> *Learning general English is important, but this is something we did before entering university. This is a pharmacy faculty, and we should do more content directly useful to us* (W: GE^{+ESP}→ESP).

Students also felt that EMP content can relate to other courses: for example, "By doing medical and pharmacy-related topics we learn about illnesses and medication relevant to other classes. In R's class the content is difficult, but topics such as diabetes help us to understand other lessons" (R: ESP→ESP).

An example of another reason-category, start early, is expressed in the following comment: "To prepare us for the difficult pharmacy English classes

in our second and third years, we need to use medical-related content in our reading classes. Also, the earlier we're exposed to medical vocabulary, the better we'll remember it" (K: ESP^{+GE}→ESP^{+GE}).

Motivation was the fourth category, with the most frequent reason being that medical content was more relevant and thus more likely to rouse students' interest. This relevance was mainly related to the content's utility value; EMP would be useful for other courses and/or future careers. Some students considered EMP motivating because it made them feel, as one put it, that they were "on the road to becoming pharmacists" (R: ESP→ESP).

Reasons for Desiring GE

The most frequent reason for desiring GE was that the basics should take priority: "Between finishing our entrance exams and entering university our English level has dropped. So, in our first year we need to return to our previous level by going over the basics" **(**W: GE^{+ESP}→GE^{+ESP}**).**

Actual or perceived level of difficulty was the second most frequent reason. A number of students wrote that the problems understanding specialist content related to a lack of background knowledge rather than language ability per se: for example, "As first-year students we still haven't learnt much about pharmacy, and without this background knowledge it's hard to understand medical topics taught in English" (W: GE^{+ESP}→GE^{+ESP}).

Numerous students felt also that KKE should be about expanding horizons beyond their major: "If we just stick to topics related to pharmacy, our knowledge will become lopsided" (M: GE^{+ESP}→GE^{+ESP}).

Many comments reflected the results from the quantitative data that indicated a desire from the majority of respondents for a blend of GE and EMP: "This is the pharmacy department so we should do topics related to healthcare. But I haven't mastered grammar yet, so we also need to do basic English" (K: ESP^{+GE}→ESP^{+GE}).

Another category, "fairness across classes," should be noted because it includes comments that called for both more GE and ESP: for example, "In Introduction to Medical English, I felt at a disadvantage compared to students who had been in a reading class focusing on medical English. All reading classes should do basically the same, otherwise it's not fair" *(GE^{+ESP}→GE^{+ESP}).*

This student wanted all classes to be GE-orientated lessons, but others suggested achieving fairness by making classes more EMP orientated. Although such comments numbered only around a dozen, they are a reminder that students exchange information about each other's lessons, and that, particularly in the competitive environment of a pharmacy faculty, students may feel disadvantaged due to their placement in one class rather than another.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this study that, although the vast majority of pharmacy students desired their reading courses to contain discipline-relevant content, many also wanted some GE. After reflecting on the results, the author now gives students a break from pharmacy English with several GE lessons each semester. The perfect content mix for all students may be unachievable, but this study suggests a combination may be the best option for pharmacy students. This finding could be applicable to other faculties with ESP courses, such as medicine and nursing.

Many students in this study were perhaps unclear as to the distinction between GE and ESP. While Belcher (2009) devotes 18 pages to an overview of "What ESP is and can be", the author's questionnaire sought to distinguish between the approaches in only a few lines. It would, therefore, not be surprising if students were somewhat inconsistent in their interpretation of the two terms. Responses indicated that most students considered GE as referring to general topics and/or basic grammar and everyday vocabulary, while ESP was considered to be medical-related content and vocabulary. A more detailed explanation of the distinction may have impacted the results.

Future research could focus on teacher motivation to become familiar with the students' area of study or, as one peer-reviewer suggested, on the thorny issue of ESP-relevant teacher qualifications. It may also be interesting to ascertain students' class preference in a pharmacy faculty whose English reading courses were solely GE. If the finding from the present study—that students tend to desire what they are getting—is not an anomaly, we may expect students exposed only to GE to have a limited desire for EMP classes. It is important, however, to remember that students' *wants* constitute just one aspect of needs analyses. However satisfied students are with the GE-status quo, we should consider whether English for liberal education without discipline-related content is really best for their long-term needs.

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Appendix A: *Questionnaire (Japanese)*

On the hard copy of the questionnaire completed by students, the teachers' actual names were, of course, written in full.

一年生の英語授業の内容に関するアンケート 後 期 2015

このアンケートはX大学薬学部の学生のみなさんの、英語に対するニーズを把握し、今後の授業改善に役立てるために行います。無記名で行いので、思ったままを記入してください。ご協力よろしくお願いいたします。

次はみなさんが受けている教養英語リーディング授業についての質問です。

英語の授業の中身に関しては大きく分けると2種類あります。一つ目は一般英語General　Englishです。一般英語の授業のトピックはさまざまで、多くの場合、受講している学生の専門性とは直接関係がありません。二つ目は「特定の目的のための英語」ESP　(English for Specific Purposes)です。　ESPの授業は学生の専門分野と関係があり、将来の職業に関連する内容になっています。この授業【医療英語入門】で利用している教科書は『医療従事者"healthcare professionals"』を対象に作られたものなのでこのクラスはESPのクラスと考えられます。

Q1. あなたが受けている教養英語のリーディングクラス(Reading class)の先生は誰ですか。当てはまる先生の名前の横に〇を付けてください。

1.　W先生　　2.　T先生
3.　K先生　　4.　M先生
5.　R先生

Q2.　あなたが受けているリーディングクラスの中身は、次の1~4のどれに一番当てはまりますか?ひとつだけ〇をつけてください。

1. 「一般英語」で授業のトピックは医療・薬学に特化していない。
2. 「一般英語」だが医療関係の内容が限定的に取り扱われている。(例えば、一学期の間に１つか2つの授業は医療に関する内容が取り入れられている)
3. 「ESP:特定の目的のための英語」で授業のトピックは医療・薬学に関連していて、学生の専門と関係がある。
4. 大体「ESP特定の目的のための英語」だが、一部の授業内容は「一般英語」的な英語に属する。

Q3. 授業の内容だけに関して聞きます。次の授業の種類1~4のうち、薬学部の一年生に提供すべきなのはどれですか。一つに〇を付けてください。

1. 「一般英語」で授業のトピックは医療・薬学に特化していない。
2. 「一般英語」だが医療関係の内容が限定的に取り扱われている。
3. 「特定の目的のための英語」で授業のトピックは医療・薬学に関連していて、学生の専門と関係がある。

4. 大体「特定の目的のための英語」だが、一部の授業内容は「一般英語」的な英語に属する。

Q4. なぜそのようなクラスが一番好ましいですか?その理由を書いてください。

Q5. 一年生英語の授業の内容について意見がありましたら是非書いてください

English Translation

Questionnaire on the content of first-year English classes Semester 2 2015

This questionnaire is to find out the needs of students at X University, and to help improve lessons. It is anonymous, so please write what you think. Thank you for your cooperation.

It is possible to categorize the content of English lessons into two kinds. The first is General English (GE). In GE lessons there are various topics, most of which will not be directly related to the students' major. The second kind is ESP (English for Specific Purposes). These lessons are directly related to the students' major and have content that will be relevant to their future careers. Introduction to Medical English [the name of the course in which students completed the questionnaire], uses a textbook made specifically for future healthcare professionals. This course, therefore, could be considered an ESP one.

These questions are related to your kyoyo kyoiku [basic education] English reading classes

Q1. Who is your reading-class teacher? Put a ○ next to the teacher.

1.	W	2.	T
3.	K	4.	M
5.	R		

Q2. How would you describe the content of your class. Put a ○ next to the one from below that most closely describes it.

1. General English (GE): Topics in the lesson are not specifically about healthcare/pharmacy.
2. Mostly GE but also with limited medical-related content.
3. ESP with the topics related to healthcare and medicine.
4. Mostly ESP but also with limited GE type content.

Q3. This question is asking you only about the content of the classes. From the following lesson types below, which do you think should be given to first-year pharmacy students? Put a ○ next to one.

1. General English (GE): Topics in the lesson are not specifically about healthcare/pharmacy.
2. Mostly GE but also with limited medical-related content.
3. ESP with the topics related to healthcare and medicine.
4. Mostly ESP but also with limited GE type content

Q4. Why is the class type you marked the most preferable? Please write the reason below.

Q5. If you have any comments about the first-year English classes, feel free to write them below.

Appendix B: *The Key Questions Asked in the Teacher Interviews*

1. How would you categorize your class? (The interviewee is shown Item 2 of the students' questionnaire in Appendix A)
2. What do you think is the best lesson type for students? Why?
3. How do you feel about teaching medical related content?
4. How do you go about preparing for lessons with medical-related content?
5. What do you consider to be the role of kyoyo kyoiku (liberal arts/general education) English classes?

Appendix C: *Students' Reasons for Desiring a Certain Lesson Type*

It was common for a single comment to express more than view. The categorizing into groups was not an exact science, but the Total Comments column does give a fairly accurate representation of the relative number of times a certain reason was given. For both of the tables below, the Total column indicates the number of comments in each category for 2014 and 2015 combined.

Abbreviations used in the table: EMP (English for Medical Purposes); ESP (English for Specific Purposes); GE (General English)

Table 5. *Reasons for Desiring more ESP or Being Satisfied with ESP-Orientated Lessons*

General Category	Main Views Expressed	Total
Necessary	Needed for future career. Will need EMP for subject courses. Important for reading journal articles, obtaining medical information, and for study abroad programs.	170
Commensurate with pharmacy student status	We entered university to become pharmacists, so we should do medical-related topics. We are pharmacy students, so we expect to study topics related to our area of study. We want to be challenged. It's meaningless to repeat what we did in high school.	70
Start early	Medical English is difficult, so it's best to start from the first year. The more we are exposed to medical language the better.	59
Motivation	Relevant content grabs our attention and heightens our self-awareness that we are studying to be pharmacists.	52

Table 6. *Reasons for Desiring Less ESP or Being Satisfied with GE-Orientated Lessons*

General Category	Main Views Expressed	Total
Need basics	Need to review what we did in high school. If we do not do the basics, we will forget. Need strong foundation on which to study medical English.	67
Too difficult	Too much EMP makes the lesson a struggle. Need to introduce medical content gradually, otherwise we will lose motivation.	62
Need GE	GE necessary for communication with foreign patients and friends. Need GE to read journals and for TOEIC. GE provides a necessary break from difficult pharmacy/science-related topics.	52
Broaden horizons	The first year is about gaining a broad knowledge.	39
Lack Knowledge	In the first year we lack the background in pharmacy necessary to understand specialist content in Japanese, let alone English.	33
Not necessary	EMP will be taught in other classes, so we do not need to do it now.	22
Too Early	Introducing difficult content too early will reduce motivation. Students are not yet used to university life, so we should do easy English to start with.	18

Delving into Dysfluency: Identifying the Most Problematic Issues of Japanese Learners

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This paper addressed two questions, namely: which six dysfluency variables were the most problematic for Japanese EFL learners, and whether dysfluency changed with increases in Speaking Rate A (Wendel, 1997)? To gather data for the initial question, five categories were formed with varying speaking rates. Data were collected from 55 transcripts from gendered and same-sex discussions that took place in 2016, and form the Japanese University Student Corpus (JUSC). Results showed that the six most problematic kinds of dysfluency included mean length runs (MLRs), number of words, total syllables, cross-talk pausing, amount and percentage of silence, and speaking rates A and B. As for the second research question, data showed significant differences in cross-talk pausing (which doubled), mispronounced words, repetition, and meaningless syllables. Fluency did improve with regard to MLRs. This indicates that while some aspects of fluency do improve with speaking rate, various other aspects of dysfluency also increase. As the most serious issue of dysfluency is that of poor production (number of words), more effort should be focused on getting students to talk longer and with more syntactic complexity.

本論では、日本人のEFL（外国語としての英語）学習者にとって、非流暢性のどの6つの変数が最も問題となるのか、また発声速度Aが上がると非流暢性がどう変化するのかを調査した(Wendel, 1997)。第1の調査質問に関するデータ収集のため、発声速度に応じて5つのカテゴリーを形成した。データは、日本人大学生のコーパス(JUSC)に基づき、2016年に行われた男女の議論を書き起こした55の原稿から集められた。調査結果によると、最も問題のあった非流暢性は、発話の平均的長さ（MLR）、語数、総音節、会話の一時停止、沈黙の量／割合、そして発声速度A／Bであった。第2 の調査質問で有意差を認めたのは、会話の一時停止（倍増）、言い間違い、繰り返し、無意味な音節、であった。MLRについては流暢さが増した。これは流暢さのいくつかの側面が発声速度と共に改善する一方で、非流暢性のいくつかの側面も同様に増加することを示している。非流暢性の最も深刻な問題は語数が不足していることであるから、学生がもっと構文的に複雑な長めの会話をするよう焦点を当てるべきである。

When considering aspects of English education in Japan, grammar and fluency have rarely been afforded equal treatment. A plethora of books, CDs, and DVDs address common and arcane aspects of English grammar for a variety of standardized tests, but it is hard to find books and materials that address fluency. In short, teachers seem to only pay attention to fluency during student presentations and performances when it is one quality to be evaluated.

However, attitudes towards fluency are slowly changing as more educators realize that correct grammar means little if speakers cannot say enough or express themselves quickly without mispronouncing words, rephrasing or making use of repetition. Improving fluency begins by understanding the most problematic issues. Seligman et. al (1997) note that spontaneous speech is notoriously messy insofar that most utterances are not fully-formed, have repairs, hesitations, and fragments, with overall spoken speech being abandoned, redirected, or abbreviated.

Conversational analysis has been criticized as not having enough instances of data and with results often containing frequencies that are too small and inaccurate; this leads to sweeping interpretations. Another issue is that of researchers examining fluency or dysfluency rates across different corpora, as this might reflect differences in the circumstances of data collection, pragmatic issues, or coding criteria. Thus, this study, which is based on one large corpus of 55 transcripts (110 individual speaker's samples) from Japanese first and second-year university students, aims to identify the six most problematic kinds of acoustic, lexical, and syntactic dysfluency that are evident in gendered and same-sex discourse. These interactions, which are less structured when compared to a previous (2012) study, are based on a variety of topics (see Appendix A) and thus provide for a more elaborate L2 discourse. In short, the aim is to raise important pedagogical issues and awareness of the importance of fluency and a better understanding of the issues concerning dysfluency in Japanese L2 speakers of English.

Background to Dysfluency

The research on dysfluency and fluency (Brennan & Schober, 2001; Binder, et. al, 2002; Lennon, 1990; Long, 2016; Magnan, 1988; Riazantseva, 2001; Richards, & Schmidt, 1983) covers a wide range of issues, from how dysfluencies differ in various tasks

to when they are the most prevalent in discourse among others. However, one issue that has yet to be researched and established is which dysfluency phenomena (DP) occur the most in the L2 speech of Japanese, and to what degree. Other researchers point out that fluency involves a set of patterns such as speech rate, sentence selection, pausing and pausing patterns, and hesitations. Therefore, addressing dysfluency first involves knowing which patterns are in need of consideration the most.

The Study

Rationale

The first aim is to identify if dysfluency variables of retracings, vocalism/filled pauses, mispronounced words, word fragments, and the use of L1 (Japanese) are the most problematic for L2 speakers at this range as was found in my previous studies. The study also seeks to identify which six variables of dysfluency are the most problematic between two Japanese L2 speakers in less structured discourse. A second aim is to establish, with an increasing speaking rate, if any patterns in dysfluency (the frequency of incorrect pauses, silence, etc.) exist in L2 speakers at a certain level of proficiency.

Research questions

1. Concerning the various variables in the three types of dysfluency (acoustic, syntactic, and lexical) which four are the most problematic at this lower level of proficiency, (see table 1)?
2. Are there certain patterns in dysfluency as it relates to Speaking Rate A? Does a higher speaking rate result in fewer variables of dysfluency?

Procedures & Subjects

Four participants, two females and two males, were selected based on their standardized English test scores and with the acknowledgment that they did not know the other people in their group. The students' test scores (see Table 1), provided a relatively similar level of proficiency. One issue was that of familiarity, and Coates (1996) notes that discourse is more fluent between associates. A total of 110 subjects were used for this study, but for each set of interactions only four participants were chosen: two females and two males, with two sets of gendered discussions taking places followed by same-sex discussions. Thus, there were a total of 55 transcripts with 110 speakers being examined. Participants signed permission forms allowing for their discussions to be videotaped and transcribed. In order to better understand the fluency aspects identified in each transcript, videotapes of each session were uploaded to Youtube (2015), and these sessions are open to the public domain.

The 110 subjects for this study were from a municipal university and a national university in western Japan. All students had limited study abroad experiences.

Table 1. *Scores for Lower Proficiency Students*

TOEIC	Eiken 英検	IELTS	TOEFL IBT	TOEFL ITP	TOEFL PBT	TOEFL CBT
440 – 550	2級	3.0 – 4.0	42 – 55	272 – 450	463 – 480	143 – 157

Discussions, averaging 10 minutes and 46 seconds long, were videotaped with two gendered discussions taking place simultaneously in different rooms. Next two sets of same-sex discussions would take place.

Discussion format

In order to more accurately measure issues relating to fluency instead of conversational management, subjects were asked to follow a three-topic format. The first was based on shared interests in order to find areas of commonality, the second was aimed at gathering information related to these shared interests, and the third posed a difficult question or issue related to the first topic, see Appendix A. If students finished the topic, they could move on to the next one on the list.

Preliminary Data: 2013 Transcripts

The preliminary data examined students having a range of TOEIC scores. Long (2014) compared the lowest range of TOEIC score participants (461-571) to native speakers examining syntactic, acoustic, and lexical dysfluencies. This study was limited to 10 speakers and the discourse was highly structured. The dialogic data that is used for this study averaged 10 minutes. The transcripts followed from the Jefferson Transcription System; see Appendix D.

2016 Corpus / Transcripts

The 55 transcripts were manually transcribed, beginning in March through July 2016. The videos, which are located on Youtube (2015) totaled over nine hours and 8.3 minutes (590 minutes) with videos, ranging in length from 6:23 to 14:59 minutes.

The videos and transcripts for this study, which can be found at genderfluency.com, came from nine sessions, which provided enough reliable data of students' fluency and dysfluency. The corpus, referred to as the Japanese University Student Corpus (JUSC), contains nine sessions; for fluency-oriented researchers, the corpus with analysis contains 94,575 words whereas for other researchers the other corpus contains 49,027 words. The data for the native speakers' fluency came from a second set of transcripts that were collected in 2013.

Data Analysis

For the first research question, data related to fluency and dysfluency were input into Excel. Additional analysis was needed to provide data for variables that were not included in the 2013 study. In answering the second research question, four categories were formed using Speaking Rate A, with category 1 including the speaking rate ranging from 50-79 (16 speech samples), the second, from 80-110 (43 samples), the third, 111-140 (37 samples), and the fourth category ranging from 141-170+ (15 samples). Descriptive data were then sorted into each category. Determining outliers on the averages was conducted with the Grubbs test with Graph Pad software.

Results

Except for acoustic dysfluency, which had z-scores ranging from 2.215 to 2.289, all of the other variables had z-scores of 2.289, which indicate a moderate level of variation in scores. For EFL participants, outliers were found on micropauses, mean length of pauses (MLP), total amount of silence, cross-talk pausing, mispronounced words, word fragments, use of L1, abandoned sentences, retracing, repetition, average mean length runs, and meaningless syllables. For native speakers, outliers were only found on MLP, total amount of silence, and abandoned sentences. These outliers were eliminated and the data were recalculated to reflect a more normal distribution, see (Table 2) for data concerning the results of native speakers and this year's data. As can be noted, the six variables that showed the greatest difference (indicating the most important issues in dysfluency) include the variables of: (a) mean length runs (MLRs) (a 1,292% increase), (b) number of words (a 283% increase), (c) total syllables, (d) cross-talk pausing, (e) amount / percentage of silence, and (f) speaking rate A (a 102% change).

By comparing transcripts of native speakers (see Appendices B and C), the first striking difference is the amount of actual production that native speakers provide compared to EFL speakers. This is also found in the variables of the number of words-syllables, MLRs, and total time speaking. The second easily recognisable issue is the lack of silence of the native speakers, especially in cross-talk pausing.

Table 2. ***Comparison of EFL Participants' Fluency with Native Speaker Fluency***

Variables	EFL Participants		Native Speakers	
	Ave	S.D.	Ave	S.D.
Fluency Variables				
Articulation rates	1.58	0.41	3.34	0.930
Speaking Rate A	97.9	0.41	198.2	56.4
Speaking Rate B	88.8	23.5	192.8	55.6
Acoustic Dysfluency				
Micropauses	6.68	4.09	14.8	14.8
Mean Length of Pauses	3.81	1.69	1.62	0.33
Total Amount of Silence	60.7	47.3	9.8	10.6
Cross-talk Pausing	7.30	7.90	0	0
Lexical Dysfluency				
Mispronounced words	0.40	0.86	0	0
Word fragments	1.11	1.15	1.6	0.70
Use of L1	2.65	2.72	0	0
Syntactic Dysfluency				
Abandoned Sentences	1.36	1.46	0.50	1.0
Retracing	2.59	2.20	0.30	0.48
Repetition	18.29	14.49	6.30	8.19
Average Mean Length Runs	9.48	3.59	134.4	102.6
Total Syllables	476	174.0	1550.8	933.5
Number of Words	330.2	125.9	1246.2	703.2
Meaningless Syllables	43.24	24.65	40.2	21.1

Note: For dysfluency, these units represent either number of occurrences. For fluency variables, the units are measured in syllables spoken per second.

Note: The data for the variable of abandoned sentences retained the two outliers as these comprised the total data for native speakers.

In examining the question as to whether dysfluency changed with participants who spoke faster (Speaking Rate A), the variables that showed significant differences in dysfluency were cross-talk pausing (which doubled), mispronounced words, repetition, and meaningless syllables

which rose from an average of 7 to 29. Fluency did improve with regards to MLRs, which rose from 4.1 syllables per pause to 11 syllables as well as the total number of syllables and words, from 137 to 350) (Table 3). This indicates that some aspects of fluency do improve in relation to the speed in which one talks, but so do various other aspects of dysfluency.

Table 3. *Comparing Dysfluency Variables Based On Speaking Rates*

	Speaking Rates				
Variables	20 -49	50 -79	80 -110	111 -140	141 -170
Cases	2	25	46	34	3
Fluency					
Speaking Time	236	289.6	313	274	193.2
Articulation Rates	0.65	1.084	1.5	2.0	2.5
Speaking Rate A	41.8	68.06	95.0	122	155.2
Speaking Rate B	40.1	60.63	86.0	111	144.1
Acoustic Dysfluency					
Micropauses	3.5	6.00	7.9	6.4	4.6
Mean Length Pauses	4.5	4.07	3.9	3.9	5.3
Total Silence	49.9	76.5	66	56	55.8
Cross-talk Pausing	5.45	30.6	17.0	15.0	9.4
Lexical Dysfluency					
Mispro-nounced words	0.5	0.64	1.2	0.3	13.4
Word fragments	0.5	1.08	1.1	1.3	2.66
Use of L1 (Japanese)	2.0	2.40	3.8	2.6	3.66
Syntactic Dysfluency					
Abandoned Sentences	1.50	1.24	1.5	1.7	1.00
Retracing	1.00	2.72	3.3	2.9	1.33
Repetition	2.00	14.5	21	22	11.6
Mean Length Runs	4.10	7.83	11	9.8	7.86
Total Syllables	189	344.7	496	560	503.3
Number of Words	137.5	234.8	346	391	350.3
Meaningless Syllables	7	31.8	57	49	29.33

Note: Data reflects the averages for each variable.

Discussion

It is clear by looking at the data and the transcripts (Appendices B and C) that the overall issue of production (short MLRs, total syllables, the number of words) was the most serious dysfluency possessed by Japanese EFL speakers. Pauses and silence were a second problem, followed by a relatively slow speaking rate. However, concerning the issue of production, getting students to simply say more is difficult and requires a lot of preparation on the part of both teachers and students. Also, the data show that as speaking rates increase, students can make significant progress in production while reducing their amount of silence.

The key issue is helping students to become more aware of their own dysfluency. Providing three- to four-minute samples of their production, and having them transcribe their speech (while including pause frequencies and times) can be one method. Teachers should also make their students aware of the lexical and syntactic complexity of their production: stringing together a series of simple sentences will fail to bring about a sense of true fluency. These results lead to interesting questions such as which dysfluency variable is the most irritating to listeners, and whether or not awareness and immediate feedback of one's own dysfluency brings about immediate change or takes longer to result in significant improvement?

Conclusion

While it is important to provide quantitative data concerning fluency, teachers should also step back and observe the overall communicative competency of students' interactions. While students may be deemed fluent, are they providing their listeners with the appropriate and relevant content, is their pacing of information too fast or too slow, and are they animated enough?

Fluency also brings about confidence, and the ability to produce social change. For too long, Japanese education has focused on *getting it right* instead of *getting it fluent* so that students are unable to convince, debate, discuss, negotiate and interact in a wide variety of settings. However, by focusing on fluency, students will eventually be able to hold the floor and to make their point successfully; and in doing so, they will gain the confidence to influ-

ence particular social events. In short, there is little meaning to grammatical accuracy if there is too little speech in which to make an adequate evaluation of it. Finally, it is important for teachers to recognize that fluency takes into account a wide variety of psychological, cultural, pragmatic, and social factors. While a semblance of fluency may be achieved in the classroom in various tasks, this fluency may not be so evident in outside situations; thus, it is important to have students participate in a wide variety of role plays in which they have to ask and answer questions, provide in-depth opinions, give directions, and make requests, compliments, and complaints. By doing all of the above, as Binder, et al. (2002) note, we can indeed say that, "fluency is true mastery" (p. 12).

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Appendix A

Discussion Topics (Abridged)

Note: A = Information gathering, B = shared interests, C = Cognitive loading

1st MM – FF Interactions		
Set 1	A. Share information about classes, hobbies, preferences	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: how are you both different?	Shared interests
	C. Compare schedules. Who is busier?	Cognitive loading
Set 2	A. Share as much information about family, friends, major	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: what do you both have in common	Shared interests
	C. Compare parents. Whose parents are stricter?	Cognitive loading
Set 3	A. Share information about your activities, books, movies	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: What kind of food do you both dislike	Shared interests
	C. Compare personalities. Who is more social and outgoing?	Cognitive loading
Set 4	A. Share information about your ideas about 3 dream jobs	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: What kind of pets would you like?	Shared interests
	C. Compare dreams. How are your future dreams different?	Cognitive loading
Set 5	A. Share your ideas about your 3 favorite teachers	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: what are your four favorite class?	Shared interests
	C. Compare spending habits. Who is a saver or a spender?	Cognitive loading
Set 6	A. Share information about trips, clubs, and food	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: What are your four favorite movies?	Shared interests
	C. Compare histories. What was your favorite children's book?	Cognitive loading

2nd MM – FF interactions		
Set 1	A. Share information about what you like to buy this year	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: do you buy similar items and products?	Shared interests
	C. Compare viewing habits. Who has watched more anime?	Cognitive loading
Set 2	A. Share 3 events you have heard on the news	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: what do like watching on TV?	Shared interests
	C. Compare viewing habits. Who watches more TV?	Cognitive loading
Set 3	A. Share information about sports you like or have done	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: What kind of sports are the dullest?	Shared interests
	C. Compare personalities. Who is more active?	Cognitive loading
Set 4	A. Share information about current events. What's new?	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: Who keeps the most up-to-date?	Shared interests
	C. Compare interests. Who has more "interests" regarding news?	Cognitive loading
Set 5.	A. Share your ideas about how you have changed in 5 years	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: Who has had more problems in life?	Shared interests
	C. Compare musical tastes. Which groups do you both dislike?	Cognitive loading
Set 6	A. Share information about your most important memories.	Information-gathering
	B. Discuss the question: What was your most important event?	Shared interests
	C. Compare past family and school trips. Who saw more of of Japan or the world?	Cognitive loading

Appendix B.

Native Speaker's Transcript (Abridged)

Interviewer: Tell me about your family?

H.T: (.) Ok, um↑ (1.4) I have two:↑ elder brothers heh heh still alive I believe uh: (.) sadly my parents passed away (.) uh: (1.2) the my eldest brother is an optician I think he is still working and my my middle brother (1.3) is retired↑ although he was a sales representative, actually he was an international sales representative for many years, but um:↑ he's retired (.) in↑ Nottingham (.) which was where I was hoping to go. Um, he has a daughter (.) who lives in (.) Australia now, she is a qualified nurse and just had a second baby. Uh, I also↑ have children, I have two↑ sons↑ neither of them are married at the moment and neither of them feel the necessity to marry, heh heh I think uh: (.) but↑ they are children of a mixed Japanese and British marriage so its perhaps not surprising that they have done quite a bit of traveling and:↑ at the moment, my eldest↑ son (1.4) is I know not where. He was in Hong Kong, he was threatening to go to America, New York, uh he has not replied to my last email so uh he could be up in the air traveling some where at the moment. My uhm my younger:↑ son (1.8) he graduated from uh Bath or Baath University a couple of years ago and has been working in London ever since↑ he recently he has changed jobs uh, I know↑ his new job is quite interesting that he's doing some research for an online gambling↑ (.) company so↑ but the main thing for him was that he has a little bit more money to gamble so he seems quite happy with the move he lives in London. [02:13.9]

Interviewer: It seems that your schedule is very hectic.

H.T: heh heh. Yes:↑ uh:↑ (.) it is: (1.0) um (.) I'm quite busy on the weekends doing God's work um: (.) I I have to travel to most of my jobs (.) so that obviously takes up time and two years ago I moved (2.1) um: to Munakata-shi, (.) I↑ had been living there previously, but uh into a more rural part of the of the city and↑ as a result I've got a lot of land to play don't have so many toys, but I have land that↑ is very↑ time consuming. And (.) it is also quite back-breaking, but also very satisfying, growing uh my own vegetables, uh we also got some fruit trees. Um: two↑ years ago, we had an excellent harvest of ume and we didn't eat ume, of course, we did make ume-shu, which was very pleasant. (.) So:↑uh (.) the quality of the (1.9) of my↑ food↑ has been improved uh since I heh heh became a country yokel. [01:30.0]

Interviewer: Interesting. Um, tell me ( ) about your hobbies.

H.T: Yeh↑ uh:↑ Well, you keep me very busy so I don't have time for hobbies. But uh. What I used to do a lot of running and even triathlon (.) um (1.8) and I to to be able to do the training because I actually did competitive uh triathlons, and uh marathons, I had to (1.2) build↑ a training scheme into my everyday routines, I used to run to work, I even,↑ in the summertime, get on my bike, very↑ early↑ in the morning↑ and cycle thirty, thirty-five kilometers into Kyushu University from Munakata. I done that in training so I knew it could be done and at that time it was actually as quick or possibly quicker by bicycle to get to Roppanmatsu than using bus. Um, in recent years uh:↑ I had different priorities in my life, so↑ its for me, (.) it wasn't feasible to maintain that kind of training regime, uh which is disappointing because I think it had many health benefits, and many benefits to your:↑ hhh (2.5) esteem, I suppose, knowing that you you have a (.) fairly high degree of fitness gives you some confidence, but↑ uh↑ (1.2) it does require effort↑ and (1.9) as things changed in my my life I also had to change my priorities as well but I still do↑ try (1.7) to do some running, certainly some kind of exercise just from the point of view of maintaining my health. I think of (1.8) probably any activity, if you suddenly↑ quit doing it, it could actually have the (1.9) the reverse process could operate and you: (.) might come down some sort of illness. So I believe that, I was often told when I came to Japan it often affected uh sumo wrestlers that uh they suddenly stopped training but they still had a lot of bulk that many of them suffered from (.) maybe (.) heart disease. (.) I hope that won't happen with me. [02:25.9]

- Start time: 01:38
- End time: 22:48
- Total Time Speaking for Interviewee: [20:38.9] (1,238.9 seconds)
- Amount of Silence: (85.6) seconds
- Percentage of Silence: 6.9%

- Average mean length run: 62.4 (3624 syllables) (3543 meaningful syllables)
- Articulation rate: 3.1
- Fluency Rate A: 175.5
- Fluency Rate B: 171.5
- Cross-talk pausing: 00:00
- Micropauses: 52
- Total Words: 2838

Appendix C.

EFL Speaker's Transcript (Abridged)

M2: Uh: my↑ family↑
F1: yeah↑
M2: is↑ mother and me. Only only. My parents (divorced) in (2.4) about five age.
F1: Oh: ↓
M2: My mother (.) grow up me heh ah uhm: but↑ I have many friends.
F1: Yes yes.
M2: And uh about uh my friends is actor
F1:Oh oh
M2: In Tokyo. He went (.) two years ago. He: he: decided (.) uh to go to university, Seinan university, but↑ he canceled and go to Tokyo. Uh,
F1: Oh: Oh:
M2: Uh: please tell me your friends and your friends.
F1: Uh my family is mother and father and little brother.
M2: Ah:
F1: Yes.
M2: Uh: what is your little brother?
F1: Heh (sniffle)
M2: Eleven?
F1: No: heh (fifteen). Fifteen years old.
M2: Junior high school.
F1: High School.
M2: High school.
F1: Yes, Yes.
M2: Eh:
F1: He: is very cute heh his hobby is very good. One day, he get up early. He make a (.) pancake↑ Yes↑ heh
M2: He likes cooking.
F1: Yes. He likes making sweets.
M2: Sweets?
F1: Yes yes.
M2: Uh I like (pudding).
F1: Heh heh
M2: Uh He He can make (pudding)?
F1: Yes Yes. He ca- makes cake↑ but I don't like. I don't like it. Swe- Sweets is making sweets is
M2: No
F1: Yes Yes My mother and father says it (change) (change)
M2: Heh heh
F1: Your character too
M2: Your brother
F1: Yes changing.
M2: He wants to be a (pastiere)
F1: No:
M2: No. His hobby. Yes yes. Your friend.
F1: My friend, my friend.
M2: Unique
F1: Yes Yes. And (.) I (.) uhm I think my uh character is not cute, and my friend is the same. Yes.
M2: Uh, my↑ friend (2.1) uhm: (3.2) (Japanese) unique, for example, ah, (.) I : (.) I and my friend, my friend name is Keisuke, Keisuke and I ah (.) in high school comedy in in: Japanese Bunkasai, uh yes yes ↓ but he wants to be comedian. Uh He is studying in Fukuoka University, but he (graduate) ah he graduate after Fukuoka University, uh he want to be a comedian, he go to (Hiroshimoto) he so↑ he (big) ah what what↑ studying in university?
F1: I major in law↑.
M2: Law?
F1: Yes.
M2: Law is very difficult for me.
F1: Heh Yes. Heh.
M2: Law is (.) remember↑ remember↑ and understand in brain. Ah About a lot of words.
F1: Yes
M2: I can't this.
F1: It's very difficult.
M2: I like math, so I major in economics in university. I dislike↑ remember and understand words, but↑ something so I like math. So I studying university. Uh: (2.5) Hmm: so what your hobby?
F1: My hobby is eating.
M2: Eating? Ah, eating, eating, eating. (.) Ah: What your favorite restaurant?
F1: Restaurant?
M2: Or shop?
F1: Shop. I I↓ like (.) Chinese food. ↑
M2: Ah:↑

Fluency Analysis

- Total Time Speaking for Interviewees: 10:00 (600 seconds)
- Female 1 Speaking Time: 04.02.7

Appendix D.

CA Transcription Symbols

Manner/Quality

• Smile quality:	£
• Exhale / inhale:	hhh
• vocalism:	(sniffle)
• click:	.t
• laugh pulse:	heh
• laughing word:	wo(h)rd
• laughter:	heh heh
• Low pitch:	↓
• High pitch:	↑
• pause, timed:	(1.2)
• pause, short:	(.)
• lag (prosodic length / elongated sound):	:
• unintelligible:	( )
• uncertain:	(word)
• Emphatic tone:	!
• Interviewer comment:	[[ ]]


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

Our featured interview is with James Dean ("J. D.") Brown, Professor of the graduate faculty of the Department of ESL at the University of Hawai'i in Manoa. Dr. Brown specializes in the areas of language testing, curriculum design, program evaluation, and research methods. He has taught all over the world—in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. He has served on the editorial boards of prestigious journals such as TESOL Quarterly, JALT Journal, *and* Language Testing, *to name a few. He has also written and edited many books and articles. Recent ones include* Mixed Methods Research for TESOL *(2014),* Cambridge Guide to Research in Language Teaching and Learning *(2015),* Introducing Needs Analysis and English for Specific Purposes *(2016), and* Statistics Corner: Questions and Answers about Language Testing Statistics *(2009).*

Dr. Brown was interviewed by J. Lake and Trevor Holster, both of whom are experienced university teachers on the editorial board of Shiken, *the language assessment publication of the JALT Testing and Evaluation (TEVAL) SIG. J. Lake is currently the Program Chair of the TEVAL SIG and the Fukuoka chapter of JALT. His research interests include language learning motivation, language assessment, and positive psychology. Trevor Holster is the Publications Chair of the JALT TEVAL SIG. He is interested in researching the integration of classroom assessment with instruction, performance-based testing, peer-assessment, and placement testing. So without further ado, to the interview!*

An Interview with J. D. Brown

J. Lake
Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University
Trevor Holster
Fukuoka University

J. Lake and Trevor Holster: *Thank you for taking the time to talk to us about classroom language assessment and your JALT2016 plenary talk. Your talk was relatively short given what you know about classroom language assessment. Would you care to add a couple of points that you had to leave out?*

J. D. Brown: For those who were not at the plenary, let me summarize my talk. I focused on three questions: (a) What happens in the brain when students learn? Answer: The myelination process which means they need *lots of practice* and *tailored feedback*; (b) Where in the brain is language stored? Answer: New research indicates that vocabulary is stored in semantic groupings all around the outside of the brain; and (c) When should language learning start? Answer: Research indicates large differences between child, adolescent, and adult learning. I also argued that integrating language teaching, classroom activities, and assessment practices requires matching learning and assessment to how humans communicate, matching age, learning, assessment, and the brain, and perhaps using rubrics/checklists to do so. I concluded that classroom assessment practices should at least involve *extensive practice and appropriate feedback* and should be *semantically organized* and *age appropriate*.

To answer your question directly, classroom assessment issues that I could not cover include at least: (a) The important differences between standardized testing and classroom assessment; (b) guidelines for writing good classroom assessment items; (c) examples of useful and legitimate classroom assessments; (d) questions that teachers should ask themselves to improve their teaching and assessment; (e) the importance of using rubrics in classroom assessment; and (f) the steps that teachers should include in using classroom assessment.

Many teachers are suspicious of testing and evaluation. The most extreme view is that any process of evaluation is harmful. How would you respond to that view?

I think that, most often, the hostility that arises is toward the sorts of high-stakes, standardized, multiple-choice testing that only results in a score (like the entrance exams in Japan, TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc.). As an ESL and EFL teacher, I, too was hostile to such testing because of the effect it had on my students. For example, when teaching communicatively using tasks and pair work, my students would argue against my methods by saying things like, "This won't be on the TOEFL." That kind of thing would raise the hackles on any teacher.

But, as I stressed in my JALT talk, classroom assessment is very different from standardized testing. Classroom assessment should be about creating *carefully tailored feedback* that is directly related to and will foster student learning. From my perspective, any teacher who is against the idea of using feedback to foster student learning simply doesn't understand how learning works.

Obviously, classroom testing has been around for a long time, but there seems to be a renewed interest in this topic in recent years? Any thoughts about why that is?

I think that some teachers are reacting to the current pervasive overemphasis on standardized testing. From my point of view, the best way to counter the negative effects of standardized testing is to do effective classroom assessment that provides useful feedback and increases learning. However, we also need to push back against the study-for-the-test mentality. I have long chanted to my students, "If you learn English, your TOEFL score will go up. If you learn TOEFL, only your TOEFL score goes up. Studying for TOEFL is a terrible way to learn English. Why not learn English? Then, you will have a good TOEFL score *and* the ability to use English."

Other causes of the renewed interest in classroom assessment probably include our greater understanding of the differences between standardized and classroom assessment, our realization that most of the assessment that goes on in students' lives actually takes place in classrooms, and our understanding that assessment feedback can and should be used to increase and foster learning.

In recent decades, we have seen major changes in theories about language learning. Has this really changed what teachers and students actually do in the classroom, especially concerning assessment and feedback?

It would be easy to lose hope in the face of how slow change occurs in actual language classrooms. One reason that change is so slow is that some individual teachers resist it. I'm not sure if that is due to laziness or simple inertia, but the fact remains that many teachers resist updating their teaching methods or delude themselves about what they are doing. For example, in doing an evaluation of the English teaching in Tunisia, I was told that *communicative* language teaching was universal in the English classes in the public schools. Indeed, the first class I observed was conducted by a *genki* young teacher, who had just returned from training in the UK, and her class was fantastic—communicative, task-based, learner-centered, and very noisy. Unfortunately, the other nine classes I observed, taught by less *genki*, older, established teachers, were what I call "pseudo-communicative" with teachers saying things like, "We communicate. I ask a question and the class answers—choral response style," and "I have them do pair work by getting students to work on written exercises together."

What I am saying is that after 40 years of observing English teaching around the world, I have found that young, recently trained teachers tend to be up-to-date while some older teachers stay current, and still other old teachers brag about how many years of teaching experience they have. Hopefully, over time, evolution will lead to "major changes in theories about language learning" resulting in real changes in "what teachers and students actually do in the classroom." Sadly, such evolution seems to be glacially slow.

In several publications, you have suggested incorporating good characteristics of the teacher's values and local values into assessment practices. Could you elaborate on how classroom teachers might do this?

All teachers have values that they bring to the classroom, but they are also under pressure from the values of others in teaching/learning situations with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents. We all do a subtle dance combining all these values in our professional lives—sometimes by compromising. For example, many *gaijin* teachers in Japan bring to the classroom the Western attitude that students who do not do the work for a course should fail, but then they are told by administrators that they cannot fail even a single student. The *gaijin* teacher is faced with a dilemma. Perhaps with an eye toward keeping her job, she decides to compromise by going along with the administrative policy in grading. Nonetheless, she teaches the students her values and tells them individually that their work and/or behavior was very much below expectations and would in fact fail in the outside world, especially overseas. That sort of compromise requires "incorporating good characteristics of the teacher's values and the local values into assessment practices" if you see what I mean.

In your new Statistics Corner book, you mention that teachers should report scores as percentages. Doesn't this encourage looking at learning as an accumulation of final products? Although this is fine for many learning points, shouldn't we also be giving feedback on where they are in the process of learning?

When I talk about presenting scores on classroom tests as percentages, I am usually making the point that these are criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) rather than norm-referenced tests (NRTs). Basically, I am

trying to get teachers to think of their classroom tests as measuring what the students *have learned or can do* related to the objectives or learning outcomes of their courses, or as you put it, "an accumulation of final products." I think that percentages accurately describe the way many teachers and students think about how much students have learned or can do. But, also, the *percentage* scores that indicate how much the students have learned on classroom assessments make a nice contrast with the *percentile* scores that indicate where the students are in the distribution of scores of standardized tests. To illustrate this difference, on the NRT standardized paper-and-pencil TOEFL, we know that a student who scores 600 was at the 84th percentile or did better than 84% of the other test takers and worse than 16%. However, we do not know what percentage of the questions that student answered correctly, nor do we care. Conversely, if a student got 80% correct on a CRT classroom assessment, we do not know by looking at the score where the student is in the distribution of scores for that class, nor do we care because we are focused on the how much that particular student learned or can do (80%).

I consciously used the phrase *learned or can do* in the previous paragraph because learning points are not just about knowledge or what students can pour into their brains, but also about the skills that they develop or what students can do with the language. And so, that brings me to your point. In assessing what students can do with the language, teachers naturally turn to forms of assessment that afford students opportunities to show what they can do. This includes various types of performance or task-based assessments where the scoring and feedback might quite appropriately take the form of a rubric or checklist, and these do not necessarily lead to percentage scores. Moreover, students in a reading course might be asked to do extensive reading, and the best way to give feedback on that might be to keep track over time of the number of pages each student has read per week. Even in intensive reading classes, assessment might focus on reading speed (not a percentage) and comprehension (probably a percentage). So percentages are a good way of thinking about CRT scores as compared to NRT scores, but common sense indicates that percentages are not the only way of keeping track of student learning or giving them feedback.

You also discussed the neurological differences between children's language acquisition, where neural plasticity allows very rapid incidental language acquisition. Adult learners lack the neural plasticity of children. The term "native speaker" is almost perfectly synonymous with childhood language acquisition. Does this mean that native speaker models of proficiency are inappropriate as the basis for adult level curriculum or assessments?

Yes, in my opinion, the so-called native speaker (NS) model is inappropriate in many situations. I have suggested elsewhere that only those students planning to immigrate to an English-speaking country or study in a university in such a country may need to aspire to a NS or native-like model. Most EFL students in Japan are not planning to immigrate or study abroad. Indeed, they are much more likely to use English in their home country in the form of English as an international language (EIL) or English as a lingua franca (ELF) and do so while speaking to other non-native speakers of English. In such cases, goals of intelligibility and comprehensibility might serve the students much better than goals of grammatical accuracy and the unattainable NS model. For example, learning EIL for business purposes or ELF for travel purposes would provide the majority of students with a target that might be attainable in the mere 600-800 hours that most Japanese study English in school. What I mean is that successfully reaching the NS (or even native-like) target necessarily takes those few students who do it decades and requires many thousands of hours of study or exposure to English—not the usual 600-800 hours that most students get. Why not give those students who are *not* planning to immigrate or study abroad—that is, the vast majority—a much more attainable and useful target like EIL or ELF? (For more about EIL and ELF, see McKay & Brown, 2015).

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions.

No, thank you! I really enjoyed attending JALT2016 in Nagoya and doing this interview.

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Steven Asquith & Nicole Gallagher

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 • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Hi, and welcome to My Share, the column which showcases the talent and invention of TLT readers, and provides a consistent stream of great ideas to stimulate your classes. Before introducing this month's selection, I would first like to extend a warm welcome to my new co-editor Nicole Gallagher, who has joined me in the My Share hot seat. I am sure she too will enjoy reviewing our readerships contributions just as much as I do.

In this edition, first, **Erin Frazier** *introduces an ingenious card game that challenges students to work together and think critically about using nonverbal communication to deduce instructions. Personally, I think this activity would wonderfully complement any university course which requires students to engage in group problem solving. The second article, by* **Timothy Bunting**, *is a fantastically simple and effective method of practicing phonics, something teachers of all levels and ages can appreciate. Third and finally,* **Jane Pryce** *provides a great way of scaffolding peer-to-peer questions during small group presentations. This not only provides a solution to that all too familiar uncomfortable silence during question time, but also gives teachers a convenient way of recording these utterances. Personally, I look forward to trying all three of these great ideas this semester, and I hope you can use them, too.*

Learning Problem Solving Through a Card Game

Erin Frazier

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Problem solving, games, critical thinking, cooperation, directions*
- Learner English Level: *Intermediate and above*
- Learner maturity: *High school and above*
- Preparation time: *15 minutes*
- Activity time: *90 minutes*
- Materials: *Handouts (Appendices A and B), playing cards, poster paper/colored pens*

This activity elicits learners' autonomy by challenging them to use critical thinking to complete a task. It does this by introducing the card game "Mao". In this game the only rule that can be verbally shared is that the person who knows how to play cannot explicitly tell the other players the rules. By dividing the class into groups of players and leaders, learners will gain strategies to implicitly instruct others and learn to analyze a situation to obtain necessary information. Through student-led discussions and presentations, this lesson highlights the importance of cooperation, along with understanding why it is essential to follow directions.

Preparation

Step 1: Print copies of the handouts Appendix A (one per student) and Appendix B (one per group).

Procedure

Step 1: First, warm up with the 'trick' quiz (Appendix A). Tell students that they have five minutes to complete the quiz and to read the questions carefully. At the end of the five minutes, check to see how many followed the directions.

Step 2: After the quiz, in small groups have the students answer two questions: (1) "What did you learn about following directions?" (2) "Why didn't or did you follow the directions?" Have the students share their ideas with the class.

Step 3: Inform the students that they will play a card game called *Mao*. This game has many rules; however, these rules cannot be verbally shared. Have groups elect a team leader. The team leader will be taught how to play Mao by the instructor while the other members of the groups brainstorm the question: If the rules to a game are not explained to you, what strategies can you use to figure out the rules? Give Appendix B to the team leaders. Have them read through the rules and instructions. The instructor should check the leaders' understanding of the game and their nonverbal strategies for explaining the rules by playing a round with them. Answer any questions and send them back to the groups as "Mao Master."

Step 4: Have leaders play four to five rounds with their groups, so the other students can grasp the rules. Walk around and help groups where needed. Take notes of the communication strategies or problem-solving techniques the students are utilizing.

Step 5: After playing the rounds, groups will separate again to work on presentations. The team leaders will present on the questions at the bottom of Appendix B. The player groups will first write out the rules they understood. Next, they will answer two questions: (1) "Did your strategies help you to understand the rules? Why or why not?" (2) "What helped you figure out the rules?" Each group presentation should include its pre-game strategies, rules, and answers to the questions.

Step 6: Group presentation.

Step 7: To end, the instructor should highlight anything shared between players and leaders. Also, discuss any strategies that students overlooked in presentations.

Conclusion

Through playing Mao, learners will understand not only the importance of following and understanding instructions (rules), they will also devise strategies to use when instructions are unclear. This will add to the development of learner autonomy and cooperation within the classroom. Strategies that students formulate during this activity can be applied widely throughout the learners' educational careers.

Appendices

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

Speedy Sounds

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Quick guide

- Keywords: *Game, pronunciation, phonics, minimal pairs*
- Learner English level: *Beginner to intermediate*
- Learner maturity: *Any*
- Preparation time: *1 minute*
- Activity time: *10-15 minutes*
- Materials: *Whiteboard and pen, around 10 words with target pronunciation prepared in advance*

Are your students struggling with phonemic awareness? Do they need more sound and spelling association practice? Try out this easy and fun game designed to work on these exact points!

Preparation

Think of 10 or so words that contain the target sounds such as *bit, bat, bet, bot, but, beat, Burt, boot, boat, bought* or other words you wish to practice. Non-existent words also work just as well.

Procedure

Step 1: Write the 10 words right at the top of the board or in a place everyone can see.

Step 2: Practice the sounds with the class, numbering each word from one to 10 as you go along. Write the phonetic symbol underneath if necessary. Get students to check each other's pronunciation.

Step 3: Split the class into two equal number teams. Assign or have the students choose a name for their teams.

Step 4: One at a time, students from each team come up to the whiteboard and each grab a pen. Have these two students face the whiteboard.

Step 5: So that everyone apart from the two at the front can see, make a number from one to 10 with your fingers. Show this number to everyone sitting down.

Step 6: Students call out the corresponding word for that number. It's a race for the two students at the front to write down the target word.

Step 7: Tally up the scores to find the winning team. Don't forget to practice the words again at the end!

Conclusion

This activity is great as either a warm-up or as a fun way to end a lesson on pronunciation that students respond well to. Giving the students greater reason to actually produce words gives them greater motivation to do so and helps raise their phonemic awareness in the process.

Peer to Peer Questions During Small-Group Presentation Tasks

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: *Presentation, questions, grading rubric*
- Learner English Level: *Pre-intermediate and above*
- Learner maturity: *University*
- Preparation time: *10 minutes*
- Activity time: *45-60 minutes*
- Materials: *Handouts (Appendices A and B)*

Many university courses require students to do graded presentations in class, and small group presentations of typically four to five students can help to alleviate the anxiety involved. Additionally, to inspire active listening, students are often encouraged to ask each other questions. However, it is stressful for students to speak in front of people, especially if they are unsure of how to say something, and *silence* is a common result when students are instructed to ask their peers questions. Furthermore, teachers must ensure that each student's question is properly noticed. This activity was designed to address such issues by creating a process that provides students with a foundation, rather than a blank slate, from which to ask questions about their classmates' presentations. Simultaneously, it provides teachers with concrete records of students' questions during the presentation session.

Preparation

Step 1: Print copies of the 'Question Preparation' handout (Appendix A) for students, and a copy of the question ideas (Appendix B) for the teacher.

Procedure

Step 1: Introduce "question-asking" at least two or three classes prior to the presentation day. Make it clear that all students should be prepared to listen, take notes, and ask at least one question to a presenting group member during a 5-minute Q&A session between presentations (use a timer for this on the day).

Step 2: Ask students to individually brainstorm a list of possible "general questions" (i.e., not topic-related—see Appendix B for examples). Set a time limit (e.g., 10-15 minutes).

Step 3: Tell students to share their lists in small groups, and to check their questions for grammar and spelling.

Step 4: Either the teacher or students write different ideas from each group on the board. This step allows time for checking vocabulary and question format, something which students can be encouraged to do themselves. Also, get students to add new ideas from the class to their own lists.

Step 6: Introduce the question cards (Appendix A). Ask students to write their name and class number, but tell them the questions should be written on presentation day. Demonstrate how students should use the cards on the day—explain that they will hand a completed "Q card" to the teacher *when* they have asked a question. Before someone can use a Q2 card, all students should have submitted a Q1 card. Encourage an atmosphere of collaboration whereby stronger students help their group members.

Step 7: Clarify "the goal" of the questions to the students. For example, lower level students may be simply required to ask a question, and perfect grammar is not important. In advanced classes, the question accuracy may be part of the grading criteria. Either way, students should know what is expected and can prepare accordingly.

Conclusion

By brainstorming general questions beforehand, students access necessary schemata and sentence structures and practice how to ask questions prior to the presentation day. This activity also ensures that weaker students have the necessary tools to ask at least one question. Additionally, the prior demonstration checks that all students know how to use the cards. In this teacher's experience, student confidence builds throughout the session—students produce questions slowly at first, but towards the end of the class, the questions flow spontaneously with no urging from the teacher. The additional bonus is that the Q cards provide a concrete record of who asked what, and students can feel assured that their questions matter.

Appendices

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

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.

Email: tlt-wired@jalt-publications.org • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/tlt-wired

Using MAVR to Bring New Dimensions to the Classroom

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Mixed, Augmented, and Virtual Realities (MAVR) is not a new concept or area of study, but it is an area that is beginning to be implemented at a larger scale in many other fields. Environments that employ these tools and concepts are being applied to medicine, engineering, and education. There are many working in this area connected to language education in Japan; the authors and many others are working to form a new JALT Special Interest Group, the MAVR SIG. The following is a primer to the current state of the research into MAVR and a discussion of where the field may be headed. Please contact the authors if you are interested in getting involved in the MAVR SIG.

Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality: How Are They Different?

Augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR) represent stages or layers of digital content integrated into the real world as displayed in Figure 1 (Milgram & Kashino, 1994).

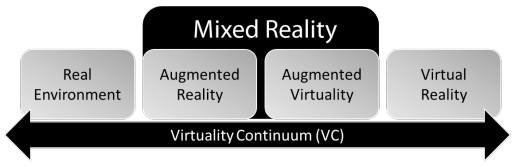

Figure 1. Milgram and Kashino's (1994) reality-virtuality continuum.

Augmented reality has more of the real world represented than virtual; the opposite is true for augmented virtuality which is mostly a simulated environment. An example of AR in this context would be a heads-up-display in the cockpit of a commercial airliner. The view out the front of the aircraft is augmented with information from the various flight instruments. Also, a more popular example would be the popular game that swept around the world in 2016, Pokémon GO, in which real environs were augmented with Pokemon characters for players to catch. An example of augmented virtuality might be a digital map of an area that is enhanced with pictures and videos from respective locations in that area. Using Milgram and Kashino's (1994) continuum, educators can now start to think about how much learning can benefit from simulation versus real-world interaction. Some affordances of AR over VR are a connection to the real world and the inclusion of face-to-face interactions.

What Has MAVR Got to Do with Language Teaching?

Integrating MAVR technologies into education has evoked growing interest among researchers and practitioners. Cheng and Tsai (2013) discussed the potential of integrating augmented reality into science education, allowing students to get a first-hand experience of objects or phenomena that cannot be seen with the naked eye. The application of MAVR in education is not limited to teaching science, but has reached humanities and arts as well (Bacca, Baldiris, Fabregat, Graf, & Kinshuk, 2014). Augmented reality techniques can in general lead to enhanced understanding of content, improved memory retention, better task performance, and increased student collaboration and motivation (Radu, 2014)— all factors which would seem to be desirable for successful language learning. Enhanced student motivation and collaboration can be attributed to the novelty of the experience as well as the possibility of adopting a more active type of learning in which students can move around the classroom.

Li, Chen, Whittinghill, and Vorvoreanu (2014) compared AR-enhanced to traditional classes and

demonstrated the positive impact of augmented reality integration into teaching mathematics and geometry. With regard to language learning and teaching, Barreira et al. (2012) reported their findings of using an AR-empowered game called MOW to teach animal names in English and Portuguese to children, indicating that those who learned through the AR game outperformed their counterparts who had learned the same material in a traditional manner. However, the potential of using MAVR technologies in language education remains an under-researched area (Godwin-Jones, 2016). Establishing the link between the two disciplines of MAVR and language education is also promising in that there are strong theoretical connections between second language acquisition and augmented/ virtual/ mixed reality, through which one could create contextualized, situated, task-based, or project-based language learning experiences in the real world (Godwin-Jones, 2016).

How Can MAVR Be Experienced?

MAVR can be practiced and applied in the classroom through two main platforms, namely educational gaming and learning materials. Several apps and wearable devices can be used to design game-based tasks and create augmented realia to experience MAVR. An increasing number of AR applications are now on offer, allowing users to experience the real world augmented by overlaying computer-generated content such as text, graphics, animation, sound, video, or GPS data. For instance, Aurasma is one of the most frequently used AR apps, available as a free download for both iOS and Android. It uses image recognition technology and geo-based information to detect real-world images or objects (triggers) and superimpose media (e.g., overlays) on them. The Aurasma Studio lets users create and share their own AR content, called Auras, in a user-friendly environment. A TED Talk demonstration of Aurasma showed how easy it is to make AR assets and "seamlessly animate the world as seen through a smartphone" (Mills & Roukaerts, 2012). Examples of other AR applications include Wikitude, Layar, and Augment. With minimal programing skills, AR applications can also be developed in game development platforms like Quake Engine and Unity 3D (see Figure 2).

To explore VR and MR, headsets or Head Mounted Displays are often used. Google Cardboard, one of the simplest virtual reality headsets, turns a smartphone into a virtual reality headset by rendering a stereoscopic vision for the viewer. It can be used in English classrooms to take students on virtual trips around the world. More recent technological innovations include the Oculus Rift and the HTC Vive. Microsoft's HoloLens is another leading system integrating both AR and VR and presenting the user with a mixed-reality experience.

Figure 2. Screenshot of the first author using Unity 3D-developed AR application.

Future Vision

In more recent attempts to employ MAVR, researchers here in Japan have tested slightly more involved implementations of AR in several different learning environments. There have already been uses of AR to connect online supplementary materials to language textbooks for a freshman English class in Japan (Hawkinson, 2014a, 2014b). Other projects related to education here in Japan include integrating AR into a new student orientation seminar and at larger scale events such as TEDxKyoto (Hawkinson, Stack, & Noxon, 2015). MAVR technologies are anticipated to become an integral part of future classrooms as AR/VR/MR-enabled devices get smaller in size and more affordable.

This area of research is exciting as it mixes areas of educational psychology, learning technology, and brain science. Mixing realities has meaningful implementations in the short term, and it seems this could be a new frontier in language education and learning in general. Those who are interested in exploring this growing new area of language learning should consider joining the MAVR SIG and check out the MAVR-related presentations at PanSIG 2017, IAFOR ACTC 2017, JALTCALL 2017, TEDxKyoto 2017, and our SIG forum at JALT2017.

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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

Hello colleagues. Have you read the interview with Annamaria Pinter, a specialist in English education for young learners and one of the plenary speakers at the JALT 2016, which was published in the previous issue of TLT? Her insightful remarks on the challenges that teachers for young learners face in professional development provoked candid conversation on this topic on the JALT TYL SIG Facebook site. As a way to develop the discussion further, we asked Chiyuki Yanase, a school owner and university lecturer, to share her unique experiences in professional development.

My Perfectly Imperfect Academic Journey

Chiyuki Yanase

Anne Lamott (1995) said, "Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people" (p. 28). This has been my mantra for my academic journey from an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at public primary schools to a part-time lecturer at the tertiary level. This journey has broadened my opportunities for professional and personal development, and granted me the opportunity to have a brand new objective and position; a researcher who inquires and shares her findings in classrooms.

It began while I was studying for a Master's degree in TESOL, specializing in Teaching Young Learners (TYL) as well as working as an ALT for the board of education in Kunitachi city in Tokyo. In 2014, having heard about my teaching background and unique position as an ALT at public primary schools, one of my tutors on the Master's program (at Aston University, U.K.) was interested, and visited one of the primary schools I worked at. She was conducting research with some co-authors to investigate the current trend of hiring, and the working conditions, of English teachers at primary schools globally. Through her observation of my class, she thought my unique position as an ALT/teacher-trainer might make an interesting contribution to her book, *LETs and NESTs: Voices, Views and Vignettes* (Copland, Garton, and Mann, 2016). Then she suggested that I write about my personal perspective towards team-teaching in primary education by writing a teaching journal for a month. At first, it was a rather overwhelming offer due to my thesis writing and busy working conditions. Then, Lamott's mantra kicked in and my daughter echoed this wisdom by saying, "Mum, you are perfectly imperfect and I don't mind it at all." Thanks to my daughter, taking this offer was one of the best decisions I ever made. Although the research project put me in an awful state of panic, it was still the best because it reminded me of the numerous benefits of keeping a teaching journal as a tool to reflect on what I do in the classroom. It also broadened my career options: I became a researcher as well as a teacher.

While participating in my tutor's research study, I managed to complete my thesis. In March 2015, I graduated with distinction and was awarded a Master's degree in TESOL, specializing in young learners. I decided to focus on young learners in my MA program due to the belief that providing outstanding quality of education to children may create a more eco-friendly, diverse, yet connected world. I had no regrets about my decision, however, it can be argued that the current research and academic field might not see teachers for young learners as competent researchers and counterparts (A. Pinter, personal communication, November 26, 2016). I experienced this upsetting trend first-hand through my own job hunting process.

University positions generally require qualifications, publications, and experience. At the beginning of my job hunting, I naively thought that I met all of these requirements. On the contrary, a candidate for a teaching position at the tertiary level is expected to already have some teaching experience at universities. Teaching in a different context is not considered to be sufficient. My setbacks were not only a lack of teaching experience at the tertiary level but also the lower perceived status of my qualification. In fact, in post-interview e-mails, my lack of teaching experience was cited as reason for rejection. This trend of disapproval of the pedagogical skills of teachers for young learners was one of the

most upsetting misconceptions I have experienced in education. A TESOL qualification in any specialized area requires the ability to demonstrate skills as a teacher-researcher. In my opinion, challenging the quality of pedagogical or research skills of the holder of such a qualification means to question the TESOL qualification itself.

Fortunately, with the connections I had built in my past during my professional development[1] and their faith in my pedagogical and English language teaching skills, in 2015 I was offered a position at a university. I had two listening classes for freshmen students in the Global Communications department and enjoyed some life-changing moments with these students. Space doesn't allow for a more detailed discussion of this, however, this teaching experience at a university enabled me to see my new role in education (teacher-researcher) and propelled me to seek more positions at the tertiary level for the following academic year.

Thanks to the professionals at the tertiary level who saw my potential and passion towards English language teaching, I had offers from four universities in Tokyo for the following academic year, 2016. Lamott's quote also played a significant role in times of disappointment in keeping my head high and maintaining my faith in the pedagogical skills I had learned from teaching in various classrooms and the theoretical knowledge I had attained from the TESOL program. I have no doubt that my former ALT career and 20 + years of teaching experience have also enabled me to do my current job at universities.

From my personal perspective, a teacher is a facilitator who provides a space for the learners and supports them to develop skills and acquire knowledge collaboratively via assigned tasks. Thus, in terms of teaching approaches and philosophy, a part-time teaching position at tertiary level is no different from that of primary school. Freshmen students in university have more sophisticated social skills and cognition than younger students. Yet, in terms of character, each one of them is as unique and intriguing as the children I have met in my past. Regarding their potential, I see no difference between freshmen students and young learners.

There are, however, differences between my previous work and the current work, especially at Oberin University, where I now work twice a week. One of the differences is the diversity of my colleagues with regard to nationality, educational background, teaching philosophy, teaching approach, and working history. The teachers' room seems like a feasible micro model for a future society in Japan. The more experienced teachers help newcomers generously. This generosity and acceptance from my colleagues has empowered me to conduct the best possible classes for my learners. I would love to see the transformation of my country from a small island to a member of a global society as demonstrated in the teachers' room. The current work also offers me more liberty in terms of course design, working conditions and time to do research projects. In fact, I am currently involved in five ongoing projects with other professionals in different settings.

In conclusion, there is a serious lack of research and publications in the TYL field (A. Pinter, personal communication, November 26, 2016). In order to develop a more child-centered collaborative learning environment in every classroom for young learners, more professionals need to join the academic circle and actively share the voices of learners and educators. For the reasons I have stated above, it is time to open the door to more teachers for young learners with TESOL. In addition, hiring teachers from various pedagogical backgrounds who approach work differently might help students to see the world from multiple perspectives.

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Chiyuki Yanase is a language school owner and a lecturer at several universities in Tokyo. She has been teaching English for young learners for over 20 years and holds a Master of Social Science degree in Teaching English for Young Learners from Aston University. She has presented at various conferences and published several articles on team-teaching, learner autonomy and teacher development. Her research focuses on collaborative learning and literacy development of young learners.

1 Study groups I have joined: ESTEEM (admin@esteemjapan.com), ETJ (http://ltprofessionals.com/ETJ) & JALT

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.*

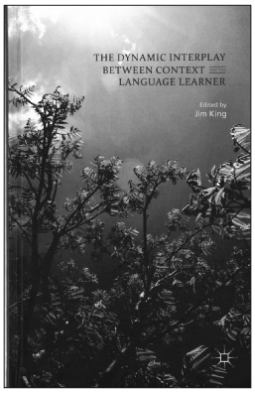
Email: reviews@jalt-publications.org • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/book-reviews

This month's column features Paul Leeming's review of The Dynamic Interplay Between Context and the Language Learner *and Selinda England's evaluation of* Skillful Reading & Writing 2.

The Dynamic Interplay Between Context and the Language Learner

[Jim King (Ed.). Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. pp. xix + 251. ISBN: 978-1-137-45712-7.]

Reviewed by Paul Leeming, Kindai University



The Dynamic Interplay Between Context and the Language Learner is an edited collection of papers written by numerous authors from contexts all over the world, and adopts a dynamic systems framework to consider the impact of context on individual language learners. Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) is an increasingly popular approach to research within second language acquisition (SLA) (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2014; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) and this volume could be considered an addition to that body of literature. DST posits that language learning involves multiple interacting variables that are constantly changing, and places particular emphasis on the context of the learner.

The content of the book is divided into three sections. The first four chapters relate to self-identity and are generally based around Dörnyei's ideal-selves model of motivation (Dörnyei, 2014). The next four chapters consider oral interaction, particularly in relation to willingness to communicate (WTC). The last three chapters of the book deal with teachers, research methodology that is appropriate to DST, assessment, and context.

The section dealing with self-identity generally considers the self within contexts, and adopts a number of different approaches to studying context. The first chapter considers social network analysis, a technique used in sociology and group dynamics, but not yet common within SLA. Other chapters use a case-study approach to study a successful language learner, or more traditional quantitative approaches to investigate identity and language learning. A particularly interesting addition to the literature is the chapter introducing *past-selves* as an influence on current behavior, somewhat mirroring the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The final chapter in this section focuses on quantitative approaches, and shows that students display identities they consider expected of them in any given social context, highlighting the dangers of making assumptions about students' behavior being a representative of deep underlying beliefs.

The next section considers WTC, and again a number of research approaches to DST are evident. The first chapter opts for a case-study approach in considering a single language learner, while the following study uses a longitudinal, mixed-methods approach to study the issue of Japanese student talk time in class. The authors find that, contrary to the findings of King (2013), when given suitable opportunities, students can talk for large parts of the class, and silence may not always be an attractor state. King revisits the data from his study in 2013 for the next chapter, and examines interviews with several students relating to reasons for silence in the language classroom, supported by observation data used for prompted recall. The final chapter in this section relates to the teaching of turn-taking in the Japanese language classroom.

The final section has three quite different papers. It begins by considering teachers, and their views on learning grammar in a teacher education course, and again a case study approach is adopted. The next chapter is a more theoretical discussion of research methodology, and in particular the appropriateness of mixed-method, longitudinal studies

in a DST framework. The final chapter introduces a balanced approach to assessment, stating that the purpose of testing is ultimately to remove the context, in order to achieve pure measurement, and arguing that we should consider aspects of context that may be considered to have an impact on performance.

Generally the chapters are well written, and provide highly accessible examples of research that considers context to be central to the findings. Also of benefit for readers in Japan, many of the studies are either based in Japan, or conducted by researchers who have spent a considerable amount of time in Japan, making them relevant and interesting.

Although a valuable collection of papers, there were a few small points to note that should be addressed. The book professed to adopt a DST framework, and yet many of the studies were rather simplistic in terms of the methodology, with case studies of small numbers of participants. Although these studies offered valuable insights and DST offers a framework for interpretation, it is not clear how they show a new direction in terms of methodological approaches to research. Also, although acknowledged by King in the introduction, some of the chapters have limited reference to DST, which is the framework for the book, and reasons for their inclusion are not clear.

In conclusion, this collection of articles is a welcome addition to the literature focusing on the importance of context within SLA, and the increased interest in adopting a DST approach to research. I would recommend this book particularly to researchers who are interested in understanding the potential impact of context on learning.

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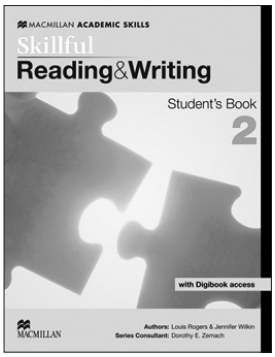
Skillful Reading & Writing 2

[Louis Roger & Jennifer Wilkin. London, UK: Macmillan, 2013. pp. 110. ¥3,024. ISBN: 978-0-230-43194-2.]

Reviewed by Selinda England, Tokai University



Part of the Macmillan Academic Skills series, *Skillful Reading & Writing 2* is an intermediate level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course book which divides reading and writing skills equally over ten units. Each unit is thematically based, with topics reflective of university and college majors, such as technology, psychology, business studies, and sociology. Units are divided into two sections: reading with vocabulary, writing and grammar skills, and critical thinking development. Additionally, *Skillful Reading & Writing 2* offers users an online digital resource containing: *Digibook* (a virtual copy of the textbook with embedded audio), *Skillful Practice* (additional exercises for self-study), and video resources.

English for Academic Purposes courses require materials that prepare non-native language speakers with the skills and strategies to become successful language users and academics. Academic compositions require students to synthesize, summarize, paraphrase and cite sources based on research; therefore, materials which stimulate interest and discussion, and offer alternative approaches to language learning, may be more beneficial (Hyland, 2013). *Skillful Reading & Writing 2* offers numerous reading and writing strategies for learners. Reading is a large component of academic study. According to Grabe and Stoller (2013), learners should be aware of reading strategies, and aim to become "strategic readers" (p. 146). Reading strategically involves learning and applying a strategy, and exposure to models of the strategy in use. From the first unit of *Skillful Reading & Writing 2*, students utilize strategies such as underlining parts of speech in a text or highlighting verbs. However, some problems are present. In Unit 2, the concept of mind mapping is introduced to students as a gap fill exercise with two practice mind maps provided. Despite this, the writing task at the end of the unit erases all men-

tion of mind mapping, and instead, asks students to brainstorm ideas for writing in a chart format. In addition, passive voice is introduced early in Unit 3, yet many linguists agree this tone is very challenging for language learners and should be one of the last skills presented (Parrot, 2010).

Academic writing materials should stimulate students to write and produce work of high quality. Tomlinson (2013) stresses the need for EAP materials to be "humanizing" (p. 141), a concept which invites learners to tap into the psyche of emotions as a means of learning. Continuing, Tomlinson (2013) notes materials which offer "problem solving [or] problem posing questions" (p. 143) may aid in the assistance of promoting higher-order thinking skills. Humanistic language can be found repeatedly in this course book. One example seen in Unit 7 asks readers to "Look at the picture. How does it make you feel?" (p. 67). The same unit poses a critical thinking task in which students are to form groups and debate whether fears are a cause for worry. Discussions with others may stimulate students to write viewpoints which may be more balanced. Furthermore, the personal pronoun "you" is used repeatedly throughout when explaining functions, language structures and strategies, drawing students into seemingly personalized course materials. An example on page 28 exemplifies this point: "When you read a factual article, look for definitions of topic-specific vocabulary you are not familiar with." The humanizing language interspersed throughout this textbook is one of its strongest assets.

Skillful Reading and Writing 2 also incorporates a variety of approaches to building vocabulary which includes: introducing academic keywords inside colorful boxes; including word families based on a general theme (e.g., types of food); matching exercises featuring previews of new words; and tasks which call upon students to actively process and play with the language itself (e.g., change verbs into nouns). Such variation is likely to stimulate students to explore lexical items in new and creative ways.

The plethora of vocabulary, reading and writing strategies in *Skillful Reading & Writing 2* appealed greatly to students. Pupils noted the guided answers to critical thinking questions were especially helpful, such as those seen in Unit 3 when discussing amateur space exploration: "I think ...'s discovery was very important because..." (p. 29). Guided practice is noted in most discussion-based tasks, and surprisingly, students often later utilized these verbalized phrases in their writing. In addition, the textbook allows for practice in short, manageable exercises. Each unit's grammar, reading, writing or vocabulary task contains a maximum of four exercises each, which many students cited as ideal for homework without being burdensome.

Skillful Reading & Writing 2 is suitable for intermediate EAP reading and writing programs. The plethora of pedagogical approaches for acquiring vocabulary, building fluency and stimulating writing will certainly interest those teachers who appreciate humanistic and alternative learning methods.

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Recently Received

Steve Fukuda & Julie Kimura

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

Recently Received Online

An up-to-date index of books available for review can be found at <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

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].

** Classroom English* — Sellick, A., Bury, J., & Yoshida, S. Tokyo: Shumei University Publishing, 2016. [Bilingual classroom English handbook for English teachers].

! 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].

! 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].

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].

** Gateway (2nd edition)* — Spencer, D. UK: Macmillan Education, 2016. [7-level course incl. workbook, teacher's book, digital book, test generator, Macmillan Sounds app, and online practice].

** 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].

! 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].

** Power Reading* — Nation, P., & Malarcher, C. UK: Compass Publishing, 2016. [3-level reading course using the 4-strand approach incl. student book CD, downloadable MP3, online practice, and word, unit, and review tests].

** Reader's Forum* — Knudsen, J. Tokyo: Nan'un-do Publishing, 2017. [4-level reading course incl. student audio CD, classroom CD, and teacher's manual].

** Science for Fun* — Hattori, K., Yamashita, J., Hasegawa, Y., & Perkins, R. Tokyo: Kinseido Publishing, 2017. [15-unit course using articles from American science magazines for children incl. audio CD, teacher's manual with passage translations, dictation sheets, and word tests].

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].

** Top-up Listening (2nd edition)* — Cleary, C., Holden, B., & Cooney, T. Tokyo: Abax, 2014. [3-level listening course incl. student audio CD, teacher's notes, and online practice].

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].

Books for Teachers (reviewed in *JALT Journal*)

Contact: Greg Rouault — jj-reviews@jalt-publications.org

L2 Selves and Motivations in Asian Contexts — Apple, M.T., Da Silva, D., & Fellner, T (Eds.). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2017.

The Usage-Based Study of Language Learning and Multilingualism — Ortega, L., Tyler, A., Park, H.I., & Uno, M. (Eds.) Washington, DC, US: Georgetown University Press, 2016.

「グローバル人材育成」の英語教育を問う — Various Authors. Tokyo: Hituzi Publishing, 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

In this issue's Teaching Assistance I interview Naoto Miyazono, a university student who volunteered to assist teachers during three semesters at an elementary school. A senior education major, he also teaches part-time at a private cram school and helps conduct workshops sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology for Junior High School teachers.

JALT2017

43rd Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition

November 17–20, 2017

Tsukuba International Congress Center (Epochal Tsukuba), Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan

An Interview with Naoto Miyazono, an Elementary School Class Volunteer Teacher

David McMurray

International University of Kagoshima

Naoto Miyazono is currently completing a three-week practicum teaching English at a junior high

school. In July he plans to sit an exam for his teacher's license. To strengthen his chances of teacher certification he completed a summer internship at a language software company in Taipei and co-presented at an international conference hosted by the English Teachers Association Republic of China.

Figure 1. Naoto Miyazono (third from right) interns with a team of educational software developers in Taiwan.

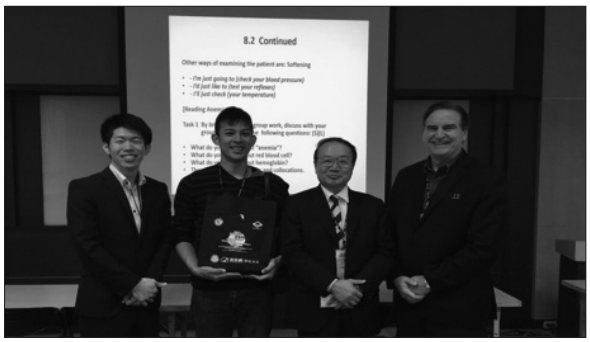

Figure 2. Naoto Miyazono (second from left) flanked by his teaching assistant and two education teachers at an international conference in Taipei.

David McMurray: If you want to be a junior high school teacher, why did you volunteer to assist teachers with English and other subjects at an elementary school?

Naoto Miyazono: I like children and I like teaching so I volunteered to be a teaching assistant at an elementary school near my university. Once a week during three semesters I assisted homeroom teachers with grade 3, grade 6, and physically-challenged classes. I'm currently in my final year of university majoring in education and hope to become a junior high school teacher, so I think I should know how students are learning English from the very beginning.

DM: So, how was your debut class as a volunteer teacher?

NM: On my first day I met two teachers. The grade 3 class was led by a young woman. When I slid open the door to enter her class, she was loudly scolding them. During the entire year the classes were active so the children became noisy and chatted during classes. Scolding took place whenever noise levels seemed to bother the class. I didn't have the confidence to emulate that technique.

DM: What was the other teacher like?

NM: A veteran female teacher was in charge of grade 6. She would sometimes scold errant students, but always in a quiet way. Seen from a distance, a parent might think that students feared her too, but over the course of one year I believe the students demonstrated a sincere interest in what they were learning.

I came away from my first day back at school thinking that even if children are noisy and chatting in loud voices, teachers must be calm especially when scolding children. I decided right then and there that when I help and talk with students, I'll always try to be calm. When stressed out, teachers can't teach properly.

DM: Can you recall your own elementary school days?

NM: Based on my observations this year, a lot seems to have changed since I was in grade five. To be honest, at that time teachers were to be feared. When I was an elementary school student I recall that my teachers were always lecturing in class. I don't remember the teachers in charge of my classes ever having us do pair or group work. The only times we rose from our seats was to answer a question, serve lunch, or study physical education and home economics. By the time I reached grade five, the Ministry of Education had introduced English classes in schools. It wasn't a formal subject, it was an option, so some classmates learned to use computers instead of foreign languages. Those new classes were also teacher-centered and we passively learned. We didn't have an assistant language teacher.

DM: I understand that you have been studying child-centered and constructivist approaches that Paul (2003) suggests are effective for children "trying to make sense of the world" and because "by nature, a child is an active learner." (p.173). What teaching method do you suggest for elementary school students?

NM: The elementary school students I observed took part in different kinds of learning experienc-

es in every subject, whether it was math, science or English. I've come to believe that active learning methodology can improve learning in Japan. Constructivism theory, the idea that learners can build their own understanding, seems applicable at elementary school, junior high school, high school and university levels. All school teachers should innovate and use this method.

DM: Setting up the classroom seems to be a key part of active learning. When students are in rows in classroom style, it is very easy for students to become passive learners. In classrooms with stationary chairs and desks, students work in pairs or stand up. To allow students to experience a more interactive and conversational educational environment, don't you think round tables for discussion and high-tech accessories for interactivity would be better for an active learning classroom?

NM: Standard classrooms with movable chairs and desks do not hinder students from quickly getting in groups to collaborate on a question or activity. I heard the teacher ask students to make groups at tables, by moving four or five desks together to form one group, or by putting desks in a circle or a semi-circle to encourage collaboration.

For example, during one class, students were discussing in a group made by putting four desks together. Once students are talking in groups, however, using the chalkboard in a teacher-centered style becomes difficult. It is hard to get their attention.

DM: I see, perhaps student-to-student discussion could be viewed as a positive result? Active learning is a student-centered approach. Discussion is one of the most common strategies for promoting active learning. If the objectives of a course are to promote long-term retention of information, to motivate students toward further learning, to allow students to apply information in new settings, then discussion seems preferable to lecturing. What major difficulties did you encounter during discussion sessions?

NM: At first, I couldn't get along with the children at all. I tried to talk with them, but they felt some inhibition to chat with me. I was disappointed in myself so I tried different ways to build up a relationship of trust. I tried to listen intently to what the children were talking to each other about at all times.

DM: From your experience, how was teaching classes of children with special needs?

NM: I asssisted with one class for students with physical disabilities. That class was very hard to teach, but I came to realize those students are highly motivated. They always tried to answer questions from the teacher. However, the problem seems to be that teachers must help children closely on a one by one basis, rather than group learning.

DM: By 2020, English will become a subject for fifth- and sixth-graders, instead of a "foreign language activity" class where children are only expected to experiment with English by speaking and listening. The annual number of English classroom hours will increase to 70 from the current 35, and reading and writing will be taught for the first time.

NM: Children in grade six are used to school life. I observed that especially boys could easily become very bored and fall asleep. The teacher in charge advised me that, "Getting angry quickly is neither good for the teacher nor for these children." Active learning could alleviate this boredom in the higher grades. I think that if many teachers add active learning components to their English lessons, language education in Japan will change greatly. Children can make themselves understood to other people. Active learning should be started now without waiting for 2020.

DM: Along with the curriculum change requiring English classes, the foreign language activity classes will become mandatory for third- and fourth-graders.

NM: Students in grade three are very active and sometimes they are very noisy. At the start of each class, the teacher in charge asked the children to meditate quietly. She created an atmosphere in which students should be silent. When one or two students still tended to be noisy and chat, I heard voices in the classroom pleading: "Be quiet. Please be quiet." When I saw that scene, I was surprised and impressed. The class as a whole was taking responsibility for learning.

DM: Active learning is a teaching method that strives to more directly involve students in the learning process. In active learning, the student constructs learning–often in collaboration with other students. Bonwell and Eison (1991) claim that when actively learning, students participate in the learning process and students participate best when they are doing something besides passively listening. Did you notice this effect in your classes?

NM: I noticed in one class, children had to raise their hands before answering questions. An individual would shout out, "Yes!" and then the teacher in charge let them reply. In the other class, the teacher

in charge freely allowed answers to be given without the raising of hands. To see this stark difference was very interesting for me. When children studied in a cooperative group they freely asked each other questions and freely responded. Perhaps if it were necessary to conduct a teacher-directed class, I would try letting one student answer on behalf of the group. Active learning, however, means students engage with books, participate in the class, and collaborate with each other.

DM: During your practicum with junior high school students are you going to stick to the teacher-centered lecture style that you grew up with?

NM: The head teacher advised, "If you are popular and get along with the students, you can create good classes for them. If you do that, they will follow your lectures carefully and answer you positively." Perhaps a teacher with charisma could continue with the lecture style of teaching. For me, a lecture style of teaching could create problems if children become bored and they could fall asleep or simply chat. Therefore, classes that include chances for pair work and group work seem to be an ideal approach. In general, thirty minutes of pair work and group work should be included in every fifty-minute class. The advantage of adding group work is that if some children fall behind and can't find the answer, they can cooperate with other students to get it. My role could be supporting groups.

DM: What goal will you place at the core of your lesson plans?

NM: As a volunteer I was told, "The teacher can't make a perfect class every day. However, we ought to prepare our classes to help children understand." During three semesters I saw many classes that were not perfect, but I realized that teachers were making great efforts. The teachers always hoped that children would study harder. Teachers hoped the young students would develop into good adults. This goal was tantamount. It seems necessary for teachers as well as parents to raise children to be productive members of society, too.

DM: Please leave us with a final message for readers who might want to participate in volunteer teaching activities?

NM: Before beginning this volunteer activity, I didn't have very much confidence. It was the first time I'd ever taught children. But I learned the power of interaction. I can play a supporting role in helping many children to learn. I tended to spoon-feed and help older students in my private school individually so they can get the task at hand done quickly and help keep things going smoothly. At times, however, this inhibits the student's motivation to learn and study. By pairing two students together to study and learn, they can ask and answer each other's questions, giving them a chance to explore and discuss. I could stand by and try to help them discuss critically. Most importantly I was able to confirm that active learning is a viable method for children in elementary school. But I have to admit, it was also fun for me to be a volunteer teacher.

Figure 3. Volunteer encouraging a student to make more guesses during classtime.

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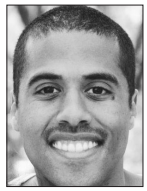

Vikki Williams and Charles Moore

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 • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/psg

Publishing Conference Presentations

Charles Moore

Concordia University

Presentations and the Potential for Publication

For TESOL instructors looking to begin their writing career, giving a presentation at a conference and subsequently publishing the content of the presentation in a journal or conference proceedings is a brilliant way to begin. As is well known within the circle of educators in Japan, publishing one's work is an essential part of career development and one that cannot be ignored for long (Beaufait, Daly, Edwards, Moore, & Ockert 2015; Beaufait, Edwards, & Muller, 2014). Japanese universities value having their teachers accomplished in carrying out and publishing research (MEXT, 2009), and this includes those that teach English as a second language. The good news is that presenting at a conference is not a very difficult hurdle to overcome. Within Japan, both the JALT International Conference and the JALT PanSIG Conference offer the yearly opportunity to submit presentation proposals, and the additional opportunity to publish your presentation in their post-conference proceedings publication as well.

Besides the fact that you can publish your work post-conference, giving presentations in itself has several key benefits for one's career that would be wise to remember. A post from the APA Science Student Council lists some benefits of making presentations that are also applicable to those in the language acquisition and TESOL fields. Benefits listed include: "Contribute to and learn about the most recent advances in YOUR field", "Learn how to talk about your data", "Contribute to your overall research profile", and "Meet other researchers in your field and potential contacts for future positions" (Dunn, 2007). Notice that the reasons listed can both enhance one's resume and bring personal growth as an educator. If we only rely on a few methods to develop professionally, such as our personal reading intake or sharing ideas between peers, this can consequently stunt our growth as teachers. Pettis (2002) says about development as a teacher, that "Employers and professional organizations may support our pursuit of professional development by funding us to the occasional conference or organizing a workshop, but as educators we must make a personal commitment to our own ongoing professional growth" (p. 395). Giving presentations brings growth to us as educators regardless of whether we publish their content or not. That being said, publishing is a highly desired goal, and the theme of this article, so let us move on to how to transform our presentation into a workable manuscript that can be submitted for publication.

From Presentation to Manuscript

There are different styles of conference presentations, but the most common is the paper or research presentation that revolves around a monologue towards the audience featuring PowerPoint slides or another type of visual aid (Lehman, n.d.). A good beginning to transforming your presentation to a written format is to first find the thesis statement of your presentation, as it is going to be the pivotal idea which the arguments of your paper will hinge upon (Edwards & Moore, 2015). Once your thesis statement is put into writing, then your methods, description of study, ideas for future research regarding your topic, and the other components of the outline can follow suit. For your speaking presentation, you may have organized the flow of your content by speaking points, but this will need a more organized structure for your paper. For another reference dealing with formatting an outline, please see Ockert's (2015) "Making a working outline: The basic organization of a paper" for an alternate and more detailed example of a manuscript outline.

Figure 1 also shows an example of the possible organizational change that is necessary when transforming a presentation into a manuscript. This is based on a prior structure given in Edwards and Moore's (2015) article on constructing a thesis statement. Following a format such as this one will help

create a paper with a structure that should align well with journal submission guidelines.

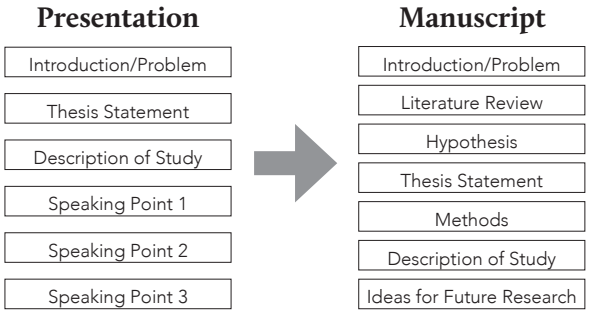

Figure 1. Manuscript conversion figure.

A Word on Content

The next step will be inserting the content of your presentation into the outline you created. If your presentation was information rich, you might have to adjust your writing to be very dense and concise in order to meet word limits. Another problem that writers can encounter is finding they actually need to add more research or define their content more:

> Because of time constraints, oral presentations usually cover only a fragment of the information associated with a research study or program development description. Journal articles based on oral presentations frequently must be expanded and reorganized to cover their topics more thoroughly. (MLA Publications, n.d.)

Lastly, remember to keep the theme of your paper consistent and clear; remember, more than just presenting the facts through your writing, you need to present an intriguing and well laid out argument to the reader. (Drake & Sneider, 2011). When your peers read your paper, they will probably only remember the problem and solution presented in your writing. Everything else is there to support those central ideas.

Conclusion

Presenting is an excellent opportunity for those aspiring to develop themselves and break into the field of publishing their work. If you do not have the confidence to begin to write an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, an alternative initial step is signing up to make a presentation at a conference in your area. If that conference also publishes a proceedings afterwards, that could be a chance to begin your writing career. Schrager (2010) suggests that the reason why some people who make presentations at conferences do not follow through in publishing their work is because they "may not have the tools (knowledge, academic support, time) to take their presentation through the process of publication" (p. 268). If this is the case, please consider using peer support for feedback and guidance, such as a more experienced colleague at work. The JALT Writers' Peer Support Group is also always available if you need help vetting your own writing, so please contact them if you need support! And lastly, always remember that publishing work takes time. Many writers spend a great deal of time and effort on one paper before it is finally accepted for publication (Drake & Sneider, 2011). So remain tenacious and keep writing!

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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

Ideas for Error Correction and Assessment of Academic Writing

Dear Readers,

In our previous column (*TLT* issue 41.2), *(Writer's) Blocked in Beppu* wrote to us with a request for advice on how to get started with teaching academic writing:

> *...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?*

Given the large size of this topic, we decided to spread our answer into two parts. Whereas last issue we provided a broad overview of the teaching process for academic writing, in this column we'll offer up some general advice for how to correct errors and assess writing skills. This is still a huge topic, but we hope to at least get you pointed in the right direction.

When giving corrective feedback on academic writing to students, there are a few key things to keep in mind. First, know that how you correct errors can help students improve the cohesion, coherence, and comprehension of their compositions. In addition, your corrections help teach proper form of academic structure and prose in longer compositions. Through your attentive comments, students learn how to introduce their topics, support their points, and provide adequate analysis. In addition, you can do a lot to help your learners avoid plagiarism.

Different Ways to Provide Corrective Feedback

There are different ways to go about correcting writing mistakes. No one way is best; it will depend on student levels, your teaching style, and the amount of time available. One question to ask yourself is how far you want to go with corrections. For example, you could take out your red pen and just completely fix each mistake, or you could fix none of them and just provide hints as to where mistakes are by adding some red circles or coded marks to their papers. In the former approach, you are doing a lot of the work for the students, so you'll need to have another way to hold them accountable for learning these points, some of which they'll not have learned yet. One way to do that is to conduct a writing test that requires each student to memorize their final corrected version and reproduce it for the exam (Munby & Zemach, 2015), a technique we'll outline in more detail below.

Another way to provide corrective feedback is to not actually correct any mistakes at all — just provide hints where mistakes are via a system of coded marks, such as (WW) *wrong word*, (SP) *spelling*, (VW) *vague word*, (A) *article*, or (SS) *sentence structure*. Students then re-write their essays and hopefully attend to their errors. This approach is good in that it forces students to suss out problems and learn in the process, but beware—you may have to live with less-than-perfect papers in the end. It wouldn't be practical to keep going until perfection is reached. But if you're okay with this, then that will work fine. You can find error correction codes in the back of many academic writing textbooks. We suggest starting there and gradually developing your own approach and style.

A third way to conduct error correction is to work down the middle—correct some mistakes, perhaps the most egregious ones, but also do some hinting, maybe on errors you know are well within their ability to comprehend (or vice versa!). Especially for these sorts of careless mistakes, just a simple underline without any explanation may be all that is needed for your students to be more attentive to this particular point. If you try this method, it can be very helpful to add margin notes or comments between the lines for short grammar/usage explanations. For example, you could make a note about why beginning a sentence with *But* is not a good idea... This process would entail more work for you, on the other hand, so if you have dozens

of students, it may not be practical. A good work-around could be to provide a pre-fab list of common mistakes and their explanations, all of which are numbered. When you encounter these problems on a student's paper, all you need to do is write the number of the explanation. The students can then look up the explanations themselves (Barker, 2015). Also, remember that the time to correct mistakes is not limited to when you are going over their papers. While students are writing in class, you can monitor and help them as needed.

Finally, another idea is to teach your students how to provide useful peer feedback by checking their partners' work. If you're interested in peer assessment, there is a lot of literature and information online. A quick google of *EFL peer assessment strategies for academic writing* will find a large amount of information for you. If you go this route, we recommend that you do so only after you are very confident in your approach to corrective feedback. The clearer you are about how you do it, the easier it will be to teach your students.

Ideas for Assessing Writing

As for assessing academic writing, one idea we've previously mentioned is to have students reproduce their short composition from memory and subtract points for each mistake—a point or two for small errors, three or more for larger problems. This works well in classes where students have access to a grammar textbook for reference so that they can look up information on their mistakes. Most students should be able to memorize short compositions up to a few hundred words—your typical five paragraph essay—but obviously not for longer term papers. This test format puts grammar accuracy at a premium. It will challenge students to prepare thoroughly by writing out their composition again and again until they get it right. Despite the seeming drudgery of this task, there is a simple and effective beauty to it. Students are required to pay attention to their grammar studies in class because they know they'll be assessed on it. During their preparation time, they will be reading and writing out perfectly accurate sentences they wrote many times. This is hard work that will pay off in increasingly accurate compositions. Over time, with luck, their papers will be easier for you to mark.

A more traditional approach to assessing writing is to use an analytic rating scale rubric. After students submit their final draft of a paper, you take your rubric and assign marks on the various constructs you choose, such as *Clarity & Development of Ideas*, *Overall Organization*, *Using Sources*, *Grammatical Accuracy*, or *Academic Style*. Within each construct, simply mark each on a scale from 1 to 8 (or whatever) and have some descriptors to help guide your grading. You should also share this rubric with your students so they know what they have to do to succeed. There is a lot of freedom in marking this way, but if you're getting started, it can help to go with a pre-made one. Feel free to use our *Writing Assessment Rubric Descriptors* handout, which you can download from the online version of this article at http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/dear-tlt

To summarize, the way you provide corrective feedback and assess your students' writing can be a very useful way for them to improve their overall writing skills. Whichever approach you use, strive to be consistent yet flexible. It will take some time for you to develop your preferences for error correction and assessment. We recommend trying out a few different ways and seeing what works best for you. Good luck!

References

Barker, D. (2015). *English writing manual, 2nd edition*. Nagoya, Japan: Back to Basics Press.

Munby, I., & Zemach, D. (2015). *Read to write compositions, 2nd edition*. Nagoya, Japan: Back to Basics Press.

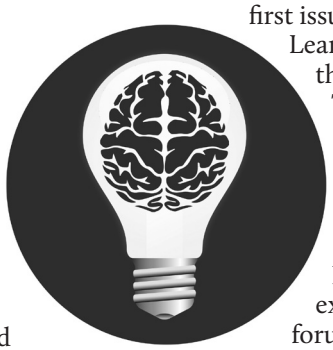

Joël Laurier & Robert Morel

JALT currently has 26 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) available for members to join. This column publishes an in-depth view of one SIG each issue, providing readers with a more complete picture of the different SIGs within JALT. For information about SIG events, publications, and calls for papers, please visit http://jalt.org main/groups.

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

Critical Thinking SIG

Origins and Precepts by David Gann and James Dunn



The Critical Thinking SIG was initially formed out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the watered down representations of critical thinking offered in most commercially produced textbooks. The co-founders, David Gann and Roehl Sybing, started the SIG in 2010 believing these representations conflated the more marketable critical dispositions with critical thinking skills. They saw critical thinking being increasingly used as a buzzword. The original focus of the SIG was on trying to help people distinguish instruction of critical thinking as a distinct discipline, dissociable from lessons focusing on global issues or sociopolitical problems. A need was seen to create a social space where these issues could be discussed for the promotion of pedagogically sound teaching methods based on a foundation representative of the tradition of critical thinking from Dewey through Watson and Glaser to the more recent works of Ennis, Elder and others.

Rather than using a definition of CT to build walls, the CT SIG acts as a good guide for its members to help them understand critical thinking in a more comprehensible manner. In 2015, the SIG expanded its focus to include areas of overlap shared between critical thinking and the three other higher-order thinking skills: problem solving, decision making, and creative thinking.

Publications

In the spring of 2014, the CT SIG core officers started collecting "best-of" articles from the CT SIG newsletter, CT Scan. This idea eventually morphed into a peer-reviewed journal that showcases member contributions. In November of 2014, the first issue of Critical Thinking and Language Learning (CTLL) was published. Since then, the CTLL has continued to grow. The third issue was published in November of 2016.

Events

With its present coordinator, James Dunn, the CT SIG also started to expand from its mainstay activities of forums at PanSIG and JALT International. In addition, the CT SIG held an event for JALT Yokohama Chapter members, co-sponsored an event in Nagoya with the Speech, Drama & Debate SIG in the summer of 2016, and kept a dedicated room for CT SIG members to present in during the ETJ Expo in Sendai. This year it is sponsoring a plenary speaker at Pan SIG 2017, and is holding a one-day event with the BRAIN SIG in Tokyo in September of 2017.

The CT SIG hopes to continue to expand its activities and publications in order to help educators in Japan, and beyond, develop their definitions of critical thinking and learn how it can be utilized in the language learning classroom.

Contact details: coordinator@jaltcriticalthinking.org

Malcolm Swanson

This column serves to provide our membership with important information and notices regarding the organisation. It also offers our national directors a means to communicate with all JALT members. Contributors are requested to submit notices and announcements for JALT Notices by the 15th of the month, one and a half months prior to publication.

Email: jalt-focus@jalt-publications.org • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/jalt-focus

2017年第1回総会開催通知

Notice of the First 2017 JALT Ordinary General Meeting (OGM)

日時:2017年6月18日(日)

Date: June 18, 2017 (Sunday)

時間:12:30 – 13:30

Time: 12:30 – 13:30

場所:松山大学、樋又キャンパス、H2A (2階)

Location: Room H2A, 2F Himata Campus, Matsuyama University

- 地図:https://www.matsuyama-u.ac.jp/soshiki/110/bunkyo.html
- Map: Number 21 on the map at the following URL in English: https://www.matsuyama-u.ac.jp/site/english/bunkyo.html

議案 / Agenda:

- 第1号議案 議長選出 / Item 1. Determination of chairperson
- 第2号議案 議事録著名人選出 / Item 2. Determination of signatories
- 第3号議案 平成28年度事業報告 / Item 3. Business Report (2016/04/01-2017/03/31)
- 第4号議案 平成28年度決算報告 / Item 4. Financial Report (2016/04/01-2017/03/31)
- 第5号議案 平成28年度監査報告 / Item 5. Audit Report (2016/04/01-2017/03/31)
- 第6号議案 平成29年度事業計画 / Item 6. Business Plan (2017/04/01-2018/03/31)
- 第7号議案 平成29年度予算 / Item 7. Budget (2017/04/01-2018/03/31)
- 第8号議案 その他の重要事項 / Item 8. Other important issues

* 5月下旬に、会員の皆様に議案詳細、各報告書のリンク先、及び個別の不在者投票へのリンク先をEメールでご案内いたします。

* An email containing details of the agenda, including links to the various reports that will be presented, and a link to an individualized ballot will be sent to you at the end of May.

Eメールがお手元に届きましたら、不在投票の方法に従って投票をしてください。

本総会は、特定非営利活動法人(NPO)としての地位を保つ為に必要なもので、過半数以上の会員の皆様による出席(定足数)をもって、正式に開催することができます。

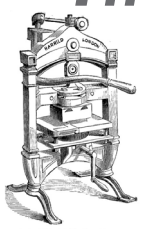
幸い当学会では、会員の皆様に向けて電子投票システムを提供させていただいており、不在投票をしていただくことで、本総会の出席者としてみなすことができます。

お手数をおかけいたしますが、ご支援とご協力のほどよろしくお願いします。

When you receive the email regarding the OGM, please follow the instructions on how to complete the absentee ballot. It is important for us to have a majority of JALT members present at the OGM for it to be valid, and holding a valid OGM is necessary for us to maintain our status as a nonprofit organization (NPO). Fortunately, you can vote online by absentee ballot and be counted present for the meeting, as per the JALT Constitution.

Thank you very much for being a member of JALT and for your continued support.

The Language Teacher needs you!



If you are interested in writing and editing, have experience in language education in an Asian context, and are a JALT member, we need your help. *TLT* is currently recruiting proofreading and editorial staff.

Learn a new skill, help others, strengthen your résumé, and make a difference! If you would like to join our team, please contact the editors:
<tlt-editor@jalt-publications.org>

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。バイリンガリズム、CALL、大学外国語教育、共同学習、ジェンダーと語学学習、グローバル問題、日本語教育、自主的学習、語用論・発音・第二言語習得、児童語学教育、生涯語学教育、試験と評価、教材開発 等。

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
- Group (5 or more) ¥8,500/person—one set of publications for each five members グループ会員(5名以上を対象とし、JALT出版物は5名ごとに1部): 1名 ¥8,500

http://jalt.org/main/membership

Information

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

JALT Central Office

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t: 03-3837-1630; f: 03-3837-1631; jco@jalt.org

Joining JALT

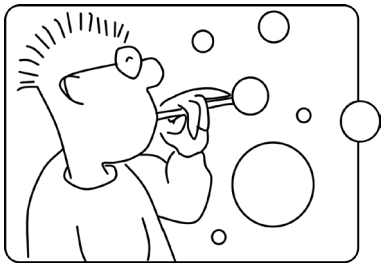
Use the attached *furikae* form at Post Offices ONLY. When payment is made through a bank using the *furikae*, the JALT Central Office receives only a name and the cash amount that was transferred. The lack of information (mailing address, chapter designation, etc.) prevents the JCO from successfully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

Scott Gardner *old-grammarians@jalt-publications.org*

Soapbox Time

The other day while taking a shower (which is not to say that I haven't taken any since then), I observed that the bar of soap in the dish had been reduced to a small, warped, transparent green rectangle resembling a slimy, half-melted microscope slide used as part of some inhuman 19th century biological experiment. This brought to mind an important assignment I had given myself about a week before but had continually neglected to do, which was of course to replace the soap in the shower.

Trying to use the remaining shard in the dish would have involved a careful lather-dance requiring equal efforts in manual dexterity, gentleness, force, and grace, so as not to lose it down the drain, crumble it to bits in my hand, or perhaps even lacerate myself with its sharp edges. However, having woken up just three or so minutes ago, I knew I would not be up to such a task. So, admitting failure in the timely fulfillment of my assignment, I got out of the shower and took a few cold, wet steps toward the cabinet under the sink to retrieve a new bar.



I quickly located a promising squarish container in a basket on a lower shelf, ripped it open, and returned with its contents to the warm cocoon of the shower room without undue exposure to the icy February morning air. But I am not always so lucky in under-sink expeditions, and this was my reason for making "replace the soap" a formal project on which I had hoped to bring all my faculties to bear while in a relaxed state, without the distractions of time, temperature, or wet nakedness. For under the bathroom sink, behind the towels and in the dark corners, there are things lying in wait, unheard-of gelatinous things in fluorescent colors, strangely shaped entities that seem designed to startle, odoriferous creations defying adequate description—despite the fact that, ironically, they are covered with labels.

I'm talking about the plethora of personal care products: shampoos, conditioners, body washes, body wipes, face scrubs, elbow scrubs, neck tighteners and dead skin looseners. The more exotic ones mix their standard smelly ingredients with substances you'd be hard pressed to imagine, such as salt, sand, plankton, coconut oil, olive oil, motor oil, microbeads and nanoscrunchies. (Note: personal hygiene products in the United States are now prohibited by law from including tiny artificial abrasives such as microbeads and broken glass.)

Recently I noticed from the label on my shampoo that it was "thickening." I don't know exactly how many months or years I have used this particular brand, but it suddenly occurred to me that for the first several decades of my life I was most likely using shampoos that were not "thickening"—meaning that they could well have been *thinning* shampoos instead. As this "8-ball to the cranium" realization set in, I started rifling through all the other bottles and tubes in the bathroom to see what their labels were—and were not—telling me.

Among them I found a "refreshing cleanser" (as opposed to, I guess, car-washing soap or floor wax, which reminds us of little else than exhausting labor); a "deep treatment mask" (something psychoanalytical?); and a "thoroughly clean face wash" (which is probably top of its line and costs substantially more than the lower-end "deficiently decontaminated" or "appallingly germ-ridden" face washes).

One of the more curious bottles I saw, sitting next to a toilet brush, was an "all-purpose cleaner." Surely this one made everything else redundant, didn't it? A cleaner that does it all: cleanses, sanitizes, treats, lifts, rejuvenates, thickens, massages, maybe even guts your Christmas turkey for you. I was ready to start brushing my teeth with it until I noticed the promotional photo on the label, which clearly showed the product being sprayed on some moldy bathroom tiles. By this time I'd been awake for a good 15 minutes or more, lucid enough to guess that maybe this cleaner wasn't quite as universal in its applications as I had at first thought. So I spritzed a bit into each armpit instead, and went to get dressed, feeling refreshed.

Pan SIG
Expand Your Interests

PanSIG 2017

Expand Your Interests

Panel theme: ***National Trends in Language Education***

May 19 – 21, 2017

Akita International University, Akita

http://www.pansig.org