

In this issue:

2019 JALT CUE AND  
BIZCOM ESP  
SYMPOSIUM

TWO FEATURE  
ARTICLES

CUE CAREERS



# CUE CIRCULAR

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News and articles from the JALT College and University Educators Special Interest Group



Fukuoka Jo Gakuin Nursing University

Photo by Mathew Porter

## All roads lead to Nagoya.

Welcome to issue 9 of *CUE Circular*, coming out just as we finish preparing our posters and slide decks for JALT 2019 in Nagoya!

Again, we're running a shorter format now, with two feature articles rather than three, plus the regular CUE Careers column. Two articles will shed light on the job and career side of things; Akiko Tsuda shares her insights as a mid-career female university faculty member, and Michael Parrish and Richard Miller in the Careers column explain the array of job titles and job descriptions within our field. To round things off, Daniel Velasco returns to *CUE Circular* with a great story of what happened when he lost his voice for a few days, and how it changed his views on certain aspects of his teaching.

That idea for an article that you have been holding on to for a while probably *will* make for a great read. Go on and write it! *CUE Circular* is all about sharing the experiences,



*2019 JALT CUE and BizCom ESP Symposium*

insights, opinions, and advice that teachers in Japan's CUE sector can benefit from reading but which might not find a home in more rigorously academic publications.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *CUE Circular*.

*Steve Paton, Editor*

### **2019 JALT CUE SIG and BizCom SIG ESP Symposium**

The 2019 JALT CUE and BizCom ESP Symposium took place on Saturday, September 21 in Osaka. The Osaka branch of Uchida Yoko proved an excellent venue for the one-day symposium.

The event got started with a plenary talk from Laurence Anthony detailing the current state of the field of ESP and recent changes to ESP programs. He shared several useful tools for creating and analyzing field-specific language corpora. Anthony finished by examining future directions the field of ESP could take.

After lunch, the second plenary speaker, Winnie Cheng, outlined collaborative ESP projects that have been taking place in Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on the process of creating profession-specific corpora. She detailed the effects of these interdisciplinary research projects on ESP education.

There was ample time for exchange during the two poster sessions and breaks. As the posters were split into two separate sessions during which no other events took place, it was easy for presenters and attendees to move around and exchange ideas with others. The setup of the posters along the perimeter of the break room meant presenters never waited for long before conference goers arrived to view and discuss their posters.



After the second poster session, plenary speaker Judy Noguchi discussed how ESP methodologies can be used to improve communication in specialized fields even for native English speakers. She modeled this with examples from science, engineering, and medicine courses. The symposium finished with closing remarks and a book raffle. Four lucky attendees won signed copies of speaker Laurence Anthony's latest book, *Introducing English for Specific Purposes* (Routledge, 2018).

Following the symposium, many gathered at a nearby restaurant for the friendly conference dinner.

*Jamie Taylor, Outgoing CUE SIG publicity officer*

*\*Thanks to Jamie for four years of service to the SIG!*



*2019 JALT CUE and BizCom ESP Symposium*

## Feature articles

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## Feature articles

### Why are we so busy? Reflections of a mid-career Japanese female faculty member

**Akiko Tsuda, Nakamura  
Gakuen University**



Akiko Tsuda (M.Ed., M.A., Ph.D.) is Associate Professor at Nakamura Gakuen University in Fukuoka. Her research interests include ESP/EAP and intercultural communication.

Busy, busy, busy. Always, we Japanese faculty members complain about our hectic lives. Probably 20 or 30 years ago, the job of sensei in Japanese universities was more relaxed and more respected, I suppose. Before getting a position as a full-time teacher at a Japanese university myself, I couldn't imagine how busy faculty members actually are. Tenured teachers in higher education in Japan have four responsibilities: research or *kenkyu*, teaching or *kyoiku*, administration or *komu*, and contribution to communities or *chiiki koken*. I have been evaluated on these four factors by my university, as most Japanese universities have introduced the same criteria for evaluation.

The majority of teachers choose this profession to do research, and usually we are evaluated based on the number of

publications we produce; if we would like to climb the career ladder in academia, we need to focus more on research for a more attractive CV as researchers. However, year by year, the research budgets of universities have been decreasing, so we need to get research grants from outside, such as *kakenhi*, the research grant from the Ministry of Education in Japan. In October, the first month of the fall term, one of the busiest months for teachers, we need to write proposals for *kakenhi* while preparing for classes. The acceptance rate of *kakenhi* is usually just 20-30 percent, and some universities have cut the budget for researchers who do not submit *kakenhi* proposals, like a penalty. I feel it causes awkward relationships among faculty members, as of course some of the faculty members work at universities because they want to be teachers in a certain field, not researchers.

In my case, after completing an M.A. and Ph.D. course while working as a part-time teacher in several colleges, I finally got a full-time lecturer position on the tenure track. I regard myself as a researcher/teacher and really like teaching, so I want to prepare for teaching as much as possible. That's why I feel stressed. Even though I would like to focus on teaching, I'm almost always overloaded by my other three roles. To keep up with trends in teaching, I need to be active in academia. Teaching and researching should be two wheels which affect each other. On top of that, budgets for teaching have been slashed, especially for private universities,



and the ratio of students per teacher is becoming larger. Classes which do not have a certain number of students registered might be cancelled the next term. The minimum number of students per class is set by individual universities, and usually it is not known by students and part-time teachers.

The third duty of teachers, *komu*, is less known by outsiders. Full-time teachers need to attend a lot of faculty meetings and belong to several committees, such as educational affairs, entrance exams, public relations, international exchange, research, ethics, and so on. Basically, part-time teachers don't have to attend these kind of meetings. In addition, full-time teachers in Japan need to take full responsibility for entrance exams, from designing and proctoring to marking. Nowadays, also, to attract more examinees, more and more private universities have to set several examination venues in other prefectures, so faculty and administrative staff members need to travel as proctors during the season of entrance exams. In addition, many universities now have several kinds of entrance exams: *ippan nyushi* (general exams), *AO nyushi* (enrollment by Admission Office), and *suisen nyushi* (enrollment by recommendation), and these causes a wide disparity of academic abilities among students. To solve these issues, many private universities which are labeled as *mendomiga-ii* or universities "accommodating students" have high numbers of school-like events; for example, we need to organize one-day excursions, escort students on study-

abroad programs, arrange PTA meetings, etc. Faculty members work like classroom teachers in secondary education. My institution is one of this kind, so I am a classroom teacher of 55 first-year students. I have sometimes called students who have been absent for too many classes and met with them as one of my duties as a classroom teacher even though I have no experience as a school counselor.

In my opinion, the fourth duty, *chiiki koken* (contribution to communities), tends to be given the lowest priority, as teachers are already stressed out from their other three duties. Usually, *chiiki koken* at my institution is done as open lectures or extension courses to local people, but in some cases, the speakers are just invited from outside of the university. Also, in the hierarchy of the university in Japan, younger faculty members don't dare to "contribute to communities". As they are rather low in status in the committees in universities, they cannot afford to spend their time outside of their institutions.

Looking back more than 10 years as a faculty member, I have been juggling my private life and professional life, and I have felt sorry for my son as I've rarely attended his school's events. If I had attended them, I would have had to cancel my classes and schedule make-up classes on weekends or evenings, which are not ideal for my students or family. Now my parents have reached their 80s, and I need to think seriously about their care in the near future. I admire many senior professors I know who have been facing

these issues, caring for their elderly parents and managing the four responsibilities I mentioned along with family issues.

What's the solution? How can I become a much happier researcher/teacher? One thing I can say is that one person alone cannot change anything, and it takes time to change this trend. Japanese society is aging, and the birth rate has been decreasing, so universities in Japan are categorized as "a declining industry".

In my case, I have shared my opinion with my co-teachers and tried to speak with English speakers (including English as Lingua Franca speakers such as those from the Philippines, Russia, and Singapore). Compared to Japanese faculty members, they are less informed or not informed at all due to Japanese language barriers and our cultural patterns. Even English speakers who have been working for a long time in Japan experience similar problems, especially if they don't live with Japanese partners. Through discussions with them, I can think outside of the box of the current system. The goal set by the Ministry of Education is nurturing "global-minded human resources", but I often feel a lack of communication between Japanese and foreign (or international) teachers, and this might hinder the globalization of the campus. Except for English-medium universities, faculty meetings are held in Japanese, and important decisions for English education in institutions are made in Japanese by only Japanese decision makers. If the Japanese faculty give enough information about these four

responsibilities to English speaking teachers, we can collaborate more efficiently. I would like to research together, teach together, work together for institutions and external institutions, and contribute to local communities, regardless of nationality and differences in first language to make the most of our time and efforts.

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## *Submit an article!*

What's happening in your teaching?

What obstacles have you overcome, and how?

What ideas or opinions do you have that others might be interested to read?

What have you read, heard, or seen recently that's changed your approach to teaching, either in or out of the classroom?

CUE Circular aims to publish quality, interesting, practical articles about the day-to-day nature of teaching in our sector.

[www.jaltcue.org/cuecircular](http://www.jaltcue.org/cuecircular)



# Teaching in silence

**Daniel Velasco, Rikkyo University**



Daniel Velasco is an assistant professor and mental health therapist. His research interests are intercultural communication and counseling support for university students. [dvelasco@thechicagoschool.edu](mailto:dvelasco@thechicagoschool.edu)

“Why aren’t you wearing a mask?”

I have never actually seen anyone infected with the Black Plague, but in typical hypochondriac fashion, I assumed that was what my student had caught. He was coughing violently and sneezing all over the place without even the slightest effort towards covering his mouth to keep at least some of the contagious particles at bay.

“I don’t have one,” he wheezed.

I frantically looked around the room for someone wearing a surgical mask. Apparently, while I was talking to this student at close range, exposing myself to the deadly infection, most of the other students took the opportunity to put on masks for their protection.

“Does anyone have an extra mask?” I asked. Fifteen students sifted through their bags and simultaneously produced masks, but it was too late. Over the course of a month, one by one, students became infected with the illness and disappeared from my class until only five remained. Then one day, I, too, felt the onset of what

would become one of the worst colds I have ever had in my life. Initially, it felt like a regular terrible cold, but then it hit me with a barrage of fevers, chills, coughs, aches, and pains that one only reads about in French tragedies. In the end, after the fevers and chills subsided, I lost my voice. Completely.

I had a choice to make: cancel classes or push forward and hope for the best. Most teachers would not even hesitate to cancel their classes when they’ve lost their voice, but I had a planned vacation coming up, and canceling classes would mean 2-3 weeks of missed lessons, which would not have been looked upon very positively by the front office. I decided not to cancel classes and hope my voice returned in time.

It didn’t. I tried a mom-sworn remedy of gargling for 5 minutes with tablespoons of salt poured into hot water, drank a medley of boiling hot herbal teas, and even resorted to using some strange black liquid that the Japanese swear heals most ailments. Unfortunately, nothing brought my voice back. Shortly thereafter, I found myself sitting in my office on a Monday morning nervously pondering my options.

## Silence

The word frightens people for various reasons and in various situations, including relationship argument strategies (the “silent treatment”), eerie horror films, or pick-up approaches (the “silent gaze”). There’s even a medically-recognized fear of silence (sedatephobia), and a growing concern connected to the rise of technology: “Many experts believe

that technology has also given rise to the constant need for sounds around humans. For some people, it is impossible to meditate or sit in a quiet room for even a few minutes as they always need their phone, music, TV, or the noise of traffic around them” (Olesen, 2018). In the field of education, silence has also received a bad rap: “Silence...is often problematized in a classroom situation, with the underlying implication that classrooms are for talking – as long as the talking is under the control of the teacher” (Ollin, 2008, p.278-281).

Lees (2012) has written extensively about silence as a powerful tool in education, but it might be advantageous to also reflect on what teachers say about silence. One educator suggests that pausing during a lesson can achieve several things; it can build intensity and suspense for a culminating statement, diffuse and lessen the anxiety of a situation, show dominance and communicate power, and indicate that you are listening and mentally digesting a student’s question or comment (Reddy, 2015). Also, teachers in a study on silence in the classroom used silence in a number of ways:

- dramatic impact;
- relaxation, slowing down at the beginning or end of class;
- focus, discipline and control;
- inner reflection;
- creative, intuitive or reflective space for students; and
- freedom from intrusion (from classmates, teachers, etc.) (Ollin, 2008).

## **Coping with Silence**

Reflecting on the loss of my voice, I didn’t consider any of this. All I could think about was how on earth I was going to get through these lessons. With twenty minutes left until the start of the first period, I decided to just write out what I would say onto PowerPoint slides and hope for the best.

I walked into class, powered up the AV equipment, and waited patiently for the chimes to ring. Once they had, I clicked on the first slide and pointed to a naturally charismatic and talkative student. Confused, he robotically read the first line: “Good morning. I’ve been very sick and have completely lost my voice.” The class collectively gasped, and then erupted into amused chuckles, after which the student reader continued reading the slide with a more conversational tone.

What happened next was unexpected and amazing. First, after the initial shock wore off, the students simply switched into “classroom mode” and listened attentively to the student speaker while scanning the slides for information and taking notes. Nobody stared at me, giggled, or lost interest in the lesson. Even more amazing was the leadership role taken by the student speaker. He would occasionally stop and ask in English, “Is everyone good?”, or “Does anyone have any questions?” He even adopted a few of my mannerisms and read some of the prompts as I would have (e.g., clapping hands together while enthusiastically saying, “OK, let’s get into small groups and talk about these discussion questions!”). The class ran smoothly,



students were having fun, were engaged in the topics, and I never uttered a single word.

Although the students in this first Monday class had high English proficiency, my two classes on Tuesday consisted of low-intermediate students, so I expected I might be facing a bigger challenge. Also, I never use PowerPoints in these two classes, so bringing one into play now would seem out of place. It took a bit more time, but I wrote a few sentences on the blackboard, similar to the previous day's first slide, and then drew two big buttons on the right-hand side: one labelled "Please read" and the other "Please do." I continued the lessons by pointing to a student, "pressing" one of the buttons, and then gesturing to the section, exercise or discussion question I had written on the chalkboard. Again, the students were amused at first, but settled into the lesson and worked together to get through each activity and discussion. The most incredible part of these lessons was when a few higher-level students began explaining in more detail certain points that other students weren't understanding. These classes were definitely a challenge, but it was inspiring to see leaders emerge and students working together with very little assistance or prodding.

By Wednesday morning, my voice was beginning to return, but I decided to test out some of my "silent treatments," if you will, on two more classes. Similar to Tuesday, I relied on student readers and guides for these lessons, and, surprisingly, the classes once again ran smoothly.

Students were engaged and not distracted by the absence of my voice. In a way, they seemed more relaxed than when I was guiding them through the lessons using my voice.

### **Becoming One with Silence**

This experience allowed me to not only learn about my students, but also more importantly it offered me the opportunity to reflect on how much I was actually speaking in class and how I could potentially use the class time more effectively. I reflected on this during the weekend, and asked myself some pretty difficult questions: I promote student-centered, active, experiential learning, but how much room was I allowing for this to take place in my lessons? Was I talking too much? Were my lessons overshadowing the natural leadership abilities of my students? Were my classes safe spaces for students to engage in open discussion?

With the recent shift to 100-minute periods, the time to re-evaluate daily lesson structures has come, whether we like it or not. Admittedly, over the previous couple of years I had grown comfortable with my lesson formats, mixing things up by throwing in a textbook DVD video now and then (see my article on TV commercials and mullet hair-styles in a previous *CUE Circular* issue), but I must now reflect on how to effectively use the additional ten minutes. My recent experience with the positive aspects of teacher silence has encouraged me to search for appropriate uses of silence within my lessons. I hope that my

experience losing my voice via the Black Plague encourages you to do the same.

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*Autumn colors (and a helicopter!) at Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, in Hokkaido*



## CUE Careers

### The hire-archy of Japanese academic employment

The CUE SIG stands for College and University Educators special interest group, and under that overarching term there are many different types of positions and titles that are used to describe our jobs as educators. As with many professions, the field of education has an implicit hierarchy of jobs with “university educator” having an elite status. But even within this category, there is a hierarchy of positions, each with different terms of employment, responsibilities, and pay scales. There is no professional organization that dictates the nomenclature for titles and levels of university employment, so any list is bound to be fraught with special cases and discrepancies. The following generalized guidelines are adapted from Miller (2017), where he advises readers to “think case-by-case” when considering the various positions and what they mean and entail. Although there may be unique positions that are not listed here, the following will cover most of the posts in Japanese universities and colleges (both private and public).

The first division in university education is between full-time instructors (*jyokin koushi* 常勤講師) and part-time or adjunct instructors (*hijyokin koushi* 非常勤講師). The former teach between 8 and 12 *koma*

*In this regular column, Michael Parrish and Richard Miller offer insights on the employment market for college and university language teachers in Japan, as well as general career guidance, advice, and strategies.*

*Contributions from readers with specific areas of expertise, or regarding specific issues or changes in the job market, are encouraged.*



Michael Parrish and Richard Miller are the current co-coordinators of the Job Information Center at the JALT National Conference, and are former editors of the Career Development column in *The Language Teacher*.

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(90-minute class sessions for universities) per week, are solely employed by one institution, and are paid an annual salary. Adjuncts, on the other hand, receive payment per *koma* taught and often teach at several institutions concurrently. We will describe the situation of full-time employment first, then part-time.

The situation of full-time employment is a bit complex in terms of the types of positions, contractual conditions, responsibilities and expectations, and position titles. When the first universities were being set up in Japan, just after the Meiji Restoration, the government followed the American system, specifically the Harvard model, of titles and positions for faculty: instructor, lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. There was a divergence in the use of the term “tenure” because in Japan

one who has tenure has a permanent, full-time position, irrespective of academic rank. Some may refer to it as “full-time” though that can be confusing as there are numerous *tokunin* or *ninkisei* instructors or even part-time, adjunct-faculty members who work full-time hours of 10-15 koma to make a living here, generally under a limited-term contract. The changes in the national labor law in 1997 and 2013 ensured that workers would have the opportunity for permanent employment after working for five years consecutively. This has had mixed results; some universities have instituted positions with no term limits (continuous employment until retirement age) while others have doubled down on increasingly strict enforcement of 5-year or at most 10-year limits on employment for full-time as well as part-time employees (Williams, 2019).

With the growth of English teaching, specialized, limited-term foreign instructor contracts were promulgated. Under these contracts, non-Japanese, specialist language teachers were encouraged to teach at universities, but they were given neither the opportunity for advancement, nor permanent employment with tenure (Arudou, 2002). Subsequent increases in hiring of non-tenured instructors related to economic, social, and legal factors led many of the universities to adopt a variety of terms to describe this type of position. As a result, there are terms of contract and tenure that would not be easily recognized in the United States or other Western countries. The nomenclature for these limited-term contracts serves mainly to emphasize that

the positions are not tenure-track (*sennin*) positions, and even if an equivalent rank (assistant or associate professor) is affixed to the English translation, the Japanese title is what counts officially. *Ninkisei* (任期制) and *tokunin* (特任) are common terms. They are often translated as “Contract Associate Professor” or “Project Associate Professor,” which implies that the level of expertise required is more than a lecturer, but the term is limited to the time frame of a specific “project.” This might be similar to the position of Visiting Professor in the system in the United States, where an instructor or professor is hired for a limited time and is not eligible for tenure or advancement. So, as the system has evolved, it has diverged somewhat from the original model.

The following list, with the Japanese term in romaji and kanji, along with the English title, includes a brief explanation for each:

*Tokunin koushi* (特任講師) is a term used to describe a contracted position (generally from two to five years). Within that, the title translated into English is instructor or lecturer, though at times it might be assistant or associate professor. This type of one-year renewable (from 2 to 4 times) goes by many names: *Shokutaku* Full-Time Language Instructor, Instructor of English as a Foreign Language, Associate Lecturers of English, Contract Instructor of Languages. Usually, these positions require a minimum of a master’s degree and three publications. The workload is

often 8 to 12 *koma* a week, without many extra duties.

The *ninkisei* (任期制) is similar to the *tokunin koshi* but usually with the assistant or associate professor title that is attached to it. This is a contract position, but the contracts are often longer, sometimes as long as 10 years. This has the same requirements as the *tokunin koushi* but often requires better publications and perhaps a Ph.D. These positions are often granted to instructors who will teach specific content in English, rather than just TESOL oriented courses (Williams, 2019). There will likely be other administrative, research, and management duties as well; Japanese language ability is often required.

*Sennin* is a tenured position, in the traditional academic sense. There is job security until the mandatory retirement age of 65 or 70. Such a teacher may start as a lecturer before moving towards professorship as his/her level of experience and qualifications increase. Generally, a Ph.D. (or equivalent, i.e., significant publications and specialized experience) is required, a solid research track record is essential (more than the minimum three publications are required), and a good grasp of Japanese is needed. In this position, *sennin* become faculty members, are expected to participate in various committees, and, theoretically, to have a say in how the university is run and organized. After retirement, a few professors are granted the special status of Professor Emeritus (*meiyo kyouju*, 名誉教) and allowed to

continue to teach at the university after retirement.

A recent development has been the creation of a hybrid position between *tokunin* and *sennin*, sometimes referred to as Super *Shokutaku* or a Special Instructor, consisting of a year-to-year contracted position with unlimited renewals until retirement age. The instructors are not guaranteed an increase in salary or rank during the terms of the contract, but the position provides the job security of tenure, if not the status.

Complicating the full-time university employment category are the new positions that are becoming more popular as universities create self-access learning centers. People in these positions are not considered instructors, but rather language coaches or facilitators. They have different responsibilities and may only require a bachelor's degree.

The other main employment category is that of part-time or adjunct instructors (*hijyoukin koushi*, 非常勤講師). They are often language teachers but are increasingly playing a greater role in picking up the course load in many faculties and disciplines. The part-time instructor is expected to show up and teach the classes without having any other duties. Duties outside classroom teaching and preparation are minimal, except for the occasional orientation or staff meeting. The term part-time can be misleading, as there are many instructors working a full-time schedule at several institutions. They try to efficiently maximize the number of classes into their schedules, and some try to add as many



into the same day as possible. As there is a maximum of seven classes scheduled on any given day at universities, more than three classes per day might be possible for some *hijyoukin* as they move from university to university.

In terms of compensation, the salary and benefits go up from adjunct, to contract, through the various ranks of professor. Adjunct employees receive their salary per *koma* taught. At some institutions, such as national universities, they are not paid during non-teaching months. The average *hijyoukin* earns less than 3 million yen per year (Williams, 2019). They may receive commutation expenses but no other benefits. On the other hand, most full-time employees (of any rank) are paid an annual salary and typically receive benefits, such as transportation allowance, living or housing allowance, health insurance, and they are enrolled in a pension scheme. The amounts that can be earned vary dramatically as well, with some *tokunin* earning as little as 3.6 million a year. Generally speaking, however, it should be possible to make at least 5 million yen a year fairly quickly and some full-time professors earn triple that. In the case of outsourced instructors, some are treated similarly to part-timers and others are treated as lower-paid full-time employees.

As the terms and conditions vary so much, it is important to clarify during the interview process, pre-hiring, or very early during the contract what possibilities for renewal and/or advancement exist for a particular position.

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