A Letter from the Editor

Greetings Friends and Colleagues,

This issue of *On CUE* reflects changes both in form and content. Minor design changes are intended to make the publication more attractive and *user-friendly*; continued refinement of our vetting process, along with an increase in both quantity and quality of submissions, is leading to more useful and interesting articles for our readers. Here's a preview of what's inside.

Former editor **Michael Carroll** introduces the topic that dominates this issue—The International English Language Testing System, or IELTS. After Michael's overview of the exam, **Todd Squires** explores the impact that authentic test tasks found in standardized tests may have on EAP programs, comparing the TOEFL to the IELTS. Michael follows up with a review of an IELTS test preparation text.

In our second feature article, **Tim Stewart** reexamines an issue relevant to us all—the debate over the scholarly value of teachers' reflections on their professional experiences, challenging the traditionalist notion that teacher research is somehow less valuable than that conducted by professional researchers removed from the classroom.

In the *Opinions & Perspectives* section, **Colin Sloss** challenges **Michael Guest** on the question of objectivity in research, while **Colin Rundle** reports on the remarkable level of autonomy he witnessed at the Indonesian Varsities English Debate, eyeing possibilities for us and our students here.

In *From the Chalkface*…**Jacob Schnickel** shares his rationale and strategy for a successful "green business" project. Hand-outs are available from the CUE website.

This issue also marks the debut of Joe Falout's *Research Digest*, in which **Jim Smiley** reviews the *Scholar's Aid* software. Also, **John Adamson** considers the nature and value of interviews he conducted with Japanese English teachers in the course of his research. Rounding out this issue is a review of *Oral Presentations for Technical Communication* by **Kay Hammond**, and a review of Richmond Stroupe's presentation on teaching critical analysis at JALT2003 by **Mika Maruyama** and **Joe Falout**.

I hope this issue provides you with lots of interesting reading during the upcoming summer vacation. Enjoy!

Note: If you joined or renewed your membership at JALT2003 and didn't receive *On CUE* 11.2, please contact Juanita Heigham via email. The new entries didn't appear in the database until after 11.2 was mailed. We will send it right out to you. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Mike Hood
On CUE *Editor*

A Short Introduction to IELTS

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The English language testing scene in Japan is one of the largest in the world. Whether the combination of high level of disposable wealth, a culture that values tests exceptionally highly, and a widespread desire to 'master' English is the reason or not, every year huge numbers of Japanese people take standardized English tests. The most common are STEP, the Japanese official 'Standardized Test of English Proficiency' (eigo kentei shiken or Eiken), and the two dominant tests from the US: TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and its less academic counterpart TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). STEP and TOEFL have a long history in Japan, and TOEIC, a relative newcomer, is gaining in popularity. Though there are differences, the three are similar in many respects. All rely heavily on multiple choice questions and short reading texts; they all have a substantial grammatical knowledge component. TOEFL, geared toward prospective university students, is widely known as the gatekeeper for study overseas. However, there is another test widely used by overseas universities outside the US: The International English Language Testing System (IELTS). IELTS, designed and administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), The British Council, and the Australian International Development Program (IDP), targets the same test takers as TOEFL, but in a more task-based way.

Any test must achieve a balance between reliability and validity. A test is reliable to the extent that, assuming no change in underlying proficiency, a given test taker will score the same regardless of the time or place of testing; the difference between the scores of any two test takers will be the same on different occasions. A test is valid to the extent that it measures the constructs it sets out to measure. Both IELTS and TOEFL have high levels of reliability and validity. However, the balance between reliability and validity is achieved differently. The TOEFL test is designed primarily to be administered to large numbers of test-takers simultaneously, to be machine marked, and to be reliable (fair) within those constraints. It achieves this through relying almost entirely on short multiple choice items aimed at measuring underlying proficiency. Items, carefully trialed with very large populations of test takers, are extremely reliable. The IELTS test focuses more on validity. It aims to test the skills needed for academic communication, rather than the broad notion of overall proficiency. This is most clearly evident in the division of the test into the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. While the listening and reading sections are, like TOEFL, easily marked multiple choice, the writing and speaking sections require skilled examiners. Ensuring that these examiners apply the same evaluation criteria is an enormous task, requiring constant training

and re-training. IELTS examiners must be assessed and re-accredited every two years for both the writing and speaking sections separately.

Each section of the IELTS test aims to simulate, within the constraints of test conditions, the kinds of tasks university students are likely to encounter. Thus the writing section consists of two tasks: a 150-word descriptive report, usually involving interpreting factual information presented to the test-taker graphically or in table form; and a 250-word discursive essay on an academic topic of general social interest. The reading section consists of three texts, also on topics assumed to be accessible to any educated reader, each with around 13 multiple-choice or short answer (up to three words) questions. The texts, at around 800 words each, are longer than TOEFL texts, and the questions are geared more toward an assessment of discourse features, such as understanding of paragraph organization, cohesion, and coherence.

The listening section is more similar to the TOEFL model. It progresses from short, simple conversations from which test-takers extract information, answer pictorial or graphical questions, or fill in simple forms, to longer lecture-style monologues with structured gap-filling and note-taking questions. Again, this is a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. The speaking section consists of a structured 11- to 15-minute interview with an examiner, progressing from simple introductions through concrete descriptive questions (of the *tell me about your hometown*, or *describe a typical wedding in your country* variety) to more analytical discussion requiring speculation about future events, hopes and so on, or explaining reasons for assertions.

The IELTS test is not scored like TOEFL, but on a band-scale. Test-takers are given a rating from 1-9 for each section of the test, and their average is computed to derive an overall rating. A typical score for a student at roughly the 550 level in TOEFL might be L6, S5, R6.5, W6, Overall 6. A score of 1 represents almost no ability at all, and a score of 9 native-speaker-like ability. Scores around the 5.5 – 6.5 level indicate an ability to communicate effectively within an academic environment in English, albeit with marked pronunciation and grammatical inconsistencies and occasional communication gaps. (The listening and reading sections allow ratings of .5, but the speaking and writing sections allow only whole numbers). Most universities require an overall score of 6 or 6.5, or sometimes 7 for courses requiring advanced language skills, such as education, medicine, law and so on. Some programs may have minimum requirements for individual sections, for instance *a minimum of 6 in writing*.

Like TOEFL, therefore, the IELTS test is most suitable for students who are close to the goal of being able to function in university courses overseas. Scores below 4 are not very revealing and can easily vary from one test experience to another. Above this level, the test is usually considered reliable. So which test should Japanese students aim for? There's no absolute answer. For some students used to a sentence-level, analytical approach to learning favored by some institutions, the TOEFL test may well be easier to prepare for. And the IELTS speaking and writing sections are undoubtedly more daunting for students unaccustomed to productive English. On the other hand, the long-term learning effects of preparing for an IELTS test, involving the processing of language in terms of real-life discourse and the formulation of ideas and responding appropriately to those of others, make it, in my view, a far more useful test.

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Classroom Implications of Authentic Listening Tasks on Standardized Proficiency Tests of Academic English

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Introduction

Teachers and administrators working in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs often find themselves in a bind. All of their efforts to create and implement programs that will prepare students for success when they are studying at institutions of higher learning abroad are often haunted by the specter of standardized English proficiency tests. The gap between classroom practice and external testing instruments has been the source of a perennial problem. Many students seem to understand the necessity of acquiring skills such as academic discussion, speech, essay writing and lecture note-taking, but when a test such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) will determine whether or not they will even be able to enter a university or college abroad, learning of these essential skills oftentimes takes a backseat to test-specific study.

Although the Educational Testing Service (ETS) has always maintained that learners should strive to improve their general English proficiency and academic skills in order to be successful on the TOEFL, it is hard to ignore the fact that the items on many standardized test batteries encourage a nega-tive washback effect. The reason for this is obvious. If we look at the types of tasks that appear on the TOEFL examination we can see that more often than not they bear little surface resemblance to the tasks that learners will face in the future, and thus the types of skill-building activities we work on in our classes are often seen by students as unimportant for achieving their more immediate goal of success on the test.

In response to this dissonance between projected real-life uses and test tasks, ETS is introducing a new TOEFL examination in 2005 that promises to increase the number of authentic tasks. Authenticity, of course, has been a growing concern for experts of language testing and has begun to influence the development of standardized tests of academic English. For a number of years the Cambridge ESOL Examination and its affiliates have been administering the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination, a test of both general and academic English skills. In stark contrast to the TOEFL, however, the IELTS uses a number of authentic test tasks.

With the shift toward authentic test tasks we would be well-advised as teachers and

program directors to reexamine a number of implications of these tests. In this paper I will explore the impact that authentic test tasks on standardized tests can have on EAP programs. First, I will briefly discuss how authenticity has emerged within an indirect dialogue between changing teaching approaches and language testing research. I conclude by arguing that locating *authenticity* merely as a quality of the test items misrepresents what authenticity actually means. Instead, we should not consider authenticity as an essential characteristic, but consider more deeply how authenticity is actively constructed in the production, use, and interpretation of tests. By looking at authenticity in a more holistic way, testing can be brought into a constructive dialogue with classroom practice. Second, I will discuss a research study that I conducted in an EAP program that sought to determine how learners perceive listening comprehension test task items. The conclusions of the study caution that there may be problems with learners recognizing authenticity and interacting with test tasks in an authentic way. Finally, I will suggest some ways to improve the connections between learners and our teaching methodologies in light of the positive impact that authentic academic English tests can have on our curricula.

Teaching, Learning, and Standardized Testing

Standardized language testing has always had a somewhat dissonant relationship with classroom practice. Teachers tend to view these tests as peripheral to day-to-day teaching, and indeed more likely than not believe that focusing on these tests in the classroom leads to unnatural teaching practices, the teaching of inappropriate language learning styles, and the use of inauthentic English—

all of which runs counter to the goals and objectives that they have set for their classes and activities. Antipathy toward these tests is further exacerbated by the fact that teachers' performance and the success of programs are often evaluated by students' performance on these instruments. Students, for their part, are keenly aware of the importance that standardized tests have on their future. Thus, it often turns out that a gap exists between what students are expecting to get in class (to help them pass these tests that are perceived to be *objective*) and what teachers are doing (based upon their own beliefs about teaching and learning). Consequently, this disconnect can oftentimes undermine the goals we have set for our programs.

The reason for the somewhat antagonistic relationship between standardized testing and classroom pedagogy is a long-standing one, especially in North America. Language testing has been based upon two fundamental beliefs. The first derives from theories of language and language acquisition. Influenced by Chomskyan linguistics and cognitive psychology, researchers in SLA have almost unanimously accepted that language is an innate mental process located in the individual's underlying competence (Chomsky, 1965), and for the foreign language learner, competence is represented by his or her interlanguage (IL) (Selinker, 1969, 1972; Ravem, 1968; Dulay & Burt, 1974; Pienemann, 1989). This systemic competence has been uncovered in a number of studies and has shown that foreign language learners' progress follows regular sequences of development that are more or less invariable across learners. Thus, a learner's language proficiency is believed to be measurable if one can create test items that accurately tap into that IL. The second influence on language testing in North America has been the

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instruments that are assumed to be best for evaluating learners' underlying competence. Until recently, discrete point tests have been the only measurements believed capable of standing up to the rigorous scientific criteria of validity and reliability.

Language teaching, on the other hand, has been guided by a slightly different set of assumptions. Chomsky's influence on foreign language teaching has been most vociferously championed by Stephen Krashen, who argues that second language acquisition is no different than first language acquisition (1985). Regardless of one's feelings about Krashen, we must concede that he was pivotal in moving us toward focusing our pedagogy on language as a means of communication rather than as a system of rules to be learned, practiced and internalized. Communicative language teaching (CLT) in its most recent incarnation has emphasized tasks as the organizing unit for classroom activities. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) shifts the focus of classroom procedures away from the actual communication and focuses on specific outcomes. *Task* has been defined in a number of ways (e.g. Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1998; Long, 1985; Nunan, 1989); however, all of these frameworks have a number of principles in common: 1) the focus is on problem-solving, 2) the focus of the activity is on meaning, 3) real-life processes of language use are employed, 4) outcomes are clearly defined and non-linguistic (Ellis, 2003). In short, task-based learning engages learners in problem solving employing language as the medium through which the task is accomplished.

Just as our understanding of the usefulness of a wide repertory of communicative and task-based approaches has been deepened and enriched by developing theories of SLA and trends in general education and learn-ing, our classroom and institutional testing regimens have also been transformed. Today, most teachers use a wide variety of testing instruments that they believe accurately reflect how well their students have achieved the objectives of their courses. Performance assessment, portfolio grading, peer and self evaluation, just to name a few, seek both to make assessments true reflections of learners' achievement and assure students that they will be able to perform competently outside of the classroom.

Educational programs that emphasize authentic assessment have slowly had an affect on testing research. Though *authenticity* continues to be a term that is hotly debated in testing theory, it is commonly accepted as the extent to which a test task resembles a task in the real world. Bachman (1990) argues that authenticity is distinctively different from *face validity*, defined as opinions about surface features of test items being *valid* measures of the skill or knowledge being tested. In many ways the new definition of authenticity represents an attempt to bring this much maligned notion back into testing theory by operationalizing it as the correspondence between features of the test task and features of a "real life" task. Bachman describes the preoccupation with authenticity as reflecting "a sincere concern to somehow capture or recreate in language tests the essence of language use" (p. 300). He argues that authenticity is important as a way of ensuring that language tests reflect or even replicate language use in the target domain and that their results are thus valid for application in that domain. In specifying how authenticity is important in the creation of test tasks, Bachman proposes that test takers' perceptions of test may affect their performance (face validity), and it is important for predicting performance outside

of the testing situation (predictive utility).

Bachman & Palmer (1996) extend Bachman's ideas of authenticity and discuss it as one element of tests that make them *useful*. An assessment instrument is useful when its tasks are "developed with a specific purpose, a particular group of test takers, and a specific language use domain" (p. 18). By "specific language domain" the authors mean a situation or context in which the test taker will use the language outside of the test itself. The language learner as a language user needs to have both declarative knowledge about the subject matter, the target language, as well as performative knowledge, about how to use the language appropriately in the specific situation. Authentic test tasks would appear to be the easiest and most comprehensible way to make generalizations about how the test takers' abilities will be accurately measured and how that measurement, as a reflection of performance on a test task, relates directly to the specific tasks in which test takers will find themselves engaged in the real world, beyond the context of the testing situation.

For standardized language testing operationalizing authenticity is inherently problematic. First, the domain of real-life tasks has to be explicitly defined. In general, it is quite hard to predict in what situations test takers will find themselves and what forms of language they will be required to use. Once a domain is defined, a representative sample of the domain must be made. This is crucial, since test takers' performance must be generalizable and predictive of their performance on real-life tasks. Third, criteria for performance must be explicitly stated. This is also difficult since there may be a number of ways in which a task in the real world could be deemed *successful*. Finally, there must be some accounting for individual variables in performance on tasks, given that tasks can

be accomplished in a number of ways.

Despite these complications, there have been a growing number of arguments in favor of authentic performance-testing in standardized tests of academic English (e.g. Jacoby & McNamara, 1999; MacDonald et al., 2000; Brown et al., 2002). Given the limited range of contexts in which learners will be using English and the underlying abilities that are agreed to be necessary at institutions of higher learning, it has been argued that it is possible to create authentic test tasks that preserve both construct validity and reliability. Ultimately, a test should assure stakeholders that its results are predictive of success in an academic setting. Thus, questions about compromised construct validity due to the indirect testing of background knowledge and vocabulary are less relevant in that it is assumed that test takers must have this knowledge in order to succeed in their academic careers.

The idea about authenticity expressed in the research to date has located *authenticity* in the relationship between the test task and a real life task. How authenticity has been constructed in the literature still poses a number of theoretical problems, even for EAP testing. Psychometric measurements, of course, could be criticized on a number of counts which for the purposes of this paper is not necessary. However it is important for us to recognize here that the fundamental basis for psychometric measurement and its constellation of procedures and calculations used to interpret the scores all rely upon a closed system of knowledge that predetermines what *knowing a language* entails and prescribes the means of measurement and validation. *Authenticity* in current testing theory might best be seen as an attempt to revive *face validity* by giving it legitimacy within the system of psychometric testing.

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Widdowson's (1978) notion of authenticity suggests that it is not something that resides inherently in any test task. Rather it is something that is actively constructed between a text and an individual. For any language testing situation, we can see that authenticity emerges at a number of levels, going far beyond what we could call the micro-level: the test taker and the test item. For the test developer, authenticity is the product of his or her own conceptualization of a domain of real-life tasks that he or she assumes the test taker will be engaged in at some future time and confirmed by accepted testing theories. Authenticity is constructed as part of the test development project, and includes assumptions about the types of behaviors that are required to successfully accomplish a hypothetical task. The individual test task can then be judged to be authentic if it shares a minimal number of features in common with the real-life task. Likewise, authenticity is constructed by the stakeholders of any testing instrument. Unlike the testing specialist, institutional administrators and test takers do not in all likelihood use the same instruments of validation that test developers and researchers use, yet their perceptions are equally important for understanding the socio-educational construction of testing and the legitimacy accorded to these instruments. Therefore, it is vital for us to understand all stakeholders' perceptions of authenticity if we are to integrate them into our programs.

I firmly believe that there can be a positive washback effect from standardized tests of academic English if we can better understand how authenticity is perceived and constructed by test takers. In order for this to be accomplished, we must entertain a number of questions:

1. How do learners actually perceive test tasks?
2. What value do learners place on authentic tasks as valid measures?
3. Do learners perceive test tasks as being transparent as to what they are measuring?
4. Do learners have a well-defined target language use?
5. Can learners of all proficiency levels engage test tasks in authentic ways?

The research presented in the next section attempts to explore the answers to these questions by looking at learners' perceptions of listening comprehension test tasks on two of the major standardized tests of academic English, the TOEFL and the IELTS.

Research Study
Method

In order to more fully understand how test takers construct authenticity of listening comprehension test tasks, a study was conducted using two of the most highly used standardized tests of academic English, the TOEFL and the IELTS. As has been noted elsewhere (Ellis, 2003), the TOEFL is a classic example of psychometric testing. The IELTS, on the other hand, uses a wide variety of tasks and questions. Overall, the IELTS has been considered a more *authentic* examination. I intended to elicit from students what they considered to be their target language use of English at a different time from when they actually took the test in order that the questionnaire would not have any affect on their answers to the post-test questionnaire. (This research study was an expanded version of my pilot study (Squires, 2003).)

Participants

The participants in this study were 47 students (5 male and 42 female) in an EAP program in Osaka, Japan. The students' English language proficiency ranged from low-intermediate to high-intermediate (scores on the most recent ITP TOEFL ranged from 430 to 530). Their ages ranged from 19 to 22. All but one of the students had graduated from high school in the past year, and therefore they had all taken English in Japanese secondary education institutions for six years.

Instruments

All of the students had taken the TOEFL exam at least two times before this experiment and the majority (38 students) had taken two terms of a TOEFL preparatory course (six hours a week for ten weeks). The experiment was conducted during their regularly scheduled listening and speaking classes. They were given three practice listening examinations from an IELTS preparation textbook during the six weeks prior to the experiment to become accustomed to the style of questions. These were introduced to the students as additional practice for listening comprehension.

Questionnaire

The students were given a questionnaire in their L1 (Japanese) that asked them several questions about listening comprehension. The items on the questionnaire included questions about what they felt was difficult about listening in English, their listening study, listening strategies and how they felt listening would be important for them when they study abroad.

Listening Test

The test was composed of a 25-minute listening comprehension practice test from the TOEFL sample test (Educational Testing Service, 1995), and a 40-minute listening comprehension sample test from the IELTS (IELTS, 2003). The TOEFL examination consisted of three parts: Part A (short conversations), Part B (longer conversations), and Part C (short talks). The IELTS consisted of four sections: Section 1 (listening to a telephone conversation and filling in a form), Section 2 (listening to a short talk and taking notes), Section 3 (listening to a conversation between classmates and matching the speakers to opinions, and answering two multiple choice questions), and Section 4 (listening to an academic lecture while completing lecture notes).

Follow-up Questionnaire

A post-test questionnaire was administered (in Japanese) immediately following the listening test. The items included questions about what they thought each of the sections was testing, which section(s) they felt were most appropriate for measuring their listening comprehension, and the strengths and weaknesses of each section. While they were filling out the questionnaire, students were allowed to refer to their tests so that they could refresh their memories.

Procedures

During the first week of the term, students were given 40 minutes to answer the questionnaire as completely as possible, and extra time was allotted for those students who wanted more time.

During the seventh week of classes, the students were given the 90-minute listening comprehension test and the follow-up ques-

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tionnaire. Following the administration of the test, the students were given a questionnaire that asked them a number of questions about the test. After they had finished the questionnaire, the tests, answers, and questionnaires were collected. The TOEFL and IELTS examinations were scored according to the rubrics provided with sample tests. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for the group as a whole, as well as for each of the proficiency levels. Since most of the answers from the questionnaire were open ended, the responses were grouped according to the major themes found to be salient. Other questions on the questionnaire were quantified using a Likert scale, as well as the results of the test.

Results

Given the small sample of students that participated in this experiment, the results were not definitive. However they were suggestive. The initial questionnaire showed three distinct themes in students' answers. First, when asked about their difficulties with listening comprehension, 75% of the students reported that it was a lack of vocabulary which impeded their comprehension. More importantly, even when they said they knew the vocabulary in the listening text, they reported that they were unable to recognize vocabulary items in listening passages due to a number of factors, including the rate of speech and reductions. In other words, it was not simply a lack of vocabulary that they perceived as causing difficulties, but not being able to match mental representations of lexical items with the aural input. These bottom-up processing constraints continue to be a problem even for higher proficiency learners.

Strategies for listening also revealed a number of themes. First, many of the students reported that they actively tried to improve their listening comprehension by listening to music and news and by watching movies at the theater, on video/DVD and on TV. Many students also said that they try to make non-Japanese friends. Second, they indicated a number of strategies that they used to deal with breakdowns in communication, including requests for clarification and repetition, and trying to pick out the main ideas even if they could not understand everything.

The most important question related to authenticity was the question that asked them how listening would be important for them when they studied abroad. The answers fell overwhelmingly under three basic themes: understanding academic lectures and taking notes, communicating with lecturers and classmates, and functioning in everyday life.

Students' scores on the listening comprehension test were unremarkable in that they reflected both previous scores on the TOEFL as well as expected proficiency level differences. For this reason, only the scores for the entire sample are reported here.

Table 1: Subjects' listening scores

Test	No. of Items	Average
TOEFL	50	17.96 (35.91%)
IELTS	40	13.32 (33.30%)
TOTAL	90	31.28 (34.75%)

A simple equivalent forms method showed reliability between the TOEFL and IELTS test scores, and the difference between scores on the two tests decreased with the proficiency of the subjects. It is assumed with more familiarity and practice with the IELTS examination, the scores would be virtually identical.

Perceptions about Test Task Items

The test takers used quite different phrases to describe the TOEFL and IELTS tests. The subjects describe the TOFEL exam items as testing their ability to "remember," "make a good guess," or use their "power of memory." In other words, the TOEFL exam appears to have been perceived from the perspective of a cognitive processing exercise. The respondents described the IELTS exam items, however, in terms of the task-related activities that they were required to do, such as the ability to "take notes well," "to listen to the content and write it down," "to understand the content," "to grasp the important points," "to get a grip on the points in the content," and "to listen and take notes."

When the subjects' responses were divided into lower and higher proficiency groups, clear differences became apparent. The lower proficiency subjects described the test tasks by talking about superficial aspects of the tapescript. For example, when they compared Part A to Part B and C of the TOEFL, they mentioned that the text was "short" or "long," and therefore Part A was testing the ability to listen to "short listening passages," whereas Part B and Part C were testing the ability to listen to "long listening passages." Likewise, the *task* most often mentioned by lower proficiency subjects was "answering the question." Conversely, the higher proficiency subjects more often mentioned the actual task of the items and their relationship to real world tasks, such as "the ability to take notes." Thus, it appears that lower proficiency learners spend much more effort on bottom-up processing and cannot focus on the authentic aspects of the test task. With increased proficiency, learners become more aware of the differences between psychometric and authentic, performance-based test tasks.

Perceptions of Most Appropriate Test Tasks

The third item of the questionnaire asked subjects to give their opinions about how they felt each of the sections accurately measured their English listening comprehension ability. The IELTS sections were rated slightly higher than the TOEFL sections, and the sections they rated most highly of the seven sections were Section 2 and Section 4 of the IELTS examination. The favorable appraisal of the IELTS examination gradually increased with the proficiency of the subjects. Interestingly, respondents' perceptions about the accuracy of measurement of each of the sections did correspond to the sections that were the easiest for them, so it appears that they were more thoughtful about the reasons why they selected these two sections as best for measuring their English listening comprehension ability.

Questions 4 and 5 of the questionnaire elicited subjects' opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of all of the sections of the test, as well as their opinions about which test section was the most appropriate for testing their English listening ability. The results of these responses indicated that the test takers perceived the IELTS questions as more authentic than the TOEFL questions. The strengths of the TOEFL correlated well with the respondents' perceptions of what the section was testing. For example, the most common responses for the strengths of TOEFL sections were that the tasks were "good for developing memory skills," "getting used to the sound of English," "helping increase concentration," and "improving the ability to respond quickly." The weaknesses of the TOEFL sections were also related to the same skills and included "too much reliance upon memory" and "the tendency to forget what has been said." Other responses about

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the strengths and weaknesses more directly related to the format of the test. For example, some respondents felt that the multiple choice format made it easy to answer, while conversely some of the respondents saw this as a drawback, saying "if you can make guesses the test is not very realistic because you might be able to get a correct response even if you do not understand." Finally, some of the respondents were keenly focused upon their short-term goal of passing the TOEFL and said, "The TOEFL is the most appropriate since I am going to have to take the test in order to get into a US university."

Responses about the strengths and weaknesses of the IELTS items contrasted with responses about the TOEFL items. Respondents' opinions about the strengths of the IELTS exam focused upon authenticity. Respondents noted that the exam was "more realistic and accurate measure," "the items more accurately measure listening ability because they test overall English ability," "the preview style allowed greater comprehension and the question styles made it much easier to understand," and "the test items helped with the ability to follow a conversation." As for the weaknesses of the IELTS items, respondents consistently noted two drawbacks—the need to spell the responses correctly and some of the vocabulary was difficult (Section 4).

Finally, in question 5 the test takers were asked to select one of the seven sections that they felt was the most appropriate measure of the English listening comprehension ability. The most favorable evaluation was for the IELTS type of test items. Those respondents that chose the TOEFL test items focused upon two aspects, "the quick response style," "the need to concentrate as best for measuring true listening ability," and the need to "pass the TOEFL exam to get into a US university." Second, the respondents who chose Part C of the TOEFL noted similarities between Part C of the TOEFL and Section 4 of the IELTS exam, however students noted that either they needed to develop their "memory skills for longer passages" or "it forced them to concentrate," and for this reason the TOEFL questions were the most appropriate. Respondents who favored the IELTS exam referred directly to the test's authentic aspects, for example, "the need to take notes well," and "the need to understand the lecture as a whole, as well as the details." In addition, a number of respondents noted that this section was a much more accurate measure of listening ability since, unlike the multiple choice items of the TOEFL exam, the IELTS does not allow for guessing.

As with perceptions of the test task items, lower proficiency subjects tended to favor the TOEFL exam test items (while a number indicated that allowing for the possibility for guessing was probably not a realistic test item), and the task-based IELTS was increasingly favored as the proficiency of the learners increased.

Based upon analysis of the data, I came to a number of preliminary conclusions. First, the data suggest that test takers become more focused on the task they are required to do as their proficiency increases. Thus, even for performance-based tasks, if the test taker's proficiency has not reached a certain threshold, he or she is not able to complete the task as intended by the test developers, but is overwhelmed with bottom-up processing. This is true even if the test taker perceives the authenticity of test tasks. Second, lower proficiency test takers look more favorably on psychometric measures of listening comprehension. They perceive that partial knowledge gives them the ability to guess by catching known vocabulary or key words,

and an understanding the general meaning or visualizing the situation enables them to have a chance of getting the correct answer. While this appears to be a natural strategy for lower proficiency learners, their perceptions are also likely influenced by a socio-educational legitimacy that test takers accord to discrete point testing and the use of multiple-choice testing in all the major testing batteries in Japan. Third, with increased proficiency, test takers can both perceive the authenticity of the test task and interact with the test task item in an authentic way.

Implications for Teaching Listening Comprehension in EAP Programs

The study described in the preceding section revealed that implementing authentic listening tasks in standardized testing does not necessarily ensure that all of the test takers will perceive the tasks as authentic or be able to complete them in an authentic manner. Moreover, there may be some socio-educational factors that influence test takers' perceptions of validity. Student comments suggest that psychometric tests retain a certain legitimacy, as opposed to more authentic tests. Even so, it appears that we are on the brink of a new era for EAP, where standardized testing will dovetail well with our practices in the classroom. Thus, it is my suggestion that we reconsider how tests such as the new TOEFL and IELTS can become integral parts of our programs.

Authentic standardized language testing can have a number of positive effects on the way in which we conduct our classes and construct our syllabi and curricula. In general, they can provide a clear focus for the kinds of activities and skills that we teach and practice with our students. We must real-ize, however, that our students are at varying stages of proficiency, and thus we need to continue working on basic listening skills while at the same time keeping an eye toward how academic listening skills are built upon them. The following are some principles for classroom instruction.

1. Continue working on bottom-up and top-down processing

Most of our students—even at higher levels of proficiency—still need to work on automatizing the processing of input. Rost (1990, 2001) proposes a complex interactive model to explain how the listener simultaneously uses both bottom-up and top-down processing to extract meaning from aural texts. As the content of input becomes more complex and technical—as with academic listening tasks—automatic matching of input to stored representations (Anderson, 1992; DeKeyser, 2001) is vital for learners to attend to the processing of input as meaning. Learners also need to increase their mastery over receptive vocabulary in the aural modality. As many of us are aware—and as my research has shown—this is one of the major problems that stands in the way of Japanese students' general listening comprehension and approaching tasks in an authentic way. We could enhance our students' learning of vocabulary by adopting teaching methods according to the Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993; 2002) and teaching common collocations and lexical bundles (Biber et al., 1999) that are found in academic listening texts rather than by focusing only on teaching isolated vocabulary.

Top-down processing can continue to follow the general skills of identifying main ideas and details and making inferences. We can also directly teach different discourse types (Brown & Yule, 1983) that learners

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will encounter in academic settings, work with them on making accurate predictions about lectures (topic, the next section, main ideas), evaluating themes and motives, and distinguishing between main ideas and supporting ideas. (For suggestions for teaching, see, for example, Brown, 2001; Rost, 2002; and Ur, 1996.)

2. Introduce tasks even at lower levels of proficiency

Many of us are aware of the benefits of a task-based approach to teaching and learning, but we are sometimes unsure how to incorporate tasks into our lower level classes. For the early stages, Willis (1996) suggests a number of suitable activities. She begins with a framework that includes the pre-task phase (longer than with more advanced learners that build schemata, background knowledge, and visual aids), a series of short tasks (gradually increasing in length, necessary planning and reporting) and language focus (classifying words/phrases, using classroom language, etc.). Tasks for lower-proficiency learners can include:

a. listing—brainstorming, memory games

b. ordering and sorting—classifying, sequencing, collecting sets

c. comparing—matching, identifying

d. problem solving—puzzles, general knowledge quizzes, guessing games

e. surveys

Integrating tasks will orient students toward doing meaningful tasks rather than decontextualized exercises. (Nunan (1989) suggests ways to grade tasks.)

3. Integrate listening comprehension with other skills

Both the IELTS and the new TOEFL integrate listening skills with the other three major skill areas, therefore it is important that listening activities are not taught in isolation from speaking, reading and writing. Some ways in which we can incorporate listening comprehension with the other skills include:

a. lecture listening and summarizing (orally or in writing)

b. listening followed by discussion

c. simulations based on listening texts

d. jigsaw listening tasks

e. debate

d. speech (emphasizing critical listening skills)

4. Work on specific skills for academic listening

This has been the primary area in which academic listening has been researched and for which teaching methods have been developed (Flowerdew, 1994). Some classroom practices that we can include are:

a. lecture and note-taking skills

   1. direct teaching of micro- and macro-markers (Richards, 1983; Chaudron & Richards, 1986; De-Carrico & Nattinger, 1988; Tauroza & Allison, 1994)

   2. note-taking skills (Yorkey, 1982; Rost, 1990; Dunkel & Davis, 1994)

b. integrative skills

   1. integrating knowledge from lectures as the basis for discussions

   2. jigsaw listening activities (Jacobs et al., 2002)

   3. identifying main ideas, support for those, using critical thinking

skills to evaluate and integrate this new knowledge with their own knowledge; some ideas include peer teaching, role-playing new perspectives, dialogues, and simulations (Bean, 2001)

5. Work on metacognitive strategies for listening

Constructing a syllabus that incorporates Dornyei & Otto's (1998) idea of "goal oriented behavior," will help learners develop metacognitive (Flavell, 1976; Goh, 1997) knowledge of the language learning process that includes an understanding of how to set proximal and sub-proximal goals, how to deal with non-language learning goals that compete for their attention, how to monitor learning, and how to evaluate progress. One effective way to do this is for students to use a *learning journal*. This journal could be based on the ideas proposed by Dickinson (1987) on developing learner autonomy. In this *learning journal*, learners reflect upon what listening comprehension goals they want to achieve during the course, how they can achieve those goals, and what they can do specifically to achieve them.

6. Make students aware of the importance of standardized tests and help them focus clearly on the goals and objectives of the program

In my experience, teachers and program administrators tend to have a less than positive attitude toward standardized language tests, which we unconsciously transmit to our students when we talk to them about preparation and study for these tests. As the tasks on these tests become more authentic, we can begin to actively incorporate them into our curricula and classroom procedures as measures of our learners' overall proficiency. Students can come to understand the value of these tests if we speak positively about the tests and occasionally bring practice tests into the classroom, administer them and talk about them with our students.

I foresee that authentic listening comprehension test tasks on standardized language tests have the potential to create positive washback in our classrooms. They will help us focus our attention on the needs of our students, reconfigure our curricula, set pedagogical priorities and provide an objective measurement of the overall success of our programs.

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Is Reflective Teaching Scholarship?

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The Question

For over 10 years I worked in what might be considered to be rather a unique teaching situation. As a faculty member in the Department of Comparative Culture at my university, I was an ESOL educator who worked closely with discipline-area specialists in the social sciences and humanities. Like most universities, my former institution has its own academic journal. I performed editorial functions for that journal and others over the past ten years. Two years after the university journal was launched, a progressive sociology professor began the "Reflections on Teaching" section of the journal. I was invited to write one of the six manuscripts for that original *Reflections* section. Since that time, several colleagues have asked me about the worth of such reflections to the journal. Ensuing discussions led me to wonder: "Is reflective teaching scholarship?"

Even though my former university is a small liberal arts institution with a pronounced teaching mission, some colleagues have said that the university journal should have fewer articles about teaching and more on "academic" questions. Others have expressed the opposite view. This article is one response to these contrasting views. I make no claims to finding a satisfactory answer to the question posed above, but as a concerned member of the academy I feel that ESOL specialists, and CUE members generally, should give the question serious consideration.

The very first article published in the journal of my former institution (Otsubo, 1995) raised the question of the place of research and scholarship in the academy. The author was tapping into a debate continuing for several years now on the relationship of research to knowledge for and about teaching. A major source of this debate has been the dissatisfaction with a university-generated knowledge base for teaching amongst practicing classroom teachers (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992). I would characterize this debate as one where dominant paradigms are judging a new domain of inquiry by reasserting the conventions, expectations and language of established frameworks. Let us consider here whether the relationships between teachers' research, knowledge and practice are really "new territory" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 27).

I will frame the general discussion that follows within the field of second language education by reviewing several recent publications pertinent to this question. I begin with a brief summary of some key arguments in the current literature.

Critical Views

Positions in this debate are largely decided by how participants pose their questions. Traditionalists define knowledge as being either

formal or practical. These scholars tend to limit their purview of scholarship to research falling under the rubric of formal knowledge, that is, disciplinary-based content. Others in the academy are now arguing for an expanded and, indeed, elevated definition of practical knowledge. They see the formal knowledge/practical knowledge dichotomy as artificial and unproductive.

> …the assertion [by traditionalists] that teacher research generates practical knowledge means it generates knowledge that is, from a certain perspective, low status knowledge – bounded by the everyday, excessively local and particular, and possibly trivial. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 24)

The critique of research conducted by practicing teachers as scholarship centers on this point. Scholars such as Fenstermacher (1994) argue that there exists formal, theoretical and scientific knowledge that is separate from practical knowledge. He conceptualizes teacher knowledge as: "how to do things, the right place and time to do them, or how to see and interpret events related to one's own actions" (p. 12). Huberman (1996) supports this argument by classifying teacher knowledge as situated knowledge that, with repeated reflection, could lead to practical knowledge. He further challenges the idea of teachers' research by contending that it is nearly impossible to understand events when one is a participant. Indeed, supporters of teachers' research warn that its increasing popularity risks serving too many educational agendas, so that "it is in danger of becoming anything and everything" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 21). It seems that what is now being called the "new scholarship" (Boyer, 1990; Zeichner, 1999), is in need of a new epistemology (Schön, 1995).

Boyer (1990) and his Carnegie Foundation colleagues are credited with focusing this debate in the higher education literature. They reconsidered "teaching versus research" with the intent of shaping a broader definition of scholarship. The *scholarship of teaching* is one of four areas of scholarship proposed by Boyer, in addition to *discovery*, *integration* and *application*. He argues his point in the context of the history of research in universities. Boyer's conclusion is that academics define scholarship in a very narrow way with basic research (*discovery*) generating publishable knowledge that is then applied in some way or, perhaps, used to enhance teaching. In today's restricted view of scholarship, it seems that conveying knowledge to students or the application of knowledge are not considered to be a part of scholarship. Schön (1995) lays out the dilemma of such a restricted view of scholarship:

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the use of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowlands, problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or to society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner is confronted with a choice. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to his standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems where he cannot be

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rigorous in any way he knows how to describe? (p. 28)

Let me turn now to a consideration of the alternatives to the restricted view of scholarship as *original* or *basic* research.

New Perspectives on Scholarship

As stated earlier, Boyer (1990) introduces four areas of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. His central point about the *scholarship of teaching* is that university faculty should stop looking on teaching as something almost anyone can do, or as some kind of annoying *load* tacked onto other more important tasks. Instead, Boyer advises university faculty to adopt the view of teaching as "the highest form of scholarship" (Boyer quoting Aristotle, p. 23). While affirming the important place of research in universities (the *scholarship of discovery*), Boyer makes the case that "inspired teaching keeps the flame of scholarship alive" (p. 24). He calls for "a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching" (p. 24).

The new scholarship must take the form of action research according to Schön (1995). He emphasizes that the challenge for supporters of the new scholarship of teaching is "to introduce action research as a legitimate and appropriately rigorous way of knowing and generating knowledge" (p. 31). Under the current standards of scholarship that dominate in academia, however, the *scholarship of teaching* remains unacknowledged and unrewarded. That is, the puzzles that teachers are drawn to investigate will often need to be studied in the contexts of practice. Therefore, the control and distance demanded by the epistemology of logical

positivism and scientific empiricism cannot be established. This makes it all but impossible to achieve a level of rigor acceptable by the positivist standards of research underlying the modern research university (Schön). As a result, some good teachers are denied tenure because they are unable to see the research potential in practice and/or cannot carry out a program of action research. At the same time, the positivist paradigm is so deeply institutionalized, that even liberal arts universities have difficulty recognizing the legitimacy of reflective action research in practice.

Preoccupations with issues of methodological sophistication can be challenged. These concerns are emphasized most when interpretation and analysis are done away from research settings, and when investigators have little interest in the particular case (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). This research reality is far removed from the classroom in which concerned teachers attempt to understand and develop their practice. Teacher-participants who conduct classroom action research, must "live with the consequences of the transformations they make" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 592). As Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) explain, this direct connection with the research situation serves as a powerful check on the quality of teachers' transformative work.

The impetus for shaping research on teaching by practitioners into a new form of scholarship stems largely from the perception that "much formal research has little bearing on the most immediate and central problems of education" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 30). Furthermore, universities view colleges of education as lacking intellectual rigor, while classroom teachers consider what they offer to be too theoretical and detached from teaching realities. In the past, research

in education, following the natural sciences model, has separated theory and practice, thus viewing practice as something theories are about (Carr, 1987). New conceptions of teachers' research propose that teaching practice has both practical and theoretical aspects. Therefore, teachers' research generates "knowledge of both how teachers theorize practice and how they practice theory" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p. 30). This idea is central to Boyer's (1990) concept of the *scholarship of application*. In some activities directed to serve their particular field of specialization or the larger community, professors can be engaged in research in which "theory and practice interact, and one renews the other" (Boyer, p. 23). It is this cycle of interaction that most interests those engaged in reflective teaching.

Anderson, Herr and Nihlem (1994) view teachers' research as a new genre related to qualitative research. A key difference for them is that this new form of research is conducted by participants rather than outsiders. They claim that standard academic criteria for validity are meaningless because of the fundamental difference of purpose between the academic qualitative research model of applied knowledge and "participatory inquiry" (Thesen & Kuzel, 1999). The academic traditions of participatory inquiry are "oriented toward reform rather than simply toward description or meaning" (Thesen & Kuzel, 1999, p. 270). Thus, educators engaged in participatory action research seek to change, not simply describe, schools. This position can be traced back to Dewey's ideas on democracy in the classroom and the need for reflective inquiry to improve teaching and learning.

Another way in which teachers' research is being reconsidered is by exploring how it can make teacher education and professional development more critical in the sense of critical inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998; Gore & Zeichner, 1995). Proponents of this stance define "professional development" as a critically reflective activity that continues across the professional career-span in support of social justice and social change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998). Situated as a critical enterprise, localized teachers' research can be conceptualized as knowledge that other teachers can draw from to understand and promote social change in their own schools and communities. This conception of teachers' research reflects the currently predominant view in my own field of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL). I turn now to a discussion of the issues raised relative to the field of English language education.

Reflective Teaching in ESOL

We can trace the idea of reflective teaching back to Dewey (1933) who claims that reflective thinking means giving a subject "serious and consecutive consideration" so as to allow for action "in deliberate and intentional fashion." Today, peer mentoring, case discussions, and teaching portfolios are all ways in which faculty attempt to change their teaching through reflective practices. When such reflections on teaching are done systematically in a disciplined cycle of action, observation, reflection and revision, they might become worth publishing at some point. Since many of the most prolific authors in the ESOL field work as teacher educators in universities, they can become distanced from challenges facing the broader ESOL community. This leads to a situation in which ESOL teachers become frustrated because the teachers' reference books and textbooks published are often of little use to them. For these reasons, the reflective observations of

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practicing ESOL teachers are increasingly being sought for publication.

The nature of how teachers develop and change professionally is crucial to second language teacher education. Reflection is seen as paramount to affecting change in teaching practice since changes in behavior often follow changes in beliefs (Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998). The number of books on reflective practices in ESOL is growing rapidly, following the lead of the education field. It would be impossible to comment on all of the major works in this area, but I would like to highlight some of the most important volumes. These books spring from two categories of research: action research and narrative inquiry.

Under the rubric of action research, there are a number of influential books. *Action Research for Language Teachers* (Wallace, 1998), describes action research as "the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice" (p. 1). Data may be collected as part of a case study, through interviews or questionnaires, or using observation, field-notes, logs, journals and diaries. For example, a teacher might structure his/her field-notes as a teaching log. Levels of effectiveness of a lesson can be defined and used to evaluate the lesson on a time-line. Once field-notes have been recorded for several lessons, they can be analyzed as a source of issues for deeper investigation. Or, if the data are already focused on a particular issue (e.g., teacher talk time vs. student talk time), they can be used to decide if there's enough data to see some solution. Wallace situates action research in professional development contexts. For teachers, professional development is an ongoing process throughout a career. Wallace outlines a reflective cycle that he calls a process of *reflection on profes-*

sional action. He stresses that action research is concerned with applying discoveries about practice to professional action and not with what is universally true, or generalizable to other contexts.

Another respected how-to book for ESOL teachers is *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). The authors view reflection as essential to professional practice since teacher-training courses, at the very best, can only prepare teachers to *begin* teaching. Teacher-initiated action research is typically manifested in small-scale investigative projects. The phases of typical classroom investigations, according to Richards and Lockhart, are planning, action, observation and reflection. These phases recur in cycles of investigation. Topics in this volume come from various important issues in ESOL, encouraging teachers toward a "critically reflective approach to teaching" (p. 202). It follows that projects of critical reflection on teaching practice guided by a disciplined pattern of investigation could be suitably developed into manuscripts for publication.

Many advocates of action research stress the importance of collaboration. In *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*, Anne Burns (1999) presents the case for collaborative inquiry. Like Burns, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) maintain that action research cannot be action research without collaboration between colleagues or students and their teachers. Burns points out correctly that the original goals of action research "were to bring about change in social situations as the result of group problem-solving and collaboration" (p. 12). She sees action research as a way to bridge the divide between theory, research and practice. She maintains that it "fulfils basic research requirements in that it encompasses

a researchable question/issue, data and interpretive analysis" (p. 25). Furthermore, many methodologists see action research as one type of qualitative research similar to approaches such as *grounded theory*, which presumes that there is a direct link between observed phenomena and theories of practice. Finally, according to Burns, a key point in support of collaborative approaches to research is that action researchers can work as a team to test their findings through the process of triangulation in order to increase reliability and validity.

The last of the selected sources of teacher reflection through action research adds an interesting dimension to complement the other books. In *Continuing Cooperative Development*, Julian Edge (2002) supports Burns' collaborative approach to action research. He too advocates the use of colleagues as sounding boards to help formulate ideas about teaching practice. Cooperative Development (CD) is the label Edge gives to his method for reflective practice. In CD, a teacher talks about teaching with a non-judgmental colleague who listens to and helps focus this talk, with the aim of uncovering professional development issues for investigation. The ultimate goal is to empower teachers through professional actions based on *their own understanding of* their classroom teaching situation. To achieve this understanding, Edge outlines alternative patterns of discourse for colleagues to follow. This talk about teaching leads toward the choice of a focus for action research. As the focus is sharpened, a concrete goal for action is set. Next in this process is a spoken rehearsal "to make sure that the steps toward the set goal have been thought through and that they are coherent" (p. 116). Following this, action research is conducted and observations are made. CD techniques can later be used to reflect on the outcomes and lead into a new cycle of discovery.

Two well-known names in ESOL, Bailey and Nunan, published *Voices from the Language Classroom* (1996) "to serve as a 'sampler' for people interested in learning more about qualitative research in the naturalistic inquiry tradition," since "studies utilizing qualitative data gathered in naturally occurring settings" had not often been published in the field of ESOL (p. 1). Their book of narrative inquiry examines sociopolitical and curricular aspects of language teaching, as well as the perspectives of learners and teachers. Following this lead, Johnson and Golombek (2002) published *Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development*. While the volume edited by Bailey and Nunan features many prominent university-based ESOL researchers, *Teachers' Narrative Inquiry* includes the voices of practicing teachers. Johnson and Golombek describe narrative inquiry as "systematic exploration that is conducted by teachers and for teachers through their own stories and language" (p. 6). They maintain that teachers engaging in narrative inquiry are in fact theorizing about their own practice. This theorizing is not linear in nature but "reflects a dynamic interplay between description, reflection, dialogue with self and others, and the implementation of alternative teaching practices" (p. 7). What needs to be done is to make the fundamental theoretical knowledge base of second language teacher education relevant to teachers' own social contexts. In other words, we need to enhance common sense and build on what teachers know-in-practice (Schön, 1995).

Another book reflecting this current trend in TESOL research is *Understanding the Courses We Teach: Local Perspectives on English Language Teaching* (Murphy &

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Byrd, 2001). According to the subtitle, this is a volume of local perspectives on English language teaching. Murphy and Byrd envision their book as a response to the generic discussions that have "for too long" dominated the ESOL literature. Since the 1970s, applied linguists programs situated in universities in the UK, USA, Australia and Canada have been producing global approaches and methods for second language teachers to consume. A major theme underlying this collection, however, is that "all instances of English language teaching take place within particular settings and sets of circumstances" (p. 450). The purpose of this volume is to record diverse experiences of teaching practice. The authors intend to fulfill this purpose further through a dedicated website (http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/understanding). Teachers are encouraged to contact them for support, guidance and resources. They are hoping to help more teachers become teacher-researchers.

This is a very short sample of recently published second-language education books representing the trend toward viewing the practical knowledge generated from teachers' specific situations as scholarship. Areas that could also be cited include classroom interaction analysis (Johnson, 1995; Spada, 1994), classroom ethnography (Hornberger, 1994; van Lier, 1988), and exploratory teaching (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). The international TESOL organization also publishes several series composed primarily of articles written by practitioners, including the *Case Studies* series. The trend toward publication of teachers' reflections on their practice continues to grow in the fields of education and TESOL. Does this work constitute scholarship?

Discussion

"New" scholarship in teacher education makes use of naturalistic and interpretive research methodologies including biography, life history, ethnography, action research and narrative inquiry. Furthermore, much of this research is being conducted by teachers as scholar-practitioners instead of external social science researchers. Reflection is central to this new scholarship of teaching. It is useful in that it attempts to illuminate the tacit knowledge that unreflective practitioners often cannot describe. These features of the scholarship of teaching, however, make it "inimical to the conditions of control and distance that are essential to technical rationality" (Schön, 1995, p. 34).

The continued rejection of most practitioner knowledge on the grounds that it is "nonempirical" mirrors the epistemological debate that marginalized naturalistic/qualitative research over thirty years ago (Anderson & Herr, 1999). Gaining acceptance for reflective practice as scholarship is indeed a struggle against very well-entrenched ideologies. A search of major publication in the field of education is revealing. The 1986 *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Wittrock) contains no research compiled by practitioners. The next volume of the handbook (Richardson, 1998) has one chapter dedicated to teachers' research; however, this chapter was not written by scholar-practitioners.

The situation is changing rapidly. Today, courses in practitioner research are being offered in many teacher education programs, an increasing number of books of teachers' research are published every year, and refereed journals are publishing more and more practitioner research articles. There is even an international journal, the *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, solely dedicated to enhancing educational leadership and

change in schools and universities. In addition, the *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* was established to legitimize the scholarship of teaching at universities in the United States. As this shift in the perception of scholarship is occurring for some in the academy, promotion and tenure committees continue to refuse to recognize teachers' research as legitimate (Anderson & Herr, 1999). The situation is reaching the point at which "some kind of showdown is imminent, reminiscent of that which occurred when qualitative research could no longer be ignored" (Anderson & Herr, p. 14).

The issues discussed in this paper find expression in my former educational context at Miyazaki International College (MIC). MIC is not a research university; it is a small liberal arts institution, where colleagues handcraft courses in interdisciplinary teams composed of specialists in ESOL, humanities, social sciences and natural science subjects. The faculty members at MIC are certainly dedicated and resourceful teachers. The collaborative enterprise of team teaching brings faculty together in ways that could not occur otherwise. By breaking down the artificial divisions between faculty that are fortified in many universities, MIC faculty members enjoy unique opportunities to learn from one another. This relationship has led to ESOL "practitioners" engaging in research projects with their disciplinary colleagues. Some of the collaborative research projects have been centered in the pedagogy of the disciplinary fields. Much of the research collaboration that I am aware of between ESOL and disciplinary colleagues relates to the courses they develop and how they have dealt with specific pedagogical issues. For example, how effective is the "quick write" cooperative learning technique in sociology courses, or "what are the effects of student video journals on content and language acquisition?"

By recognizing that classroom research about teaching should concern all disciplines, we can see that the research stances (e.g., inside vs. outside investigators), and political differences between faculty members in most universities (e.g., power and status relations of PhD vs. MA, and subject-area teacher vs. language teacher) might not be as large as we imagine. The kind of collaborative research on teaching that many MIC faculty members engage in can help to legitimize this new scholarship. When discipline specialists and ESOL specialists research their teaching together, the rigor of scholarly training can meld with the practical realities found in teaching. Research teams like these have a unique opportunity to work toward supplying new definitions of "rigor" for the scholarship of teaching.

The pre-conception that writing a reflective piece on teaching practice has less value than a "research article" is prevalent on the campus of MIC too. Before leaving MIC, I was asked by a colleague in a social science discipline if the *Reflections* section of the MIC journal was only open to submissions from language teachers; others have said that reflections should be confined to short narrative articles only. This situation is further evidence that the effort to legitimize teachers' research and the scholarship of teaching is a long-term struggle to change prevailing attitudes in higher education. Through organizations like JALT and publications such as *On CUE*, opportunities exist to embrace the emerging epistemology of the new scholarship on teaching, and to work toward legitimizing it.

Feature Article: Stewart

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Coming up at JALT2004!

Presenting Effectively: Delivering the Goods

Juanita Heigham & Heidi Evans-Nachi

Would you like to give a professional presentation, but lack the confidence to try? Have you been disappointed with the quality of some presentations you've heard, but thought you couldn't do any better? In this workshop, participants will explore features that make (or break) presentations and ways to execute those features effectively. The presenters will help participants to identify their strengths and weakness and to develop techniques to improve their individual presentation styles.

Readers Respond
Absolute Objectivity as Myth: A Response to Michael Guest

Colin Sloss

Opinions & Perspectives

In his interesting article "Flaws, Fallacies, and Infelicities: A Critical Look at Culture in ELT Research," Michael Guest makes some valuable points about stereotyping and over-generalizing in the ELT literature concerning Japanese learners of English. In this brief response, I would like to raise a number of issues concerning the concept of *objectivity* in research as referred to by the author.

At one point, Michael Guest suggests that when discussing "dynamic cultures" like that of the Japanese, we should avoid reducing them to overly simplistic "binary opposites" (p.4). However, I would argue that he conjures up a binary opposite of his own when, in citing various studies influenced by cultural determinism, he questions as to "how scientific and objective the original studies actually were. In fact, many of these foundational studies were largely subjective, anecdotal and based upon personal observation" (p.3). Here, it seems to me, he is contrasting research "objectivity," which he appears to favor, with research based on subjective and anecdotal methods, which he appears to believe lack "credibility" (p.8). Moreover, he appears to accept "objectivity" and "objective" as unproblematic terms which need no further qualification or explanation. **(1)**

It could be that Mr. Guest is unaware of the philosophical, scientific, and postmodernist objection that "objectivity" is not as objective as it was once made out to be. For example, as Priddy (1999) points out:

Objectivism is the thesis that reality can be known entirely as it is in itself, quite independently of the biases of any observing subject. This has been shown as untenable as philosophy. Popular though it is, this doctrine has long been rejected by the soundest philosophers and also by scientists in the forefront of physics since Eddington….

The postmodernists also have problems with the concept of scientific objectivity:

Postmodernism enables a *questioning* of the scientific attitude and the scientific method, of the universal efficacy of technical-instrumental reason, and the stance of objectivity and value neutrality in the making of knowledge claims. This is not so much a matter of *rejection* but rather of recognizing that these are claims not truths, claims which are socially formed, historically located cultural constructs, thus partial and specific to particular discourses and purposes. (Usher, Bryant & Johnson, 1997, p.7)

While it might not be possible to save the concept of absolute objectivity, it might be possible to salvage something useful. As Kenny (1975) (in discussing Wittgenstein "On Certainty") has pointed out, "Cartesian doubt in a way destroys itself, since it is so radical that it is bound to call into question

the meanings of the words used to express it" (p.206). Much in the way that Wittgenstein used his "hinges" **(2)** to try to get around this problem, perhaps we could use "objectivity" as a kind of "hinge" in a "language-game"**(3)** concerning foreign language learning.

Another way would be to retain "objectivity" as an ideal, something which while impossible to achieve is still worth aiming for. Nevertheless, we would still be obliged to keep quotation marks around the word. Alternatively, we could qualify "objective" with "objective as possible" or "relatively objective."

In some cases relatively objective research may be, at times, preferable to research based on almost entirely subjective methods. However, this in no way devalues or discredits the merits of research based on different or more subjective methods.

Notes

[1] Though to be fair to Mr. Guest, at one point, he does slightly qualify "objective" with "more objective" (p.2).

[2] Certain concepts that we decide are not open to doubt in order to make

communication in a particular debate possible, as it is almost impossible to hold everything open to doubt.

[3] "The members of any community—cost accountants, college students, or rap musicians, for example—develop ways which serve their needs as a group, and these constitute the language-game (Moore's notes refer to the "system" of language) they employ" (Kemerling, 2001).

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Right to Reply

Pillars and Spaghetti Strands

Michael Guest

I'd like to begin by thanking Mr. Sloss for reading my original article and for taking the time to comment on it. Due to its length, I was unable to engage in any specific discourse about the nature of objectivity, which perhaps has lead to some misunderstanding

of my position. In reply I would like to take the opportunity to clarify this issue now.

First, I should say that I agree with Mr. Sloss' analysis of the questionable nature of absolute objectivity. Secondly, I would like to state categorically that I do not "favor"—

as he suggests—objectivity in EFL/ESL culture research per se. However, what I do object to is the assumption found in much of the EFL/ESL culture research that citing a previously published work provides grounds for claims of objectivity. To substantiate this claim I ask readers to refer to the original article (Guest, 2003).

Writers of EFL/ESL culture literature regularly make citations presenting established research as premises in syllogistic arguments. For example, let us say a claim made by Hofstede in 1986 is cited and serves as a premise in the development of a writer's thesis. But what if Hofstede's claim itself lacks objectivity? For only if a premise is true can it follow that any conclusion based on it be considered sound. Nevertheless, such citations are often presented baldly as established facts, which then act as supposedly objective foundations on which the writer establishes a thesis. But as I have argued (Guest, 2002, 2003), many works cited in this manner actually lack the degree or the intention of objectivity claimed by those citing them.

Certainly, it is natural that EFL/ESL academic journals demand that writers try to be as objective as possible in their research; hence the often hefty number of references provided in order to establish a greater sense of "objectivity." Unfortunately though, this can mean that a simple reference to an item that was originally anecdotal or subjective in nature ends up becoming a central pillar in the writer's argument. This can then lead that writer to make unwarranted claims of objectivity regarding their conclusions. It is this tendency that I have criticized in my articles, and it is this *pillar* argument which seems, upon further reflection, to establish about as much support as a strand of spaghetti. Now, spaghetti may please the taste buds but it is

not a sound foundation for architecture.

In short then, it is not that I demand greater objectivity in EFL/ESL culture research. Rather, I question the dubious foundations of those who make claims of objectivity regarding their own research, research which often rests upon non-objective criteria. In fact, I agree with Mr. Sloss that subjective approaches can have merit in this rather nebulous field and that the nature of objectivity might not be as sacrosanct as we are inclined to think. So how about just dropping the pretense of objectivity in such research when the premises on which it is based are clearly far from being objective by any definition of the word.

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The Indonesian Varsity English Debate: A Showcase of Student Autonomy

Colin Rundle

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I recently attended the 7th Indonesian Varsity English Debate (IVED) which was held from 6-9 February in Yogyakarta, Central Java, attracting 44 teams from across that vast archipelago. Here in Tokyo I teach a diverse class of Japanese and other Asian students, including Indonesians, so I was particularly interested to glimpse how Indonesian students develop the kind of assertiveness that is rare among their Japanese classmates. The unbridled student enthusiasm that I witnessed at IVED was a notable contrast to the formality of many institutions in Japan. I suggest that this could have some profound implications for developing autonomy and assertiveness in Japanese students.

The English Speaking Union of Japan (ESUJ) hosts a comparable event, which last year featured 30 teams from across the country. It brings over a "debate squad" from select British universities to give demonstration debates and lectures, and features an eminent native-speaker MC and volunteer native-speaker adjudicators. The tournament director and assistants are Japanese students of English who receive back-up from the Debating Committee Chair, a member of ESUJ's high-powered board of professors, diplomats and business people. This is an invaluable forum and a credit to ESUJ's commitment to developing English and critical thinking skills in Japan. Therefore,

I would like to emphasize that my purpose here is not to directly compare the Japanese and Indonesian events or suggest one approach is better than the other. Rather, it is to show that IVED, with a similar mission but severely restricted resources, provides an instructive example of turning adversity into opportunity. Albeit by necessity, IVED showcases many of the techniques embraced by English instructors committed to developing autonomy in students: it is student-led, employs peer tutoring, and is entirely peer-assessed.

On arrival at the Indonesian Islamic University, this year's host of IVED, I immediately sought out the organizing committee to talk to the English faculty about how they prepared for this event. The committee room was thronging with 10-20 Indonesian students, who after briefing me on the morning semi-finals and the final that evening, proclaimed that they were solely responsible for the organization of the event and that there were no "back up" faculty or supporters.

Impressed by this student leadership, I made my way to one of the semi-finals, planning to seat myself with the teachers who would no doubt be conspicuous. While waiting I chatted with debaters sidelined in earlier rounds and their coaches. The coaches were all senior students who had competed in previous debates. Later, interviews with other

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teams and the event chair, Ipong Irfansyah Kurnia, confirmed this "peer tutoring" was indeed the norm amongst IVED competitors. What's more, none of the universities offered classes in debating, nor were any lecturers present for the debates, let alone supporting the teams. Hearing all this, dissonance crept upon me: this was the national level English language event, but the only people present, in any capacity, were students!

In a lecture hall packed with about 150 spectators, the MC of the semifinal introduced the adjudicators; all of these "officials" were also senior students who had competed the previous year. Then the debate commenced; all debaters spoke fluently with convincing, passionate and animated articulation. Each team featured at least one "returnee," who, in the absence of professors, native speakers, or other experts, dazzled the collegial audience with their native-like accents and command of collocation. They were complemented by their less idiomatic members whose strength was anchoring their teams' arguments in sound logic as they debated topics such as whether "Indonesia's farmers should be protected."

That night at the final held at the University's mosque the first sign of "authority" was visible. The Third Dean for Student Affairs, invited to present the awards, sat in the front row flanked by a junior lecturer. However, the final proceeded in the same student-led manner as the semi-finals that morning. After the impassioned final debate, "The list of crooked politicians should be publicised," the Dean began his speech with an apology for his halting English, and then continued in Indonesian to name the National Accounting College as the 2004 champions, with Atma Jaya Catholic University as the runners up.

The theme of his speech was how the "specter" of English hung over Indonesians:

It is crucial for personal and national advancement, yet beyond their material means and innate abilities. Educational resources are indeed desperately scarce, as are many resources in Indonesia, but by "innate ability," was he suggesting his students fit the stereotype of "passive Asians?" The fluency and persuasiveness that I had witnessed suggested otherwise. The student ownership of the event had both displayed and generated the immense motivation and passion of the students, which seemed to compensate for any lack of resources. In fact, perhaps these strengths were not in spite of the lack of resources, but, in part at least, because of it.

After the event, some students did admit that they longed for more institutional involvement in coaching and attendance. Perhaps the contrast of the self-deprecating Dean and the firebrand student debaters provides one clue for teacher absence. Add to this that an Indonesian professor's salary is equivalent to less than ¥20,000/month, and it becomes clear that student autonomy flourishes by necessity.

From my privileged vantage point in Japan, this example of autonomy shows that less can indeed be more. I am not suggesting that ESUJ needs to learn from this event. Rather, it communicates a clear message to instructors of English in Japan: that is, to search for creative ways to hand over to students the responsibility for their own learning, and to carefully identify opportunities to offer support without reducing student motivation. This may be one small step to instilling assertiveness, or even passion, in Japanese students.

FROM THE CHALKFACE
Green Business: A Classroom Project

Jacob Schnickel
University of the Sacred Heart

Introduction

My purpose here is to describe a unit on green business that I did with a group of 25 freshman English students at a Tokyo women's university. The students were generally quite motivated, and they took assignments seriously. For the most part, the quality of their work was good. This was an intermediate class that met twice a week. Relative to the rest of the freshman class, my group was roughly in the middle in terms of their level.

The group project itself comprised eight classes. This does not, however, include the classes during which students read and discussed a number of articles on green business, including two from a unit on green business in the freshman text, *Global Outlook 1* (Bushell & Dyer, 2003). The unit was required reading for all freshman classes, and I supplied four short supplementary articles.

After reading and discussing the required and supplemental materials, students should have had a good basic understanding of what a green business is. As defined in the text, "A green business is environmentally responsible. A green business limits its pollution and uses renewable resources in the manufacture of its products. The rule of a green business is to 'reduce, reuse, recycle.'"

The project had six basic components.

Each group was to:

1. Envision a company in response to a specific environmental threat;
2. Plan their company's primary product or service;
3. Write a business plan for their company;
4. Record a radio commercial;
5. Create a poster, featuring a logo, to introduce the company and its product or service;
6. Give a group presentation.

I chose to have the class undertake this project for a number of different reasons.

Creative Output and Critical Thinking

The two required readings came from authentic sources and were quite challenging in terms of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and grammatical structures. The first was about a nonprofit corporation called *Cultural Survival* (Bushell & Dyer, 2003, pp. 76-78), which buys rainforest commodities like nuts and oils from Amazonian villagers in an effort to preserve the forests and to involve locals in the process. The second article was about a Japanese cooperative called *Seikaktsu Club* (Bushell & Dyer, B., 2003, pp. 85-87), which has been involved

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in numerous efforts to protect and improve the environment.

In groups and as individuals, the students worked hard to decipher meaning. Though the text presented students opportunities to reflect on and discuss the issues and concepts featured in the articles, I felt that the ratio of time decoding the text to that spent dealing with the issues raised in the articles was imbalanced. In my opinion, the intellectual payoff for hours spent diligently struggling with the text was poor. My beliefs and experiences as an educator told me that time spent engaged with the issues raised in the articles as opposed to the linguistic challenges they presented would give the students a deeper sense of accomplishment. With this in mind, I made the decision to devote a considerable amount of class time to the project, hoping that students would value the creative latitude as well as the opportunity to manage their own time.

The most difficult things in the project is the fist step. We questioned about that are there a good green project we can make profit and protect the earth. **-Izumi**

Academic Skills

This project provided students the opportunity to develop key academic skills in hands-on tasks. Skills required in this unit:

1. *Word-processed (as opposed to hand-written) assignments*

   It was clear that some students had little or no experience word processing documents in English.

2. *Writing as a process*

   The business plan provided an excellent opportunity for students to experience writing as a process, from brainstorming, to rough draft, to final product.

3. *Group project*

   In addition to being a common academic mode, working in a group seemed to provide a social opportunity that many of the students valued.

4. *Presentation*

   This project offered students a chance to give presentations in a very supportive environment. For many students, this was their first opportunity to give a presentation in an academic setting.

   This is my first presentation. We learned Green Business and we considered what we can do for environment. Group work is good chance to exchange each opinion and many ideas floated. **-Yuka**

   Before we try to this activity I couldn't have few friends and I didn't talk with my classmates because I am shy. But this time, through group works I talk with many people about environment, our business plan and myself. **-Ai**

The Project

Students worked in groups of five or six. (I felt six was too many, but absences and other issues complicated planning). Beyond making a few general suggestions, I let the students decide how to manage their own groups. I told them that they might need to meet outside of class, though I did not say it was necessary. I was surprised and pleased to learn that some groups did in fact meet on their own time to, as one student put it, "get down to our work."

Reading

In addition to the two lengthy articles from *Global Outlook 1*, I assigned four short

articles, which are available on the CUE website, about creative recycling projects in Japan. I chose to assign the shorter readings prior to the longer ones for two basic reasons. First, as the readings were short and accessible, they would help establish some concepts and themes that would assist them in understanding the longer articles. Second, I wished to introduce the class to the jigsaw method, a style of group work I often use. I believe that the four short articles alone could be used as a basis for the green business project.

Pre-planning: Day One

Having read and discussed a number of articles about green business, we were ready to begin the group project. As a first step, I distributed descriptions of the project, which I asked them to read and discuss in their groups. I answered their questions.

I wanted students to understand the link between environmental threats and the creation of businesses, products and services. To this end, I simplified a short article about a new product, a plastic-like substance made from cornstarch, which had been created in response to problems associated with the growing mass of petrochemical-based refuse. This material was designed to be formed into small trays for packaging chocolate candy.

I chose to make this a listening activity and presented the text of the article to the class in the form of a dictogloss-style exercise. I pre-taught some of the key vocabulary, such as "cornstarch," "water-soluble" and "petrochemical," and then read the text twice. The first time, I asked them to simply listen. Before the second reading, I instructed them to take notes. After that, in groups, they compared notes and tried to reconstruct the text. After they had completed this task, I asked groups to compare texts with other groups to see if the they were essentially the same in terms of meaning. Finally, in plenary, I checked to make sure they had all understood the basic story.

The groups examined the relationship between the environmental threat – "the world's litter mountain," as it was referred to in the headline – and the product that was developed in response – the water-soluble trays. I then provided a worksheet featuring the article and a three-column grid so students could take notes on their ideas about environmental problems, possible solutions and potential products. As a final prompt, I included on the worksheet an example of a conversation to demonstrate the type of thought process they might go through in their groups. They spent the rest of class brainstorming in their groups, keeping in mind that they were working towards ideas for the businesses they would plan and the products or services they would provide.

Creating Products and Planning Services: Day Two

In the next phase of the project, the groups were to move into more focused discussions about what kinds of products or services they would provide. I allotted the entire class period, save a few minutes at the beginning and end of class for short warm-up and cool-down activities, to the task of coming up with a basic plan for the kinds of companies they would establish. I circulated, offering advice and input as needed. At the end of class, each group handed in a short, handwritten description of their business and its main product or service.

As a cool-down activity for the day, students paired with someone from a different group and described their business plans to each other. They seemed to enjoy this opportunity to share their ideas and to hear

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those of others.

When we started to think about Green Business, we had no idea. But now, we have just completed I have many ideas about nature or Green Business. I think it was the benefit of this lesson. And in my process of the [presentation] I learned many English words about nature. These were precious experiences for me. This project was difficult for me, but I could enjoy it!! **-Yuko**

Developing Business Plans: Days Three and Four

The brief descriptions they gave me would become the basis for their business plans. I took some time to read them and to prepare for each group a feedback sheet, which consisted of a brief, encouraging remark and a series of about four questions that I thought would help them refine their ideas and tighten their focus.

Their assignment for the next class was to produce a word-processed rough draft of their business plans. The term "rough draft" was new to everyone, and they seemed quite relieved when they learned that it was not a final product. At this point, I suggested that they divide the writing task among the members of the group, but I did not require them to do this.

When we thought business plan, especially we were careful about the grammar. And when we practiced the presentation and presented I could use more English than before. Actually, I'm not good at speaking in public but I tried to do so this time. **-Junko**

Radio Commercials: Days Four and Five

Including a marketing component in this project seemed an obvious choice, but a radio commercial was not the first format that leapt to mind. I had originally imagined they would design some sort of printed brochure. However, when I considered the similarities between designing a poster and a brochure, I chose instead to have them plan and record radio commercials.

To help them prepare, I gave them a series of questions. I wanted to maximize the sharing of ideas on this topic, so I asked them to discuss the questions, which I presented as a dictation task, in new groups. After doing so, they returned to their original project groups to report and compare their results.

For the rest of the class, students worked on their business plans, which I had marked and returned, and their radio commercials.

I love our company's poster and radio commercial! **–Mai**

Final Preparations Days Six and Seven

For the remaining two periods, students worked in their groups, finishing their posters, finalizing their business plans, recording their radio commercials, and planning their presentations. I made myself available to answer questions and offer suggestions.

Presentations, Feedback and Reflection: Day Eight

On the final day of the project, I suggested that groups practice their presentations for the first 15 or 20 minutes of class. After that, they all put their posters up on the back

wall of the classroom, gathered around, and began giving and listening to the presentations. After each one, I played the group's radio commercial, which prompted laughter and praise among the students. There was a short question and answer period after each presentation.

In preparation for the final activity of the day, I distributed sheets with a few examples of ways to compliment others on their good work. After some choral repetition practice, I asked groups of three or four, comprising members of different project teams, to get together and give complimentary feedback to one another.

For homework, I asked each student to write a reflection paper on the project we had just finished. I also reminded them to fill in the self-assessment forms I'd distributed at the beginning of the project.

In the following class, I gave each student a copy of my comments for her group. And, as a final step, I asked pairs of students to read each other's reflection papers and to make some brief comments.

> *Experiencing this group project, I had a lot of fun, and I learned about presentations.* **–Marina**

Conclusion

Based on reflection papers and year-end questionnaires, it seems most students had a positive experience with the green business project. The student comments I have included here reflect some of the themes that emerged in post-project feedback, including the value of cooperation, the importance of seeking environmentally friendly alternatives as consumers, and the satisfaction of completing a challenging, long-term group project.

I felt slightly nervous as students contemplated the blank canvas of the new project. I was excited as they began to generate ideas. And when they settled into a rhythm, I wondered if I had done the right thing in assigning the project. I struggled somewhat with the fact that whole classes passed without my saying much. In the end, however, when students displayed their posters, gave their presentations and played their radio commercials, I shared the relief and satisfaction many of them seemed to be experiencing.

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From the Chalkface

RESEARCH DIGEST
Keeping it Together: A Review of *Scholar's Aid*

*Jim Smiley*
Ohu University

Research Digest

Judith Bell's book on how to do research lists the card index as the first item in her chapter on keeping records. This was in 1999! How many of us still input reference lists manually, laboriously each time we write a paper? How many of us still have card indexes or even home-made computer files listing our books? How many of us even write our research notes on scraps of paper? If you are still working with pen and paper, reading on may benefit you. Even for those of us who have gone electronic, have you ever forgotten where you read that key point for your thesis? Are you ever annoyed by having to look up the exact format for a bibliography and references within your text? Do you ever get ruffled and forget to link a reference with the bibliography?

Welcome to the 21st century! Welcome to *Scholar's Aid*, a product which does a whole host of wonderful things that a modern-day researcher will find invaluable. It allows you to keep your bibliographical data and research notes together, and to insert your information into your word processor at the click of a button.

It makes reference lists effortlessly. It links notes via hyperlinks. It saves web pages as research notes.

Scholar's Aid comes in two sections; a notes program and a library program. Let's look at each in turn. The notes program allows you to input seven kinds of notes: quotations, summaries, tables, glossaries, web notes, My Ideas and general types. General notes differs from My Ideas only in the color of the note type. The idea is to separate general note-taking from one's own thoughts. The interface has your notes' titles on the left-hand side, allowing you to see your paper's overall structure at a glance. There is the facility to arrange a larger project

Graphic 1. Notes Window
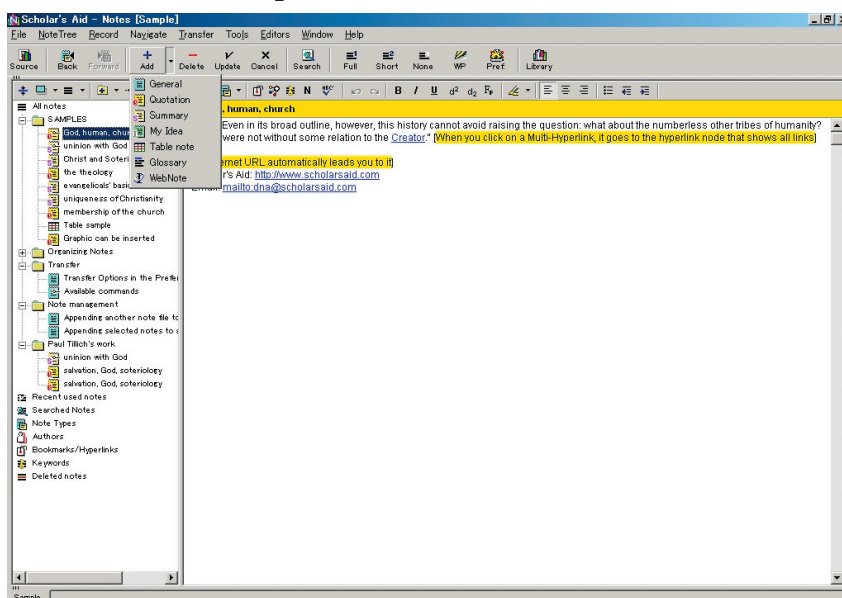
into folders. On the right is the main window for writing your paper. Each word of each note can be hyperlinked to any other note. This feature is very useful in keeping track of longer and more complex arguments. Each note type has its own color, helping you find, for example, quotations (see Graphic 1). Personalized note types may be added. The most valuable component, and the rationale for the program, is the ability to link any note with a source reference text which is stored in the Library program.

The library program has three key features. The first is the library itself. Each item is categorized into its particular source type; books, articles, reviews, theses, dissertations, reports, government documents, Internet and miscellaneous. Each type has enough subsections to satisfy most detailed categorizations (see Graphic 2). If needed, categories can be added. The second feature allows references, reference lists and bibliographies to be customized. Five styles are included with the package; MLA, APA, Chicago, Harvard and MHRA, but each can be altered, and new styles can be set up (see Graphic 3).

The third item is the facility to connect with any library's catalogue which uses Z39.50 protocol. This means that users can access many of the world's library catalogues from their desktop.

All of this retails at 149USD (student price of 99USD is also available), comparing nicely with *EndNote*, which retails at 239USD. As we would expect from the price difference, *Scholar's Aid* does not offer some of the advanced functions and capabilities of *EndNote*. For instance, *Scholar's Aid* does not have Palm Handheld compatibility.

Learning to use the program's basic functions took almost no time at all for me, but I consider myself reasonably adept with the computer. The more advanced functions, like manually adapting the references and bibliography editor to match JALT's *The Language Teacher* requirements, took a lot more time, and I found that the interface was not so user-friendly. A further drawback of *Scholar's Aid* is its use of 'in-house' terminology, which is not intuitive at times. I struggled for a bit with terms 'stitch' and 'splitters' and the difference between 'note trees' and 'note lists'.

'Search pane' only became clear when I realized that they had omitted the final 'l'. Otherwise, commands, functions, tabs and so on are clearly labeled. As expected with any modern software program, a full tutorial package, help support, and free web updates are also included.

A 30-day free trial offer enables you to try out the package and overcome some of

Graphic 2. Library Window
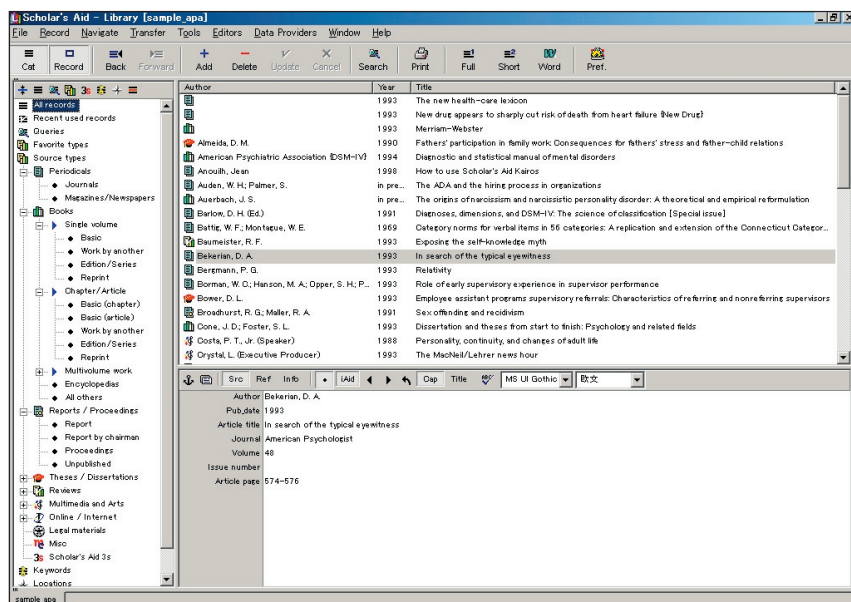
the learning curve before you buy. Details can be found at
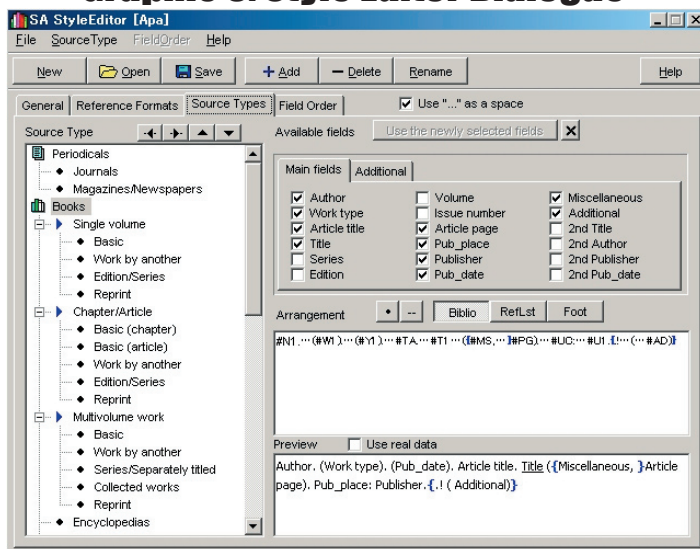
http://www.scholarsaid.com/

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Note

A trial version of *EndNote* can be downloaded from http://www. endnote.com/

Graphic 3. Style Editor Dialogue

Research Digest

Conference Calendar

Cultural Diversity and Language Education Conference

The Imin International Conference Center,
University of Hawai'i at Manoa,
September 17 – 19, 2004
nflrc.hawaii.edu/prodev/CDALE/

The 3rd Annual Peace as a Global Language Conference

Kyoto Museum for World Peace
Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan
September 24 – 26, 2004
www.eltcalendar.com/PGL2004

The 1st International Online Conference on Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Research

September 25 – 26, 2004
www.readingmatrix.com/onlineconference/index.html

International Conference on Educational Technology 2004

Suntec, Singapore
September 9 – 10, 2004
www.icet.com.sg

Interviewing Japanese Teachers of English: Data Collection or Teacher Development?

John Adamson
Shinshu Honan College

I have recently been interviewing Japanese teachers of English at the tertiary level as part of a research project into teacher beliefs about training and qualifications. This has been, and will hopefully continue to be, a rewarding process since it informs me not only about the research topic, but also about intercultural interviewing as a separate focus of interest. In this short paper I would like to share some of the insights I have gained so far.

Before looking at these insights, it is essential to contextualize the interviews by describing the research topic and interview style employed. These are fundamental influences on how any interview is conducted. The degree of familiarity or awareness of the topic under discussion naturally affects how confident the interviewee feels to provide input. Also, the researcher's style of interviewing, ranging from the strictly structured to the open, therapeutic styles have great influence over the amount and type of talk the interviewee provides. My particular approach has been to use a semi-structured approach, i.e. one that addresses a number of related topics rather than set, scripted questions. This "free form" (Drever, 1995) allows the interviewer to deviate and explore topics. It can involve additional cues and prompts suited to the linguistic level and ability of the interviewee. In brief, it is a popular approach among researchers conducting qualitative studies as it allows for the creation of an informal atmosphere in which subjects can freely ask questions and engineer the interview discussion. The interviewer's role is that of a guide leading the interviewee through the topics. The emphasis is on the creation of rapport and taking a non-judgmental approach to whatever the interviewee says. With these points in mind I decided to embark upon interviews with Japanese teachers of English, believing that semi-structured interviewing would be the best way to elicit input from potentially nervous subjects.

My research topic is to find out what beliefs and attitudes teachers of English have towards teacher training and qualifications. It is an exploration into the "hidden side" (Freeman, 2002) of teacher cognition, done especially to inform those involved in teacher training as to how teacher training courses are perceived among English language teachers, both native and non-native speakers of English and those who have received that training or not. I have chosen teachers working at a mixture of colleges, universities, schools and private language institutes to obtain a broad perspective of opinions. For the purpose of this article I will focus on the interviewing process conducted with five Japanese teachers of English working in the tertiary sector in Nagano Prefecture. The topics chosen as a basis for the interview were as follows:

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1. Beliefs toward teachers who have qualifications;

2. Beliefs toward teachers who teach without qualifications;

3. The interviewee's qualifications;

4. Experiences working with qualified and unqualified teachers;

5. The ideal training course content for the interviewee;

6. The methodological superiority of those with postgraduate qualifications;

7. Teacher hierarchies;

8. Personal teacher development.

Before the interviews were conducted, interviewees were informed of their right to remain anonymous. All interviews were taped and held at a site chosen by the interviewees themselves.

Actually finding Japanese teachers of English willing to be interviewed was quite problematic. More than ten lecturers, both part-time and full-time, were invited through personal contacts, five refusing on various grounds such as:

1. Their perceived inability to understand or communicate in English on the research topics;

2. Lack of experience in teaching;

3. Confusion about why the research topic would be of any relevance to the English language research community;

4. The research topic delved too deeply into private beliefs about sensitive issues;

5. Lack of time to be interviewed.

The third reason stated above by an elderly male was clearly the potential cause of much contention and provides as much insight into teacher beliefs towards training and qualifications as some of those interviewed. The overall suggestion was that the issue of qualifications was not related to the research field of either applied linguistics or linguistics and was, therefore, not worth pursuing.

Of the five who finally accepted, four were female and one male. Of those who refused, three were male and two female. This implied immediately that female lecturers were more conducive to being interviewed and that male lecturers perhaps felt that the research question probed too deeply into their personal beliefs.

Once underway, it became clear that female lecturers expanded quite quickly on the topics into areas concerning their personal treatment by male staff at their workplaces. Issues of discrimination, sexism and the existence of male dominated cliques were raised which were strongly believed to influence their attitudes and respect towards male staff members. The semi-structured interviewing style seemed to act as a means for these lecturers to expand deeper into the given topics and steer towards areas of concern affecting their own career development and identity.

Interviewee: I am pressured to act like a traditional woman here… but my research (requires me to) have critical (thinking)…

Interviewer: What do you mean… I mean, what is the relationship between critical thinking?

Interviewee: Ah yes, thinking, thinking, yes…

Interviewer: Yes, critical thinking and traditional female roles?

Interviewee: (short pause) I mean… they think I should have children, not be

(a) researcher. Also, I need to argue my opinion… for my research.

A male interviewee put forward the opinion that when asked about teacher hierarchies and cliques:

There are no clique(s) here. Everyone the same.

A female lecturer from the same institution replied to the same question:

Well, (smiling)…you know I should not say bad things for your interview.

The opinions about the issue of hierarchies were starkly different between the male and the female interviewees. This shows, however, not simply a contrast in belief systems towards the topic but how the interviewing style allows the expression of such beliefs. What starts as an inquiry into a research area yields more than data to analyze. The actual process by which the interview is co-constructed presents the participants (including the interviewer) with the opportunity to express their "natural voice" (Cowie, 2001). This is argued as representing "culture in action" or the "site of professional practice" (Baker & Johnson, 1998) in itself. What is touched upon is more than the provision of data, but an insight into the experiential and moral worlds of teachers. The process of such interviewing potentially, as in the case of some of the female lecturers, created a temporary "communal common ground" (Clark, 1996) in which I, as a male researcher, felt as if the interviewees wanted to expose a little of their angst and "hidden world" (Freeman, 2002).

These interviews are still in progress. Of particular satisfaction to me is the fact that one female interviewee later recommended another lecturer in her department for an interview, saying that she wanted her colleague to go through the same process since it was rewarding. If the process is perceived as rewarding, interview-based research employing a semi-structured approach takes on the role of a teacher development tool, an overlooked yet healthy by-product of qualitative research.

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BOOK REVIEWS

IELTS on Track Test Practice

Slater, S., Millen, D., and Tyrie, P. (2003) Melbourne: Language Australia in association with CELUSA ISBN 1-876768-36-3

Reviewed by Michael Carroll
Momoyama Gakuin University

How do you prepare for a standardized language test? It's certainly not hard to find test preparation materials on bookshop shelves. Of course most of these are for TOEFL, TOEIC, STEP or other tests popular in Japan. Still the contrasts between most test preparation books and *IELTS on Track* are quite striking. Many such books focus almost wholly on repetitive practice of items of the same types as those found in the test, while others, especially common in Japan, aim to build vocabulary in the range supposedly targeted by the test. While both of these approaches have benefits when they are part of a rounded preparation program, they are of limited use when seen as a core part of it. This book, like most IELTS preparation materials, has a strong focus on strategies for approaching the test, understanding what the test requires, and learning from your own and other test-takers' experiences.

The book is organized along the division into the four macro-skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, like the test itself. Each skill has a short introduction to that part of the test, and a number of practice tests, together with a 'Fast Track' section which is the strategies part. For listening and reading these are straightforward, with the advice section covering time management, focusing on the questions, guessing and predicting, skimming and scanning and so on. The suggested method of using the tests makes good pedagogic sense – trying to analyze your mistakes, retaking the test after a day's break, and finally using the transcript or text and dictionaries for detailed analysis.

One feature of the book that seems to me especially valuable is one called 'Tips from test takers'. It's not that the advice is any different from what a teacher, or the authors of this book, might give; but coming from other students gives the advice an immediacy and a sense of recognition. When one student begins her tip with 'I had a really bad start … I started to panic,' I could recognize her experience immediately from my own experience, and her advice was that much more easy to imbibe.

The writing and speaking skills sections are organized rather differently. It's an intelligent strategy. The ways of testing these skills are so different from the still moderately traditional ways of testing listening and speaking, that quite different preparation is called for. I've always thought, as a teacher and examiner, that these are the easiest parts of the test to 'prep' for. With the right preparation, students at virtually any level should be able to improve their score through good test strategies, especially in writing. (Conversely, even the best speakers and writers may be disadvantaged if they have not familiarized themselves with the test format and expec-

tations beforehand.) Both of these sections include a 'What is the examiner looking for?' page—essential given the necessary element of subjectivity in the assessment of productive skills. In both sections, advice from examiners, and advice about them (what they are looking for) takes greater prominence than student experiences. This is as it should be. A big part of success in these sections involves getting into the head of the examiners, not as individuals, but as players of the standard role of IELTS examiner. Tips from the examiners allow the writers to not only give advice about what to do, but also about common mistakes, about which examiners have the most useful knowledge.

Would I recommend the book? Unreservedly, for those preparing for IELTS, or those teaching students at the relatively high levels who may take the test. But in addition, I can see ways in which this book could be used by teachers looking for well constructed, graded listening and speaking material for students across the whole range, including the most hesitant of freshman English learners. The early items in the IELTS listening test are not overly taxing, but at the same time are genuinely natural sounding, full of communicatively useful phrases and structures that would benefit our learners greatly, and the strategies for test success overlap with sensible strategies for building basic conversational listening skills. The speaking material is easily generalizable from the test to basic fluency strategies. The topics in the early part of the speaking test – family, friends, travel, weekends – are very likely frequent topics in most university classrooms, and the commentary, transcript analysis and assessment criteria discussed in this book, are precisely the kinds of teaching interventions that may be most useful to students in pursuing greater fluency.

Book Reviews

Oral Presentations for Technical Communication

Laura J. Gurak, Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 2000. pp xxiv + 263. ISBN 0-205-29415-4

Reviewed by Kay Hammond, International Christian University

Oral Presentations for Technical Communication is one of the books included in the Allyn & Bacon series in technical communication. This series aims to provide instruction based on research and experience that explains not only the practical application of concepts, but also the theories behind them. Although this series is based on a response to the needs of North American undergraduate and graduate students, it covers the elements of good technical presentations that are applicable to a far wider audience.

The book is divided into five parts that contain four chapters each. Each chapter contains an overview, chapter contents, a short summary, a questions/exercises/assignments section, and references. At the conclusion of the five main parts of the book, advice from

a professional is given. Throughout the book there are information boxes that give more information on topics and show how mastering the skills of technical presentations are necessary in the professional world. In addition, there are scenarios showing case studies, and summary checklists.

The first part of the book is entitled, "Presenting You, Presenting your Message," and it covers the basic elements of presentation skills. The first chapter outlines the characteristics of technical presentations. The second chapter deals with overcoming anxiety. The third chapter focuses on using character, memory and delivery skills. The final chapter provides useful techniques for building confidence as a presenter.

The second part, "Audience, Purpose, Beginnings, Endings," provides the basic building blocks for readers to create their own presentations. The first two chapters cover familiarity with the audience and the purpose of the presentation, respectively. The third chapter stresses the importance of strong introductions and conclusions. The fourth chapter covers the body section of the presentation in terms of finding material, organization, citations, preparing handouts and outlines.

The third part of the book is entitled "Types of Technical Presentations," and covers four different types of technical presentation. There is a chapter on each type of presentation that: informs; persuades; offers a plan of action; and explains how to perform a task. These basic four provide a solid base from which other types of presentations could be mastered.

"Science, Technology, and Non-Expert Audiences" is the title of the fourth part of the book. This section offers readers useful techniques to bridge the gap between experts making scientific and highly technical presentations and the non-expert public audience. The chapters in this section introduce various strategies used by journalists who skillfully capture public attention about scientific matters. These strategies include: adding mystery, humor, and current events in attention grabbing introductions; shifting genre from formal academic writing to the spoken level; the shift in focus from the empirical classifications to the more practical aspects of how it will affect the audience; the use of analogies, and the use of visuals.

The final part is entitled, "Presentations and Technologies." This section covers aspects of using presentation software and hardware, copyright and ethical issues. The benefits and pitfalls of various types of presentation technology are covered, and lists of useful tips are provided.

Oral Presentations for Technical Communication goes beyond the provision of basic public speaking skills. The examples are drawn from technical and scientific areas, clearly presenting a link between general presentation skills and their application to more specialized topic areas. The book provides a balanced approach to communication that includes both the human and technological sides of technical presentations. In doing so, this book is an all-in-one reference that saves the reader from having to acquire several works to cover all the essential areas.

Further instructional material is available from the companion website <www.abacon. com/gurak>. This site provides activities, worksheets, online discussions, related websites, and sample presentations. The companion website makes a promising start; however, it is not much more than an overview of the book itself. Although it is professionally presented, it merely repeats some of the exercises already given in the book, and only two worksheets are available. The

strength of the website is that the worksheets are of good quality, and the sample syllabus is an impressive offering of class policies, a timetable of classes, presentation instruction sheets, and a peer review sheet. Overall, the website is not a good reflection of the book, and it should not be considered a reason to either get the book or reject it.

This book would be extremely useful for students and teachers who are engaged in technical and scientific presentations. This is the case for many teachers of English in Japan whose students are science majors and may wish to bring this interest into their English studies. As a textbook for ESL students, it would be more suitable for upper intermediate to advanced students. Despite the technical nature of the subject material, the style of writing is reader-friendly. The comprehensive nature of the book also makes it an excellent reference for instructors to base lesson plans on for any level of student. In addition, many instructors themselves would benefit from mastering the skills presented in this book.

CONFERENCE REVIEW

On Their Own: "Developing Opinions and Critical Analysis Skills" Richmond Stroupe at JALT2003

Mika Maruyama
Independent Translator
Joe Falout
College of Science and Technology, Nihon University

Lifetime employment has collapsed in Japan, and unemployment remains high (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2003). But job opportunities await in foreign companies based here or abroad. After a recent revision of regulations, an increasing number of foreign businesses are coming to Japan. Favored job applicants will show problem solving skills and ability to act autonomously. In other words, these employers want to hire people who critically analyze issues and express their opinions. Dr. Stroupe made these assertions at JALT 2003 in his presentation, "Developing Opinions and Critical Analysis Skills."

Critical thinking brings you more than job opportunities. In the era of Information Technology, false information runs rampant. Following the wrong information can be damaging, or even fatal. If you have critical

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thinking skills, you can better differentiate logic from fallacy, truth from lie. You can act more competently wherever you go. Less crucially, this ability makes you a well-rounded individual. But Japanese universities, finds Brian McVeigh (2002), fail to train their students to write critically, argue coherently, or express themselves (p. 13). Nor are the students taught the value of critical thinking (p. 9).

Dr. Stroupe said critical thinking manifests in a variety of practices, from supporting opinions with plausible reasons, to analyzing and discussing current issues. English teachers might consider teaching these skills to advanced learners, but not to low-level learners. Low-level learners, teachers feel, are impeded by language barriers. To the contrary, Dr. Stroupe believes language is not the issue. Critical thinking requires knowing how to think logically and analytically— processes and skills that can be developed through a coordinated education program. Learners at all levels are ready.

Students entering university already have routine experience with pursuing research and sharing opinions. As opposed to the passive, repressive environments of secondary school students, primary school students participate in autonomous settings, with more interest, enjoyment, creativity, spontaneity, cognitive flexibility, trust, and self-esteem (Edwards, 2004, p. 21). One participant at Dr. Stroupe's presentation pointed out that primary schools offer classes where students initiate their own projects, based on their interests, pursue an analysis and present their findings. He said that students who enter junior high school are full of curiosity, but by the end of their first year they lose the spark in their eyes, the spark of their critical thinking.

The rest of us agreed it is not that our students never had critical thinking skills; they developed them, but learned to suppress them in the course of their education. They spent most of their secondary school lives passively; sitting quietly, listening to teachers, and doing things they were told to do without asking questions. Yet they never lost the ability to think and choose for themselves. Even now they do so all the time: where to surf on the Internet; what to do and with whom to do it; which CD to listen to. There is no end to things that require their ratiocination. They just do not do it methodically, nor can they retrace their thoughts for objective scrutiny.

During the presentation, Dr. Stroupe solicited our teaching methods. It became clear that we teachers already incorporate—without realizing—approaches that stimulate or even capitalize on the critical thinking skills of our students, such as when they: ask for clarification; state reasons for their preferences or actions; compose simple sentences from sets of words; and write essays. Unfortunately, we do these activities not systematically, but individually and sporadically. There is little continuity across the weeks and years.

Dr. Stroupe described a long-term approach—a curriculum based on TOFEL scores and set to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1956, cited by Stroupe) to teach critical thinking as explicit processes and skills. Bloom's Taxonomy relates behaviors to levels of cognition so that one can measure the level of cognition against specific learning objectives. This taxonomy is divided into six progressive levels, from lowest to highest: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

Composition classes, conversation classes, and TOFEL preparation classes comprise each level, with specific goals and practical examples. For instance, Basic level includes predicting outcomes of conversations, and ranking explanations according to order of importance; Elementary level includes agreeing and disagreeing with statements by giving support, and explaining decision processes; Intermediate level includes proposing possible solutions to global problems, and evaluating paragraph structure; Advanced level includes evaluating social norms, and supporting main points in an essay with appropriate evidence in an essay, and Advanced Intensive level includes developing and supporting referenced argumentative essays, judging credibility of a source, and formulating new ideas.

With this method of scaffolding, students build their critical thinking skills progressively and explicitly. The students might face difficulties in the beginning because this type of thinking is something they are not used to. But they can grasp it when objectives are made transparent. The course at the Basic level has objectives such as agreeing or disagreeing with statements. With clearly stated, attainable objectives at each level, students know exactly how to pull themselves up the ladder of critical thinking.

Dr. Stroupe hopes to see more coordinated programs that systematically develop critical thinking process and skills across the school years. Starting such a program, he says, requires the understanding and cooperation of teachers and policy makers. It requires the time and commitment of everyone at a school—an enormous effort, but worth it.

A proverb reads, "It takes a village to raise a child." Like this village, the school that expends concerted effort is doing so for the interest of the students. An English program that integrates critical analysis skills prepares students to step outside school, to reach out to the global community, and to reach into themselves to think on their own.

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Conference Review

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