

On cue

For the Language Professional in Higher Education

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Conferences

AAAL 2002

April 6-9, Salt Lake City

(Re-)Interpreting Applied Linguistics

www.aaal.org

TESOL 2002

April 9-13, Salt Lake City

Language and the Human Spirit

www.tesol.org

JALT Pan-SIG Conference

May 11-12, Kyoto

www.jalt.org/pansig.html

Thoughts to Ponder

It is simply a fact that most of the time you can't find the right words till you know exactly what you are saying, but you can't know exactly what you are saying until you find the right words. The consequence is that you must start by writing the wrong meanings in the wrong words, but keep writing till you get the right meanings in the right words. Only at the end will you know what you are saying.

Peter Elbow

Japan Association for Language Teaching College and University Educators Special Interest Group
Retail Price for Non-Members: ¥700/ \$7

On CUE Call for papers

Aims: To provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of research, ideas and curriculum activities of broad interest to College and University Language Educators.

Types of Articles Sought:

Features

APA referenced articles with a focus on language education and related issues at tertiary level of up to 2,000 words

Criteria for feature articles

- consideration of issues likely to be perceived by college and university educators as relevant to language teaching in Japan
- well designed and well reported empirical research.
- writing that situates issues within the context of relevant previous work, while refraining from quoting for the sake of quoting
- thought-provoking theoretical papers, provided clear practical implications are fore-grounded

From the Chalkface

classroom applications, techniques and lesson plans, usually up to 1000 words.

Contact section editor: Andrew Obermeier,
andrew@kyokyo-u.ac.jp

Research Digest

summaries of research published in university in-house publications, of broad interest to college and university educators

News & Announcements, Andrew Obermeier, andrew@kyokyo-u.ac.jp
All other queries to Michael Carroll, carroll@andrew.ac.jp

Professional Development

1-2000 words on further education and gaining employment.

Opinion and Perspective

650 words; longer, coordinated, point-counterpoint articles are possible.

Contact section editor Keith Ford, jf6k-ford@asahi-net.or.jp

Reviews

reviews of books, textbooks, videos, presentations/workshops, films, etc. 600 words, 1500 words for scholarly review essays.

Contact section editor: Steven Snyder, snyder@phoenix.ac.jp

Approximate Publication Dates:

April 15, July 15, January 15
(Deadlines: Feb 25, May 24, Nov 18)

Cyberpipeline

descriptions of websites that might prove useful for language teaching and professional development; length depends on how many sites are reviewed

Contact section editor: Steven Snyder, snyder@phoenix.ac.jp

Focus on Language

a column in which the writer may ask/answer common questions about language that are of interest to teachers and learners. 250-600 words

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to Keith Ford, Juanita Heigham, Hugh Nicoll, Andrew Obermeier and Stephen Ryan for proofreading this issue. Their care and attention was invaluable, and any remaining errors are the editor's.

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From the Editor

In the final On CUE of volume 9, we bring together three topics that have figured frequently in discussions at recent conferences. Ellen Head and Eiko Okamura, following up on the theme of the 2001 conference, look at the role of teachers in monitoring their students' developing autonomy and describe their investigation into how 'good learners' differed from others in their levels of autonomy. James Venema both looks forward to the coming conference and builds on the last one in his paper on a curriculum innovation in his institution. He tackles the problem of how to encourage autonomous learning in a structured way, in the kind of large mixed-ability classes that are so common here in Japan. Our third feature article, by Brian Cullen and John Morris, considers a perennial issue in monocultural classes: how much of the students' first language can and should be used? His findings are surely of interest to most of us, and deserve further discussion. Responses to this article, as well as any others, will be appreciatively received by the Opinion and Perspectives editor, Keith Ford.

This issue sees a response to Christopher Kelen's feature on journal writing (Vol. 9, 2). Stephen Davies argues that Kelen's emphasis on fluency and content at the expense of form does a disservice to students in that it may encourage them to believe that accuracy is not important. Kelen responds to this with a renewed plea to take a broader view of language use.

As well as the regular sections 'From the Chalkface', 'Cyberpipeline', and book and conference reviews, this issue sees some changes in the Professional Development section. Debra Pappeler and Steve Weinkle, after two years of editing various sections of On CUE, are moving on to other things. Their contribution to On CUE will be very much missed. Debra was behind several initiatives during this period, including the idea of the Professional Development section itself. From this issue, Joe Tomei will be contributing a regular column on job and related issues, starting with a guide to searching for full-time university positions in Japan.

Finally, many thanks to all the people who volunteered their help at the CUE AGM. There is a new line-up of executive officers, as Eamon

McCafferty rides off into the sunset to concentrate on his Doctorate, hard on the heels of Steve Snyder, also finishing off Doctoral studies, and Hugh Nicoll leaves CUE behind in his quest to scale the dizzy heights of JALT national as membership chair. We wish all of them the very best for the future. Andrew Obermeier becomes the new Program chair, Phil McCasland treasurer, Juanita Heigham membership chair, and Tim Micklas and Suzanne Jensen joint publicity chairs.

Michael Carroll, Editor

The 3rd CUE mini-conference: Curriculum Innovation

**Part of the 2002 Pan SIG
conference
at Kyoto Institute of Technology
May 11th and 12th 2002**

Preparations are well under way for the 3rd mini-conference. This year CUE has collaborated with the Bilingualism and Testing and Evaluation SIGs in the 2002 Pan SIG conference in Kyoto. The deadline for submission and pre-registration has closed, but please feel free to turn up on the day.

The theme of the conference, *Curriculum Innovation*, is timely. Tertiary institutions in Japan are in a state of rapid change as the declining birthrate catches up with the generation leaving school now. We hope that this conference will allow us to explore both the difficulties created by this situation, and the opportunities it may provide.

Papers, rountables and workshops addressing issues of diagnosing and proposing solutions to curriculum problems, implementing and evaluating changes, and exploring the effects of curriculum change on teachers and students will be presented.

JALT CUE SIG Conference 2002

Curriculum Innovation

May 11th-12th 2002

Location: Kyoto Institute of Technology

Part of the JALT Pan-SIG Conference with *the Bilingual Development Forum*
(BIL SIG) and *Testing and Evaluation in the 21st Century* (TEVAL SIG)

Registration Fees

	1 Day	2 Days
JALT Member	4,000 yen	7,000 yen
Non -JALT Member	5,000 yen	8,000 yen
Student Volunteers	Free (must show student ID card and work app. 5 hours during event)	

Scope: Ideas, Innovations, Evaluations, Judgements, Future Plans

- What curriculum innovations has your institution carried out in the last few years?
- What were the results of the evaluation?
- Is your institution meeting the demands of a changing economic climate?
- What course of action was decided on?
- What plans are there for changes in your institution?
- Are changes in your institution evaluation interesting to others?

A Case for the Use of Japanese in College English Classes

Brian Cullen and John Morris
Nagoya Institute of Technology

By their nature, foreign language classes introduce a conflict between the use of the mother tongue and the foreign language. True communication can usually be carried out more effectively in the mother tongue, but in the foreign language classroom teachers and students create an artificial environment where the foreign language is used for communication purposes in order to gain proficiency. This gain in proficiency represents the long-term target of using the foreign language in natural communicative situations, and its benefits are easy to comprehend for students, but the short-term problems of communicating in a foreign language are often highly frustrating. In this conflict, students often wonder why they should communicate in a foreign language when it would be much easier to use the mother tongue.

In Nagoya Institute of Technology, this issue has gained importance for two reasons. Firstly, some students have complained that their teacher uses too much Japanese in English class. On the other hand, others have complained that they cannot understand their teacher's English and wish that the teacher would use more Japanese.

This paper describes a study which attempts to understand these student remarks to allow us to get a better overall view of the amount of Japanese that should be used in college English classes. In order to establish overall student preferences for the use of Japanese in English classes, We decided to replicate a study carried out by Burden (2000) which investigated the same issue. A questionnaire consisting of 15 items was used to establish the students' preferences for the use of Japanese in the classroom. The first three questions of the questionnaire address the primary issues of the study. Question one addresses the important matter of whether an English teacher in a Japanese university should know Japanese or not. The answer to this question has implications for both classroom practice and administrative matters such as the hiring of teachers. Question two asks the students whether

the teacher should use Japanese in the classroom. The answer to this question obviously depends on question one because a teacher who does not know Japanese cannot use it, but despite this dependence the two questions address two entirely different issues. It is quite possible (and common in practice) for teachers to have lived a long time in Japan and to be highly fluent in Japanese, yet not speak any Japanese in class for pedagogical reasons. Question three asks whether students should use Japanese in the classroom. The remainder of the questions address these primary issues in more detail, particularly question 2, by looking at in what circumstances it may be appropriate for the teacher to use Japanese.

The study uses a questionnaire identical to the one that Burden used in his study. This in turn was loosely based on Prodromou (1994). The questions may be seen below in Table 1 where the student answers are also tabulated.

One important limitation to note about the questionnaire is that students had a choice of only 2 answers to each question, 'yes' or 'no'. This is of course a very simplistic way of looking at each issue, since in many cases, a student will feel that it depends on the circumstances. Many researchers use a five point Likert scale which allows students to select from among a range of answers from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' for surveys of this type. However, my own experience, and also that of Burden, suggests that most Japanese students dislike taking extreme positions and regard the centre option as a safe middle ground (and the one requiring least effort) resulting in a very long series of non-committal answers. I should note that the questionnaire is not intended to be a precise statistical instrument. Apart from the oversimplification introduced by only having two answers, there was no attempt made to ascertain the reliability or validity of the survey. The purpose is merely to determine students' attitudes towards

the use of Japanese in the classroom in a general sense and to make practical administrative and teaching recommendations based on these.

The survey was carried out during English classes in the department of language and culture by 3 teachers in 10 classes with a total of 350 students. Two of the teachers were native speakers of English and the other was a Japanese teacher of English with native-speaker competence in English. The survey took about 10 minutes for the students to complete, including time to write any comments at the end of the paper. Students were encouraged to ask questions (in Japanese or English) about any item they did not understand.

All the papers were collected and the results of the questionnaire were tabulated to give results for each class individually and also an overall result. The comments were read and reference is made to them in the discussion below. In the study there were

a total of 350 students and 10 classes. For the purposes of analysis and discussion, I have divided these into three groups. The two largest classes (almost half the students in the study) and one smaller night class (for students who had graduated from technical high schools) were at a much lower level than the other classes. These three classes are termed 'Low Level' in the discussion below. Conversely, the two smallest classes were the ones with the highest level and motivation. These classes were elective classes for third and fourth year students and are called 'High Level' for the purposes of this study. The remaining five classes were at a level between these other groups, and are called 'Intermediate'.

A summary of the results of the questionnaire for these three groups is shown in Table 1. This table gives the percentages of students in each category who answered 'yes' to each question.

Table 1: The percentages of students who answered 'yes' to each question in the survey

	Low	Int	Adv	All groups
1. Should the teacher know Japanese?	98	93	78	93
2. Should the teacher use Japanese in class?	72	41	35	54
3. Should the students use Japanese in class?	52	46	25	46
When should the teacher use Japanese in class?				
4. Explaining new words	75	61	20	63
5. Explaining grammar	79	50	18	60
6. Giving instructions	53	34	23	42
7. Talking about culture	42	20	10	29
8. Talking about tests	72	51	45	60
9. Explaining class rules	59	35	23	45
10. Explaining why the students are doing something	54	31	5	39
11. Explaining Japanese/English grammar differences	79	54	45	64
12. Testing the students	39	34	20	35
13. Checking for understanding	48	39	23	41
14. Relaxing the students	63	42	43	52
15. Creating human contact	44	37	33	40
	100	100	100	100
	n=163	n=147	n=40	n=350

Table 2: Summary of Burden (2000)

	Low	Int	Adv	All Groups
1. Should the teacher know Japanese?	89	88	72	87
2. Should the teacher use Japanese in class?	83	63	41	73
3. Should the students use Japanese in class?	75	72	69	73
	n=150	n=64	n=39	n=290

Should the teacher know Japanese?

In every class, the students consistently stated a strong preference for teachers who know Japanese. The total number of students who filled in the questionnaire was 350, and 93% of these stated a preference for a teacher who knew Japanese. This figure holds for students in lower and intermediate classes, and even in high level classes the rate was 78%. Although the question did not address the level of Japanese required, this is a very important finding. From low level to high level students, there was little variation in this response, so it is clear that students feel more confident in a learning environment in which the teacher knows their native language.

Even if the students had not expressed this very strong preference for teachers who can speak Japanese, we should note that such teachers have several obvious advantages over those who do not have any knowledge of the Japanese language or culture. Firstly, discipline and administration problems can be easily resolved without severe frustration for both the teacher and student. In addition, there is no need to call in other teachers or office staff to deal with every little query that the teacher does not understand. For example, students often enquire about attendance or registration issues. If the teacher understands enough Japanese, they can help the student themselves or direct them to the appropriate office. Secondly, a teacher who knows the students' mother tongue is often able to identify where errors such as inappropriate use of a word or grammatical structure are likely to occur as a result of interference from the mother language. Knowing Japanese allows the teacher to point out the source of the error to the student and thus direct him onto the correct path. Thirdly, knowledge of Japanese is evidence that the teacher has gone along a similar learning path to the one which the student is now taking. This experience can allow the teacher to empathise with the learner and reduce frustration at the blocks and reversals that occur along any normal learning trajectory. In addition, the student is likely to have a greater respect for a teacher who has gone through the language learning process than for a monoglot. Indeed, it seems almost paradoxical to have a foreign language teacher who doesn't know any foreign language. Fourthly, a knowledge of Japanese can be immensely useful in many small ways in the classroom. Even if the teacher does not

generally use Japanese in the classroom, translating a single English word into Japanese for the students can save minutes of awkward explanation which disturb the flow of the lesson. If an individual student or group of students is having problems with an activity, the teacher can reiterate the instructions in Japanese for their benefit without addressing the whole class again. Finally, some knowledge of the Japanese language is a very good indicator of knowledge of Japanese culture. Few student bodies throughout the world have the same homogeneity as Japan. This homogeneity leads to certain patterns of learning and teaching which will be most effective with groups of Japanese students. By knowing the Japanese language and its inherent culture, teachers learn to recognize what will be effective for the greatest number of students.

Although we have pointed out the advantages that knowledge of Japanese can bring to a teacher, we are not suggesting that teachers should use a lot of Japanese in this classroom. The greatest advantages spring from comprehension of Japanese rather than its production. It is important to remember that the main reason native speakers of English are employed in Japanese education is that they can use English in a natural fashion. To use Japanese excessively in the classroom is to deny this very reason and in our view, Japanese should be used very sparingly indeed. Understanding of Japanese is a great asset, and a few words of Japanese from the teacher can be helpful; but overuse of Japanese is detrimental to the goal of learning English.

Should Japanese be used?

Moving back to the questionnaire, the answer to the question whether teachers should use Japanese in the classroom varies according to student level. Overall, 54% of students believe that Japanese should be used by the teacher in some circumstances in the classroom, and 45% of students believe that the teacher should not use Japanese. The highest support is in the low-level group. As was expected, lower-level students prefer the teacher to use more Japanese in the classroom. While a huge majority of these students (98%) feel that the teacher should know Japanese, 72% believe that the teacher should sometimes use this knowledge. This falls to 41% for the intermediate

students and again falls to 35% for the advanced students. This is clearly related to the language ability of the students and their level of confidence in being able to understand spoken English. In the low level groups, almost all of the student comments were written in Japanese while the advanced group wrote them almost exclusively in English. This indicates a further lack of confidence on the part of students in the low-level classes in their own ability to communicate effectively in English.

Most classes, even low-level ones, are currently held primarily in English and the student comments add an additional perspective to the results of the questionnaire. In Japanese, many students wrote comments such as "This class is very easy to understand", "If we really don't understand, the teacher should use Japanese", and "please explain only the test and homework in Japanese". These kinds of comments indicate that low-level students are not having real problems in understanding, but merely want to confirm their understanding. In other words, the problem is primarily a lack of confidence rather than lack of ability. Perhaps then, the role of Japanese in low-level classes should be to instill confidence in students by summarizing important points in Japanese after going through them in English. We will return to this discussion of teacher use of Japanese below by addressing specific areas where the students feel that it would be beneficial.

Question three in the questionnaire is the only one that addresses student use of Japanese. Even in the low-level class, 48% of students felt that they should not use Japanese. This rises to 54% in the intermediate level and 75% in the advanced level. This is clearly at variance with the actual situation in the classroom where most students will use at least a little Japanese while engaging in pairwork. In some cases, the main role of the teacher turns out to be a watchdog prowling around to see that only English is spoken! Without more questions addressing this issue in detail, there is not enough data to explain this variance satisfactorily, but common sense and our own experience remind us that we are not always able to live up to our own expectations. Indeed, the spirit is strong but the flesh is weak.

What is a reasonable stance to take towards student use of Japanese in the classroom? This clearly depends on the activity in question. For example, a group grammar exercise could be

conducted entirely in Japanese if the sole objective was the acquisition of that grammar point. Conversely, a free-ranging conversation practice may be best conducted entirely in English. A teacher who demands 100% English in every activity is denying our students a chance to help each other in their native tongue and risks student frustration directed at the activity or teacher. Usually, a balance can be struck between the use of Japanese and English, allowing students to use an occasional word or phrase in Japanese if it helps to keep the momentum of an English-use activity. In accordance with the results of this questionnaire, the actual percentage of Japanese used will depend on the level of the class, but an experienced teacher who knows Japanese will usually be able to keep this balance and ensure that a good learning environment is created without an excess of frustration. One additional point that emerges out of this discussion is the value of dividing students into different classes by level. The current academic year is the first time that a placement test was used to place students into first-year classes rather than allowing them to choose their own teacher under the traditional registration system. The large variance in responses between classes in different levels validates the use of this placement system. While dividing students into classes according to level, it also to some significant extent divides them according to their preferences and learning styles.

When should Japanese be used?

The remaining questions in the questionnaire address the areas of teaching where the students feel that the teacher should use Japanese. Since more than half of the total number of students (and a much higher proportion at lower levels) support the use of teacher Japanese, it is important for us to distinguish these areas. Despite the different perceptions of students about Japanese usage in the different levels, each group gave the highest priority to the same issues. For example, the five areas which were given the greatest emphasis were explaining new words (Q4), explaining grammar (Q5), explaining differences between Japanese grammar and English grammar (Q11), talking about tests (Q8), and relaxing the students (Q14). The actual percentages specified by each group were different, but because of these shared preferences, we will

refer to the overall figures of the combined groups in the discussion below.

The highest support for teachers' use of Japanese is for the explanation of new words (63%) and the explanation of the difference between English and Japanese grammar (64%). These answers are in agreement with the discussion above which pointed out that a quick translation of a word or grammar point into Japanese can save considerable time and frustration. The students as well as the teacher recognize that this frustration can be detrimental to language learning. Of course, lengthy Japanese explanations may be counter-productive because they reduce the amount of time spent engaging the target language. Indeed, it is probably true to say that the pedagogical validity of a Japanese explanation decreases as it increases in length. In traditional grammar-translation teacher-centered classes, the teacher spent long periods of time explaining grammar points or vocabulary. It is now generally recognized that this type of class does not lead to the acquisition of communicative competence, and the standard in modern language teaching has been to create student-centered learning environments where the students have many opportunities to use the target language in at least partly communicative situations. The high support for Japanese in these areas should not be interpreted as student support for a return to grammar-translation methodology. This is clear from the many student comments such as: "When I can't find the word that I want to tell, I'd like the teacher to answer my question which is "I don't know how to say ____ in English". Students want to use English for communication and see Japanese explanations of grammar and vocabulary as a quick prop which can facilitate communication without disturbing the flow of this communication. This ties in well with the point made above that students prefer teachers who know Japanese. Without a knowledge of Japanese, this prop is simply not available.

Another item with high support for the use of Japanese was talking about tests (60%). This is not a surprising finding. Tests are an important part of assessment and determining whether a student will get credit or not for a course. Credits are the currency of choice in a university and it is only reasonable to be sure that students know how they will be tested.

I have heard numerous horror stories about students who studied hard for a test, only to find that they had misheard the teacher instructions and studied the wrong items. If there is any doubt that students may not understand their responsibilities exactly, then we are under an obligation to use Japanese to make the matter clear. A rather surprising finding was the high support for Japanese in relaxing students (52%). Do students feel anxiety in an all-English environment? Tsui has written for many years on how student anxiety can be detrimental to the language learning process (eg. Tsui 1996). She has pointed out that a high-tension classroom can make students afraid to speak out, especially if there is a perception that an incorrect response will be harshly judged by the teacher. In the modern communication classroom, it is clearly important that we encourage students to speak out and get plenty of practice in using the foreign language without fear of censure. As has been repeatedly pointed out by teachers, mistakes are a necessary element in developing language competence. Bearing this and the students' answers in mind, perhaps we should consciously use Japanese at times to relax the students. One possible practical approach is to use a few words of Japanese at times when it is clear that students are entering an anxiety phase. For example, if a teacher asks a student a question and the student is getting flustered because they do not know the answer, a few words of Japanese to help the student or simply alleviate the tension may be useful. Foreign teachers may have the somewhat disturbing, but nonetheless useful experience that anything they say in Japanese can be found to be amusing! Indeed, imperfect Japanese may also have the positive result of conveying to the students the fact that even imperfect foreign language ability can be a highly useful communicative tool.

It is interesting to examine which areas the students felt that Japanese was not to be used. Culture (29%) is the lowest figure and this perhaps reflects the growing awareness of students that language and culture are strongly interrelated and that culture should be explained in English to the greatest possible degree. Establishing human contact (40%) was also a low figure indicating that students get to know their teacher sufficiently through the medium of the foreign language and that they do not need to exclusively use Japanese to have

meaningful communication. Checking understanding (41%) and giving instructions (42%) were also quite low. I have often heard non-native teachers express concern that the students would not understand the purpose of activities or how to carry them out if the instructions were not given in Japanese. But these relatively low figures show that students do not in general have problems with understanding classroom instructions in English and lend support to the use of English in carrying out classroom activities, even by non-native speakers.

As was stated above, this study was a replication of one carried out by Burden. Unlike Nagoya Institute of Technology where all the students are majoring in technical subjects, his study included a large proportion of students majoring in English, law, and comparative culture. Despite this difference, the results of the current study and Burden's study are similar in respect of questions 1 and 2, though Burden's students were more inclined to want to use Japanese themselves. The results of the first three questions are summarized in Table 2. As in the current study, there is very high support for teacher knowledge of Japanese. The level of support for this declines as the level of the class rises, just as in the current study. Furthermore, the highest support among Q4-15 was for the same five areas discussed above, ie. explaining new words, explaining grammar, talking about tests, explaining differences between English and Japanese grammar, and relaxing the student. This similarity implies that these preferences may be relatively widespread among Japanese students.

Conclusions

Having established that students in NIT and other technical colleges are likely to be more comfortable with teachers who understand their own language, what practical conclusions can we draw? Indeed, should we not question whether the students' preference may actually mitigate against language learning by preventing them from facing the ambiguity which is an essential part of the process? Indeed, we should address this issue, but as teachers of large classes with one predominant preference, we must take this into account at both the teaching and administrative level. I can identify five solid conclusions that emerge from this study.

1) Teachers should have some knowledge of

Japanese language and culture

- 2) Classes should continue to be divided by level to take account of the different preferences between low-level and high-level learners.
- 3) The teacher should use Japanese more in lower-level classes than higher-level ones.
- 4) Japanese should be spoken only after English has been used and primarily to instill confidence in students that they have understood what the teacher said.
- 5) Japanese should be usually only used in the five areas of explaining new words, talking about tests, explaining differences between English and Japanese grammar, and relaxing the students. Even this usage should be kept as short as possible.

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- Tsui, A.B.M. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K.M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds). *Voices from the language classroom*. (pp. 145-167) Cambridge: CUP.

The ideas put forward by Brian Cullen and John Morris may strike a chord with many teachers in Japan. What are your views on the use of Japanese in the English language classroom? If you'd like to respond to this article, address your comments to Keith Ford, Opinion and Perspectives section editor, at <jf6k-ford@asahi-net.or.jp>

Building Autonomy by Monitoring Students' Private, Voluntary Study

Ellen Head and Eiko Okumura
Kobe Women's University

A learner-training perspective: "Learning to learn English"

Learner autonomy means the development of an attitude in which the learner is willing to take responsibility for their learning" (Wenden, 1991, p. 58). Each student's use of English outside the classroom, whether for study or communication, is recognised as an important factor in their learning. Evidence from many sources suggests that "good learners" have particular strategies, for example Rubin (1975, p 41) claims that "general characteristics of the good language learner ...include such out of class strategies as seeing out opportunities to use the language for communication". Pickard found that his students were able to select the kind of self-study activities they needed: "many of the subjects in the study had recognized weaknesses in their linguistic proficiency and had taken measures to remedy them." (1996, p 157)

In order to investigate the value of these ideas in our own teaching situation, the first year students at our university were offered a study skills course during which their voluntary study was monitored by the teacher. Students were required to hand in a record sheet each week giving the date, duration and materials used. In the first year of the experiment, monitoring was found to have a positive effect on the students' self-study. (Okumura and Wilson, 2001.) The next year, three classes (out of four) were asked to hand in voluntary study records for one semester, from October to December. Since one group was not monitored, we were in a position to do a comparative study. Students from all four classes were required to fill in a questionnaire about their self study at the end of the semester.

We hoped that monitoring would motivate students to do self-study. We also wanted to know about what students were doing, in order to make recommendations to them. At the beginning of the project, we believed that 'good learner' strategies could be taught to weaker students. We expected that the 'good learners' would use a variety of strategies, and put in more study time, more regularly than the others. We also believed that frequent short study sessions were more effective than infrequent long sessions. However, the data from our student questionnaires challenged some of our assumptions. The aim of this paper is to investigate the effects of monitoring self-study, and to give an account of the data relating to our students' self-study over a three month period.

Do successful learners share any particular study patterns?

Our university divides the first year students using a placement test based on the University of Hawaii listening test. The highest scoring students are grouped together and the remaining students are put into three mixed ability groups. Some of the students selected as 'high ability' reported longer study-periods than did students in other classes. The numbers concerned were small: six out of nineteen members of the high-ability class, reported study periods of 2-3 hours or over 3 hours, compared with only two out of the remaining fifty five. A total of fourteen out of nineteen members of the high-ability group were spending over an hour on self-study, compared with fifteen students out of fifty-five from the other classes. We had different reactions to this: Head felt that it was surprising. But Okumura suggested that it reflects the fact that students need to make a lot of effort and put in a lot of time in order to succeed.

In terms of frequency of study and engaging in particular activities there was no marked difference between the high-ability class and other classes. About half the top group admitted to studying only before a test. This was rather disappointing since we were hoping to show that 'slow and steady' independent study would bring the best results.

However there was one area in which the high-ability group seemed different from the other students. In response to the question, "How has your attitude to learning changed during the past year?", many of the high-ability students made comments which suggested that they were becoming more autonomous learners, for example:

Before - I felt I had to do it. Now, I want to do it.

Members of other classes also made comments showing that they were gaining confidence and familiarity with English.

If things go on like this, I'm afraid 3 years from now I will be speaking English by accident. Simple English will pop out of my mouth like "Good morning" at everyday level.

On the whole, though, even the positive comments from other classes tended to show less confidence than those of the high-ability group:

Now I'm not so nervous when someone speaks to me in English. I have got used to English.

When we looked for a correlation between the students who kept meticulous records of their self-study, and ability, we found that in fact it was often the weaker students or the less confident students who wanted to keep a record and appreciated the teacher's interest and reassurance.

The value of doing reflective writing in L1

Students were told at the outset that their comments could be in Japanese or English. Many of the students who were monitored by an English-only-speaking teacher chose to write in English, or changed to writing in English during the term. However their comments were constrained by their level of English. "Difficult" or "Easy" was often the only comment. Some students wrote in Japanese, but there was a time lag before they received a reply

(in English) due to the need to wait for a translation. It was noticeable that the comments of the students who chose to write their feedback in Japanese (in the class monitored by a Japanese bilingual teacher) wrote a lot more and were able to give a clearer account of their learning process.

What was the process of dialogue between student and teacher?

We would like to look at three students in more detail. These students were chosen because they wrote more in their self-study records than the other students. Two were from classes taught by a bilingual Japanese teacher and one from classes taught by a non-Japanese speaking teacher. One student was from the "high-ability" group. We interviewed them after one year to ask if keeping the record had made any long-term difference to their study habits and awareness of their language learning process. The interviews were done by telephone, in Japanese. Students were asked the following questions: "Can we quote your records?" "Was record keeping useful?", "Did you study more while keeping a record?", "Did it change your study habits in the long term?", "Would you recommend it to other students?", "Would you like to continue keeping a record?"

The student who loved writing

Mari started writing a journal as a task for the writing class. She loved writing and continued to write voluntarily for about 30 minutes a day. Her test scores were rather weak for reading and she had difficulty listening too: she could not understand the native speaker teacher as well as some of her classmates. However she was an enthusiastic record-keeper. From 4th October to 12th November she wrote logs in Japanese, but she then changed to English. This suggests a growing confidence, which is also reflected in her comments written in the learning log. The comments given are for consecutive days from December 4th 2000.

Writing in English is very difficult.

I don't know what I writing in my journal.

I think my journal like a book.

I could writing a lot in my journal.

The student's comments, "I don't know what I

writing in my journal” followed by “I think my journal like a book” suggest she may have reached a level where she was not distracted by negative beliefs about herself as a language learner, and where her own story came to absorb her like a novel. At the end of the year she expressed some worries to her student advisor:

I am thinking of going over Kiso Eigo textbook from high school this summer. Is it too late to re-establish my basic English?

The following summer she kept a record of her independent study, on her own initiative. We could see this as a small success: Mari’s experience of record keeping in the class had given her a tool which she could use independently even after the class was

finished.

The active learner

Haruka used a wide variety of strategies of the “good learner”. She made opportunities to use English socially by talking to Chinese students and writing a card to her (Japanese) friend in English. She also set her own goals, for example,

My next goal is to write a page in English in 15 minutes.

She kept her record in Japanese. This enabled her to give a detailed account of her studies. The teacher was able to respond with detailed advice, as in example 1.

Example 1: Extract from Haruka’s learning record with teacher’s comments

Date	Self-study activity, time	Teacher’s comment
9/11	<i>Tried to sing along reading lyrics but difficult to listen to English song even though reading. Then I realized - I started writing English pronunciation in katakana</i>	<i>Later you could put it into the IPA</i>
27/11	<i>Conversation: 2 hours with Chinese students. I asked how they studied pronunciation. In China they read paying attention to each individual sound but in Japan I thought that as long as you can read no one pays attention to individual sounds.</i>	<i>Ask the teacher to check your pronunciation. English uses a wider range of tone so you have to raise your voice higher and lower than Japanese.</i>

One year later, Haruka commented:

Of course writing a log made me study more. You have to write something in the log, so you have to do something.

Asked whether it had made any difference to her study habits, she said,

Not so much, but I still listen to songs more slowly and note the difference between the sounds and the written form of the words.

The record as a place to articulate what can’t be said aloud

Yukari, a student from the “top” class, was often self-critical in the log:

December 8th:

I got the result of Eiken. I couldn’t pass but I think that’s a fair evaluation of my present level of English I don’t have real power in English. I’m not serious.

Sometimes the log was used to negotiate the relationship with her teacher following a difficult experience in class. Yukari commented,

Today I gave my answer to the teacher [in pronunciation class] which didn't answer the question exactly. My answer was rather vague. I am always seeking in my heart some help from the teacher

The teacher replied,

It's not only your fault. The teacher's questions could be vague or the teacher could misunderstand your comment or could be wrong. Don't be reserved. Don't hesitate to ask/comment. Language learning could take a long time. I admire your analysis and observation...

In the follow-up interview Yukari said that keeping a log had made her study more and helped her to organise her study, but she hadn't continued doing voluntary study. She liked getting the teacher's advice and getting her questions answered. She would recommend it for other students but, "it depends on character".

Was there a difference between the group that was not monitored and the other groups?

Overall, the unmonitored group responded to the end of year questionnaire in a similar way to the groups that were monitored. The frequency, length, and content of outside class study did not appear to have been affected by the need to report to the teacher. However, some students took the record keeping very seriously, and these students seemed to have benefited, according to their reports when interviewed. The process of monitoring may be worthwhile for the qualitative enhancement of the student's study skills and motivation. One student from the non-monitored class commented:

I would like to have more outside class study pushed. Like elementary school. You get seals when you make a report of outside class study.

What happened to the second year students when they were no longer being monitored?

In the second year classes, the A class participated in the self-study record keeping project in academic year 1999-2000. The B Class did not. Neither class received any reminder about self-study during academic year 2000-2001. In the end of year questionnaire, six out of nineteen members of the A class reported doing self study weekly or more often, compared to only one member of the B class. This result could indicate that these six students had kept up their self-study habit from first year. When we analyzed the specific kinds of self-study activities done, we also found a bigger variety of activities done by the A class students. However the difference between A and B classes could be due to other factors such as individual temperament rather than to the study skills monitoring. When we compare first and second years, the frequency of outside class study is noticeably lower for second years.

Conclusion: A balance of guidance and freedom, activities and reflection

This study found that although there were some differences between successful and unsuccessful learners, in terms of their study habits their differences were small. Since the numbers of students involved were also small, there are few generalisations to be drawn therefore. However, according to students' own self evaluations, there was evidence that those students who kept learning records experienced an increase in confidence and motivation, particularly those who wrote at least sometimes in Japanese.

It may be that keeping a log by itself is insufficient as a means of motivating large numbers of students. Imaginatively set homework, though, can provide a "scaffold" for voluntary self-study. By giving students homework of different kinds e.g. listening to their course-book CD, asking survey questions to a classmate in English, we can give students more options for their self-study. Giving points for the students' own choice from a menu of self-study activities, might be more motivating than expecting students to keep a log for its own sake.

We consider Reflective writing to be vital to the process of learner-development, but this does not have to be linked to self-study logging since it can be pursued in different ways. Learning journals written in class are an equally suitable place for students to develop reflective skills. We plan to implement some of these ideas in the coming year.

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"The aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education"

John Dewey

Research Reports

Do you know of papers published in your university's in-house research bulletin that might be of interest to CUE readers? If so, please send an abstract to the Editor, Michael Carroll <carroll@andrew.ac.jp>

Research Reports

Shimada, K (1998) Item analysis of a multiple-choice rational cloze test. Momoyama Gakuin University Research Institute, English Review, 13, pp 3-16.

The basic unit of any test is the test item. In order to make a test better, we need to identify weak items and modify them. The purpose of this investigation was to identify and compare the weak items of a cloze test by classical test theory and item response theory measurement.

A four-option multiple-choice rational cloze test was developed. According to the range of context for closures, words deleted were categorized into two types: higher order and lower order items. Item difficulty, item discriminability with sample separation, and point-biserial correlation were used for classical test theory analysis. As for item response theory analysis, PROX was employed for the Rasch one-parameter calibration of test items.

It was found that some items were accepted by classical test theory analysis, but rejected by the item response analysis, and others were judged as weak by the classical test theory analysis but considered to be acceptable by the item response analysis. In order to ascertain whether item difficulty was ordered according to the level of context required for closure, higher order and lower order items were compared. The analysis showed that higher order items were not always more difficult than lower order ones. It is suggested that this may be because the multiple choice format encourages wild guessing so that the difficulty level of any one item is determined by what options are given. Since item difficulty correlated moderately with item misfit, it is suggested that random guessing increases with increasing difficulty.

A Cooperative Task-based Approach to Syllabus Design

James Venema

Features

One of the challenges of teaching at Japanese universities includes the effective use of classroom time with larger, mixed level "conversation" classes. In my own classes I have come to rely on a task based methodology, incorporating aspects of cooperative group learning. Task based learning is unique not in the introduction of tasks into the classroom but the predominant role accorded them in overall syllabus construction. Task based learning puts the emphasis on the learning process and designates the task itself as the unit of course design. In essence the distinction between methodology and syllabus design is obscured. Cooperative learning provides a basis for learning in groups and includes two aspects, positive interdependence and individual accountability (see Johnson & Johnson, 1999), that apply to task design in particular. The former ensures that, by virtue of task design, students actively work together to complete the activity. The latter holds each student in the group responsible for their personal contribution to the group. This paper will focus on the flexible application of these principles in a class of economics majors at a national university in Japan.

The students

The class, which met once a week for ninety minutes, included forty students from the faculty of economics. However the fact that students were economics majors in no way determined that they were actively considering a business career. In a student questionnaire, carried out in pairs on the first class, students gave information on themselves, including their English language study background, estimated English level, and future plans. Students also indicated topics from the textbook in which they had a particular interest. The results indicated the following:

- 1) Few students felt they would have need of "business English" skills in the future.

- 2) Students selected topics from the textbook related to present interests, the most popular unit being one on travel.
- 3) Not unexpectedly, the results indicated a wide variation in levels and apparent motivation. Some questionnaires were filled in in quite some detail with evident thought and care while others were completed with only the briefest of barely coherent comments.
- 4) Students tended to perceive themselves as relatively weak in listening and speaking.

The syllabus: A selection of tasks

On the first day of class a brief syllabus description was handed out to the students as follows:

The course will concentrate on developing your English skills within the business context. We will concentrate on three broad skills which are central, but not unique, to the language of business.

- a) *Using English to accomplish a specific purpose or task.*
- b) *Using English to socialize.*
- c) *Exchanging information clearly and succinctly in English.*

During the course you will be working together on a series of business related tasks in groups which will provide the basis for assessment. Some of the tasks I will ask you to do will include:

- 1) *Research a present corporation.*
- 2) *Work together to come up with a proposed venture company.*
- 3) *Research the history of a particular product.*
- 4) *Work together to come up with a proposed new product.*

In fact the course did deviate from the tasks outlined above with number 3 omitted and replaced with a task on describing Japanese objects. The tasks were selected on the basis of three considerations. The first consideration reflected the need for finding interesting and motivating activities not necessarily related to any specific future language use. Given the fact that few expressed the expectation of using English within a business context in the near or distant future the selection of tasks moved away from addressing specific business English needs (i.e. conducting meetings, phone conversations etc.) to a selection of tasks with a recurring business theme. The second consideration was choosing tasks that lent themselves to in-class presentations. Eventual public performance was seen as key in encouraging focus on form and accuracy. As Willis (2000) notes:

"By challenging learners to communicate in circumstances where accuracy matters (e.g. making a public presentation of their ideas or findings), so they feel the need, at a prior planning stage, to organize their ideas clearly and to check that their lexical choices, their grammar and pronunciation are accurate" (p. 7).

The third consideration reflected the need for a sample of discourse which the students could use as a model. In this class the primary source of such data was the textbook whose activities often served as a launching pad for the tasks.

The tasks

Crucial to the development of the course was the design and implementation of the group tasks and two such tasks will be described in more detail here. The first was the company proposal task. After being given time to work on a company proposal together (in class and for homework) each group was divided into "listeners" and "presenters" at random with the latter moving around the class "selling" their company proposal. The groups then met to discuss what the "listeners" had heard and to decide where to invest a theoretical 10,000 dollars (omitting their own company). Each group was evaluated on a written description of their company proposal handed in to the teacher, by how much investment they managed to attract from other students, as well as the clarity, logic and detail in their written justification of their investment choices (again evaluated by the teacher). A second example

was a task involving traditional Japanese objects. Students were asked to work together to write and memorize descriptions of five objects. Once every group had completed the activity a member of each group was selected *at random* (to ensure individual accountability) to present their description in front of the class, at which time other groups were asked to guess what the object being described was. Feedback on the coherency of the description was provided by the ease with which other students were able to guess the object. Feedback on the language structure was provided by the teacher, who noted errors and put them on the blackboard for analysis once every group had completed the task, and by corrections on a written form of the activity handed in the next class.

Effective group work

Perhaps more important to the learning process than the final product of the task is the process involved in getting there. Of particular importance, and often most difficult to monitor, is that the students work towards completion of the task in the target language. While a strict English only rule was established in the first class, the size of the class, the lack of mobility in a crowded classroom, the mixed levels of the students, and the simultaneous work of ten different groups made enforcement of this rule a practical impossibility. Certain aspects of task design (personal accountability) ensured that each student in the group was responsible for being able to verbalize in English the final product, but the question remains regarding their contribution to the development of that final product.

The materials

The textbook (Hollet, 1996) had been selected almost a year prior to the onset of the course when all that was known about the class was that it would consist of Economics majors. The main strengths of the text had already become evident from its previous use as a resource: breadth and depth of coverage including intrinsically interesting exercises that often translated well into classroom activities. The limitations of the text within the context of the class in question soon became apparent. Firstly there was simply far too much to cover. In fact less than a quarter of the units were touched in any way, each of them in a superficial manner, as only text activities

most closely related to the tasks the students were asked to perform were selected. Another problem occurred as a result of the mismatch between the tasks highlighted in the text and the classroom tasks the students were asked to perform. This was most apparent in the first task in which students were asked to present a company proposal. The activities selected in the text were presentations of large existing corporations causing confusion in tense (with a task that, as a future proposal, required language referring to future intentions or plans) in addition to mitigating the suggestion that students limit their own company proposals to feasible and realistic ventures. A further problem was the result of a mismatch between the task based syllabus and the grammar exercises offered in the book. The students in fact needed more consciousness raising grammar instruction dealing specifically with errors commonly occurring in the tasks as they unfolded.

Final Exam

A final group oral exam was held at the end of the semester. The exam for the course focused on two tasks (the company proposal and new product idea) in which the teacher singled out individual students in the group for questions. Students were not told beforehand which of the tasks would be selected. Time was extremely limited (less than ten minutes per group) so it was primarily used to identify higher achievers in the groups rather than to assign individual grades to each of the participants. This worked as a counterweight to a grading system in which all members of the group received the same grade for task work performed as a group. Information on these "higher achievers" was then used, along with the final self evaluation, to select certain students for higher grades than the overall group performance would warrant. Students who did not perform as well on the final exam were given the benefit of the doubt, receiving the same grade as their partners (assuming they had met a minimum attendance requirement).

Student Evaluations

Students were asked to fill out a self evaluation and a course evaluation immediately after the final exam. The self-evaluation included the following questions:

Is your individual performance on the course

- 1) higher than that of the overall group performance?*
- 2) the same as your group?*
- 3) below that of the overall group performance?*

Please explain:

While students were asked to rate their individual performance relative to the rest of their own group the wording was apparently unclear as many students interpreted the question to mean the performance of their group relative to others. For this reason the self assessment feedback was difficult to interpret unless clarified by student comments. In the end most students within groups were given identical grades unless their performance on the interview warranted a higher grade.

A second question asked for an evaluation of the course:

Overall the group project system (working together in groups on projects) used in this class is:

- 1) a good system*
- 2) an OK system*
- 3) not so good a system*
- 4) a bad system*

Comments:

Overall the course was very highly evaluated with 27 "good" ratings and 13 "ok" ratings. The fact that there were no poor evaluations in a class of 40 could mean students were reluctant to do so on a handout with their name on it (despite teacher assurances). Yet the written comments seemed to give credence to the high ratings:

In English class of Japan, there are few group system. So I'm not use to studying in like this system, and I hesitated taking part. But this style is effective style.

At this class, I could get the ability to speak English and express myself. And it is important to cooperate with members and to describe our own opinions and good ideas. This class gave me lots of abilities.

By working together in groups on projects we can help each other and think about the project together. This is impossible if this class is one person system.

One student touched on the difficulty in assigning individual grades on the basis of group performance:

I think the merit is four people give different idea, so our product and our company are more better than the product which think by myself. But this demerit is the evaluation of individual performance is partial.

Despite steps taken to identify students that contributed more than their "fair share" to group tasks it seems clear that assessing individual performance by the performance of the group has its disadvantages. It does seem, though, that from the students' perspective the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Conclusions

If the course was evaluated simply on the basis of being able to get the students to speak and produce in class than it must be considered a resounding success. Students were outspoken in the classroom, worked together on tasks with often impressive results, and evaluated the course highly upon completion. However further questions remain about the quality of the learning that took place. Beneficial innovations would likely include the following:

- 1) More care needs to be taken in the selection of materials that complement the tasks of the course. Willis (2000) suggests that "you begin by assembling a set of language data on topics of interest to your learners." (p. 8) Given adequate time this would indeed be a more beneficial starting point than an all purpose multi skills text book.
- 2) In order to avoid fossilization and undue emphasis on fluency, at the expense of accuracy, task related grammar instruction could be further incorporated into the classroom process. In a task base approach this would probably take the form of post task consciousness raising activities.

- 3) More time should be spent on monitoring and facilitating group interactions and task work. In addition time should be set aside to teach social and linguistic skills necessary for effective group cooperation.
- 4) In order to provide time for focus on language structure and effective group interaction the number of tasks should be limited emphasizing depth rather than breadth of coverage.

While there remains room for improvement the "cooperative task-based" syllabus approach proved an effective way of facilitating learning in large, mixed level classes typically the bane of the conversation teacher.

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Curriculum:

'a systematic set of relations between particular people, objects, events and circumstances.'

*Lawrence
Stenhouse*

In the last issue of On Cue (Vol 9, 2), Christopher Kelen underlined the importance of giving students the opportunity to write freely in journals without being constrained by the demands of accuracy and academic form and structure. In this OP column, Stephen Davies takes a critical view of Kelen's argument, which is followed by Kelen's reply.

Journal Writing: A Response to Christopher Kelen

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Opinion and Perspective

Kelen's claim that journal writing involves students in "making meaning matter" is uncontested; there are undoubted benefits in allowing students to express themselves freely, many of which he summarises in his paper. However, some of his claims need to be examined more critically. First, he states that "unconstrained production of text by the student will help, in this case, to develop proficiency." But what exactly is 'proficiency' in terms of writing and how will unguided writing foster it? I'd like to offer this simple definition: proficiency means the ability to produce accurate, fluent and meaningful texts. By 'accurate' I mean writing that is free of errors of surface level grammar, punctuation and syntax. It should also show an awareness of rhetorical organisation. Getting students to produce a lot of free writing may well promote fluency but this is, I contend, very often at the expense of accuracy. Can we really call writers of inaccurate texts proficient?

Another related concern is that learners, after extensive journal writing, may begin to feel that accuracy, as defined above, is of less importance than fluency and meaning. But perhaps we should remind ourselves that, of all the writing genres, academic writing has the highest status and that many of our students will be evaluated on their ability to produce academic theses. Academic writing is formulaic, prescriptive and requires accuracy; as such it differs markedly from the free-writing ethos of anything goes as long as writers "learn to mean through the process of making meaning." Difficulties may arise for our students when they attempt

academic writing if they produce work that makes little or no sense; content then becomes impossible to evaluate since language use is so inaccurate. Put simply, my worry is that students who write extensively in journals and do not have their writing corrected may come to feel that accuracy is of no importance which is, of course, simply not the case.

Kelen's comments about the 'therapeutic' function of journal writing also need to be examined carefully. A literal reading of "a writing cure" suggests the conventional meaning of 'therapeutic', which is 'healing' or 'curative.' If we understand 'therapeutic' in this way, it would imply that his journal writers are (a) suffering from some form of illness and (b) that this can be cured by their writing. Is he suggesting, for example, that schizophrenics or manic depressives might be best treated by free writing in journals? If not, then what does he mean by talking about journal writing as a form of therapy?

The answer appears to be that writers and teachers take on specific roles in the journal writing process. The teacher becomes a "listener-advisor" and students are given unique opportunities for self-expression. Journal writing provides a "vehicle for the expression of personality." This interaction fosters a closeness which is not usually part of conventional classroom settings, enabling teachers to read about their students' problems and to offer them advice in the form of written feedback. This process appears to be what Kelen actually means by 'therapeutic.' However, he seems to refer again to the more literal psychological interpretation when he writes about the "counseling opportunities" of the journal. Surely

there is a difference between claiming that journals give students a chance to write about their problems, and, on the other hand, implying that such a writing process can be psychologically healing?

Finally, it has to be said that student journals are often very interesting for teachers to read because they can give us unique glimpses into our students' private lives and inner worlds. But, to restate my first point, there is a danger that content can assume a primacy that makes focus on form seem irrelevant. Getting students to write journals is a good idea for many of the reasons that Kelen gives; however, allowing them to continue to make errors will not make them proficient writers and may ultimately be doing them a disservice.

Taking the Pledge for the Cure: a Quick Defence and Modest Proposal

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The rat pushed the paper away from him wearily, but the discreet Mole took occasion to leave the room, and when he peeped in again some time later, the Rat was absorbed and deaf to the world; alternatively scribbling and sucking at the top of his pencil. It is true that he sucked a good deal more than he scribbled; but it was joy to the Mole to know that the cure had at least begun.

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

Is communicative language teaching an elaborate plot against a language teacher's 'natural' responsibilities for marking? I'll gloss over the digression into the discouraging effects of being 'wrong, wrong, wrong' all the time by merely saying that the ferocity of prescriptive rigour in a Hong Kong high school classroom may not be fully appreciated by those fortunate enough never to have experienced it. Having served a few years in a Japanese high school, I think I'm in a position to make a fair comparison.

The extremity of the Hong Kong situation, as I pointed out in my paper, extends to discouraging the student from writing one word past a notional limit because an extra word may be wrong and every

word wrong is one mark less. Whose laziness is reflected in this (non-native teachers') set-up? Teachers don't want to have to mark more so they organise for students to write less. The beauty of journal writing – of any fluency-focused, extensive writing demand – is that it breaks an irrational nexus between the student's capacity to write and the teacher's capacity to mark. It's healthy for the student to write more, much more, than the teacher could reasonably be expected to mark.

And then, there's the means by which you get Rat absorbed and deaf to the world. It has partly to do with leaving him alone, leaving him to his own devices. At least that is a phase in the cycle of writing in general, not merely in the process of learning to write. Which brings us to the cure. I'm interested in writing – and in imaginative work in general – as a *world therapy*. Bringing non-natives into your language is the most exciting pedagogic assignment I can imagine. The English language is worth entering because it's the world language. One of the reasons it gets to be the world language is that it is open to forms of expression and ideas which are foreign to it, forms which wilt under the glare of ceaseless correction. There are tasty and nasty historical reasons which bear reflection too.

Ah, yes, the past. When Davies writes that "of all the writing genres, academic writing has the highest status" he means that, as an academic, he can't help but feel that *his* way with words towers over that of Tolstoy and Shakespeare and the rest of their band of uncouth experimenters. This kind of grandstanding demeans the profession of scholar in general. It also undermines the imaginative – if often well concealed – processes by which subjects enter languages.

Davies accuses me of pathologising the language learner as someone needing to take a cure. I can assure him that the freedom and openness and reflexive play I'm recommending are as necessary to the teacher as they are to the student. Think of them as preventive if you like: they help to make possible a healthy life with words.

The sad fact is there are too many people in this profession who can't play with a metaphor without getting it by the throat and shaking the black and white life out of it. In that act of violence they naturally miss the point that there wasn't that kind of truth there to begin with.

Is the accuracy industry a plot by accountants to

crush the creative life out of language learning? I propose that we on the teaching side of the flowchart devote a little less of our precious bodily fluids to the knowledge of how right we are, and that we devote

a little more of ourselves to meeting our students on terms which are mutually agreed. I propose that we give a little more credence to the therapeutic value of creative effort in general.

ABC: Avoiding Breakdown in Communication

Pino Cutrone
Nova Intercultural Institute

Summary: In speaking a foreign language, there are times when learners do not know what is appropriate to say, or are unsure what the response will be if they use phrases they think are appropriate. Communication breakdown often results from this insecurity. Teachers can help learners overcome these communication breakdowns. One way to do this is to teach conversational repair strategies from the beginning of a course. By using phrases such as "pardon me", "I don't know", and "what does X mean" naturally in the classroom, learners can come to realize for themselves that these strategies are beneficial in allowing the conversation to continue with no harm done and no face lost.

Students: This technique is valuable to students of all ages and all levels, but especially lower levels.

Materials: Students are given a *help sheet*, listing repair strategies suitable for various types of communication breakdown (see below).

Time Required: Some time will be required to introduce the concept, and the method of use, but thereafter the technique is best used when the need arises naturally in the classroom. It should not take more than a minute each time.

Rationale: Communication often breaks down because learners are unsure of what to say in particular situations. Hence, we should teach them what to say in these situations. As well, this technique encourages learner involvement in that they have more

control over their learning. For example, by asking teachers for help in the classroom, rather than waiting to be directed, learners are actively taking steps to acquire new knowledge and skills).

Procedure: When a communication breakdown occurs in the classroom the teacher refers the learner to the help sheet. For example, in the course of a lesson, a student of mine did not understand a particular word (the word was *prevent*). Although I could guess by her facial expression that she did not understand, I did not explain it immediately but moved on to the next phase of the lesson. I later took out a copy of the *help sheet* and instructed her to ask me the question "What does *prevent* mean?" When this type of situation arises again, she'll either ask me the question readily, or I'll refer her to the *help sheet* again.

Reflections: The critical time in employing this technique is the first time a breakdown occurs. Learners may not be used to taking such an active role in their learning and may take a while to catch on to what the teacher is trying to do. They may be uncomfortable asking teachers questions directly or admitting that they do not understand, as these practices may be incompatible with the educational norms of their own culture.

I have experienced great success with this technique in my classroom. I think the main criteria for success are patience and resolve. The technique will only be effective if the teacher gives the learner

a chance to repair the breakdown by themselves. This may mean extending one's tolerance of silence) and if it is repeated each time the need arises naturally.

Variations: Teachers can focus on whatever set phrases they think meet the needs of their students. I often find myself altering my *help sheet* below to better suit the changing needs of my students.

Help Sheet

Finding out about meaning

What does ____ mean?
 What's another word for ____?
 What's the opposite of ____?
 What's the difference between ____ and ____?

Does ____ mean ____?

Finding out about appropriateness

What should I say when ____?
 When can I say ____?
 In what situation could I ____?

Asking someone to repeat something

Could you repeat that more slowly please?
 I beg your pardon.
 Pardon me.

Saying you don't know

I'm sorry I don't know.
 I'm not sure.
 I have no idea.

Saying You don't Understand

I can't understand.
 (Could you give me an example?)
 I'm not sure what you mean.
 I'm not quite with you.

Asking about Pronunciation

How do you say ____ (in English)?
 How do you pronounce ____?

Asking for the written form

Could you write ____ down please?
 How do you spell ____ please?

Finding about the correctness

Is it correct to say ____?
 Can I say ____?
 Is this sentence correct: ____?
 Which sentence is correct ____ or ____?

Giving yourself time to think

Just a moment please.
 May I think about it for a moment.

If you have a classroom idea that's worked,

or one that didn't work but from which you learned something about teaching,

why not write it up for 'From the Chalkface'?

Send submissions to Andrew Obermeier <andrew@kyokyo-u.ac.jp>

Conversation Flow Plans

Brian Cullen and John Morris,
Nagoya Institute of Technology

From the Chalkface

In teaching English conversation in Japan, most teachers eventually come to realize that one of the biggest difficulties for Japanese students is not the construction of individual sentences, but rather the production of naturally flowing conversations. Many textbooks attempt to teach specific conversation strategies to help learners cope with this difficulty. For example, *Nice Talking With You* (Kenny & Woo 2000) teaches strategies such as Changing the topic, Ask to hear it again, and Asking for an explanation. *Many Things* (Kelly & Kelly, 2000) teaches Asking the same question, Giving additional information, and Follow-up questions. These strategies are highly useful, but learners require constant practice for them to become an integral part of conversation habits. Most of the textbooks which offer these conversation strategies do not provide enough activities to recycle them to the point where they become automatic. This short article presents a very simple technique which teachers can use to recycle these strategies in every lesson.

Roots of Conversation Strategies

The appearance of conversation strategies in textbooks is the culmination of many different trends in language-teaching such as learner autonomy and cognitive learning theories. However, we can also regard them as a product of discourse analysis, and in particular, as a product of the work in conversation analysis carried out by Sacks and others (eg. Sacks et al. 1974). When we analyse conversations, it becomes clear that conversation has a structure, even when the speakers themselves are unaware of it. Conversation is structured upon turn-taking—deciding who is going to talk next. It is possible to describe the transcription of a conversation with labels such as “Asking for an explanation” or “Asking the same question”. These labels are, of course, the names of particular

conversation strategies. In other words, conversation analysis shows us which conversation strategies are being used and how these strategies control turn-taking. Using this information from conversation analysis and an understanding of learners’ difficulties, textbook writers can choose the most appropriate strategies for inclusion.

Conversation Flow Plans

However, we can go further than this. Instead of just extracting the conversation strategies from a conversation, we can actually use them to reverse-engineer conversations. We can tell learners to carry out their conversation following a series of conversation strategies; We will call this series a Conversation Flow Plan (CFP). Using this, they can create conversations which are similar in structure but vary in content. The structure is similar because the turn-taking is the same in each conversation. An example will make this clearer.

Example 1

A: Ask a question
B: Answer giving additional information
A: Follow-up question
B: Answer + Ask the same question
A: Answer

In the classroom, following this CFP, the exchange between two students might be as follows:

A: Which high school did you go to?
B: I went to Tokonama senior high school. It was a very big school.
A: How many students were at the school?
B: There were two thousand students. How about you?
A: I went to Shiroyama high school.

By following this very simple CFP, students know exactly what is expected of them and will begin to have conversations with a more natural flow.

This technique can easily be extended to higher-level students by using more abstract conversation strategies.

Example 2

A: Greeting

B: Greeting + Ask for news

A: Explain a problem

B: Ask for further information + Shadow

Some people might argue that calling 'Greeting' a conversation strategy is stretching the name too far, so a more inclusive term such as 'dialogue block' could be used. Whatever you decide to call them, within the constraints of the plan, higher level students now have a large degree of freedom while still gaining valuable practice in structuring their conversations.

Using CFPs in the classroom

Once teachers are familiar with the concept of the conversation flow plan, it is simple to write a quick plan on the blackboard which is suitable for their students. These can make use of conversation strategies found in the textbook or new ones can be introduced gradually. I like to use shorthand for several of the most common strategies. For example, "Question" becomes "Q", "Answer giving additional information" becomes "A+" and "Follow-up question" becomes "F/U". Use of this shorthand is shown in example 3.

Example 3

A: Q

B: A+

A: F/U

B: A & How about you?

A: A +

Conclusion

Obviously, outside the classroom, learners will not normally have a plan to follow, so a CFP is a classroom learning technique. It gives students an opportunity to consciously apply the conversation strategies sufficiently that they may have a chance to become an automatic part of the learner's

conversation habits.

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Further examples of CFPs can be found in Cullen's forthcoming textbook Humanity and Technology, to be published by Intercom Press, Fukuoka this year.

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The ever-widening gyre: the job search

Joe Tomei

Kumamoto Gakuin University

Even though the tertiary job market in Japan now qualifies as its own circle of hell, that does not mean that people are going to stop going into it. But, unlike hell, there are people leaving. This column cobbles together a number of points that those looking for a university job may wish to consider.

The job search as professional development

First of all, get involved in helping other people find jobs and talk to people about jobs and situations. I say this partly out of my own self-interest, in that JALT's job information center (the JIC) which is both an ongoing column in *The Language Teacher* and a part of the annual conference, is under my position as Director of Membership, and we could always use volunteers. But it's not just that. So many job-seekers get so wrapped up in the job search that they lose track of their own goals and needs. The job search should not be viewed as a process akin to having your appendix removed. Instead, it should be viewed as a logical part of your personal development. Understanding what possible situations are out there, passing on job information to others, looking at your own situation, and trying to identify your strengths and weaknesses are what the job search is all about. And these things don't stop when you get a job. In this era of three to five year non-renewable term limits, I often see a pattern of people who intensely look for a job in the last year of their contract, find something, then disappear from the network. It is really hard work getting yourself used to a new work environment, coping with new procedures, and filling out new forms. But a neglect of the network means that in three to five more years, you are going to be at square one again, and people are going to be less willing to help you the second time around. Also, even if you are not currently looking for a job, if you think that you may be in the future, or even

if you just really aren't sure, you should be talking to people about this. Why? There are several reasons. The first is because knowing how other people deal with their situations will make you a better faculty member. The second is that getting plugged into this network will make you more attuned to problems that may arise. The last is that everyone, bar none, who looks for a job says that they could have started earlier. Do not feel that somehow the loyalty you show by not looking for a job is going to help you stay in your position.

One way to look at the job search in Japan is to consider your professional life and development as if it were speaking a language. The ability to do well in the job search can be seen as a specific sub-skill within that ability, akin to giving a presentation in the language, a specific skill that is supported by a range of other, more general skills. Students often think that by memorizing the presentation, and ignoring the other skills, they can get by. Sometimes they can, by brute memorization and a willingness to ignore the wider context. The same applies to the job search. If you lurch from job search to job search, without examining what personal qualities are important in being an educator, you are just like the student who stays up all night writing their presentation on their palm so as to get a passing grade without putting in the work during the rest of the year.

Research, teaching, service, and languageability

In English-speaking countries, the university job is often described as being based on three supports: research, teaching, and service to the university and the community. Much ink has been spilled on how the first leg of research takes precedence over teaching and service. Transferring that model over here, the first point I would add is that for the foreigner, a fourth leg, that of Japanese ability, needs to be added. Simply as part of your professional

development, learn Japanese. Doing this not only makes you a more attractive candidate, it also widens the circle of jobs that you can apply for. Even if your Japanese is only passably fluent in listening and speaking, there will be advertisements that say '2 years experience outside Japan and/or native-like proficiency in English advisable, or for a native speaker of English, experience teaching in Japan and basic Japanese proficiency'. Yes you are competing against Japanese for the position, so you've got to accept that it's going to be difficult. But many universities have had poor luck with employing Japanese who have done graduate school overseas and know little or nothing about the Japanese university bureaucracy. Tip the scales by knowing how things work, both for you and for others.

Wordell, in 'Politics and Human Relations in the Japanese University', (1993), writes 'Given the political and cultural milieu of a Japanese university, it is wise for the foreign teachers not to fool themselves into thinking that they are really important.' (p. 153) 8 years later, what the tightened job market means is that even though the cultural milieu has not changed, it is now increasingly a part of one's professional development in Japan to make oneself important. The work of Japanese faculties is exploding. Some of it is merely reactive, setting up committees to try and look as though something is being done about the problem. But some of it will have a huge impact on the institution and, even if you are in a term-limited position now, the experience of being involved in these changes may help you, not immediately, but 5 years down the road. The balance to achieve is to do work that will not make you feel taken advantage of, but will make a difference. And while it is true that the four areas that need to be dealt with, research, teaching, service, and language ability are discrete, one should not overlook the possibility that all of the legs can be combined into a solid, integrated base. For example, examine what you do in the classroom, relate it to the literature and write it up for the school in house journal, referred as the *kiyo*. This is especially important if you have developed a syllabus and materials for a class. While these articles shouldn't be taken as sufficient in and of themselves, when you embark on the job search, they allow the search committee to have an idea of how you will fit into their program.

Practicalities

The first place to check for jobs is at <http://jrecin.jst.go.jp/>, formerly NACSIS. Though there is a password, searching for positions does not require one. By law, all jobs at national universities must be advertised here and it is 'strongly recommended' for private and prefectural universities. Many of those relating to English teaching are also advertised in Eigo Kyouiku.

Each job advertisement will have its own detailed application specifications, many specifying that the university's own proforma had to be used, and others simply detailing the headings required. A few have English language application forms, but the great majority are in Japanese. There is, though, an English language search page at jrecin.) In addition, English language publications such as The Japan Times sometimes have job advertisements, as of course does The Language Teacher.

Most application procedures include a resume, academic activities record (publications, presentations and so on), and many ask for some kind of essay (Views on teaching English in Japan; Semester plan for teaching reading/writing etc; The role of CALL in English education; and so on.) These are often asked for in Japanese. Most ads also call for at least 5 publications, and actual copies of 3-5, often with a Japanese synopsis of each one (usually 200 but up to 1000 in some cases). Even if you are not looking for a job, preparing your publications, writing Japanese summaries, taking the essay topics and starting to write essays that you can put in Japanese is time well spent. Often, the job will indicate a speciality, but if you see an essay about teaching reading or writing, or something related to comprehension, this generally means that the school is also interested in someone teaching the four skills.

In the next column, I will try to discuss how to present your teaching experience in a way that makes you more employable.

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The American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting, April 10 – 14, 2001, Seattle.

Reviewed by Dexter Da Silva
Keisen University

Conference Review

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) held its 82nd Annual Meeting from April 10 – 14 in Seattle, at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, the location of the WTO meeting that drew the world's attention, and TESOL's Annual Convention 4 years ago. The 13,000 participants stretched Seattle's hotel capacity to its limits, and were challenged by the 5 packed days of multiple-choice sessions on the conference theme: "What We Know and How We Know It."

AERA has 12 divisions covering areas such as: Curriculum Studies, Learning and Instruction, and Social Context of Education. It also has over 100 SIGs (Special Interest Groups) ranging from specific research areas (such as Research on Giftedness and Talent, Research in Social Studies Education, and Research on the Education of Deaf Persons), to theoretical topics (e. g. Foucault and Education, John Dewey Society, Systems Thinking in Education), and practical areas (Computer Applications in Education, Stress and Coping). SIGs of relevance to EFL teachers and CUE members are too exhaustive to list but would include: Second Language Research, Bilingual Education Research, Language and Social Processes, and Motivation in Education.

The size of the conference prevents it from staging plenary sessions, or Opening and Closing Ceremonies, though five special presentations spread across the convention, and the Presidential Address on the third day served to provide participants with a sense of togetherness and inclusiveness. President Catherine Snow's address, in particular, tackled the conference theme head-on, and using examples from Child Language Development, argued for the

importance of balancing experiential knowledge with empirical knowledge. The recent attack on bilingual education in the US was an example she used to show where the wealth of empirical knowledge was ignored, and influential individuals' experiential knowledge given precedence.

The variety of presentation-types itself was remarkable. These included poster sessions, fire-side chats, round tables (many small round tables for 7-8 participants, in a large room with a different topic for discussion at each table), symposia, performances, paper sessions and single presentation sessions.

Size and variety alone does not a worthwhile conference make, and this one is definitely not for those looking for teaching techniques, nor for those who dislike huge conferences. However, the convention in general was very strong on research and theory, with a host of well-known authors and researchers attending and presenting. It is a useful conference for those EFL teachers seeking to expand their horizons, or looking to the wider field of education to instruct their teaching and research. For me these included the areas of motivation in education and the special needs of first-year university students.

In terms of my particular main interest, motivation, the conference started off with a bang. Many of the big names in this area were in attendance at the first session I attended, 'Goals, Motives, and School Achievement: Toward an Integration', a symposium consisting of Martin Covington, Paul Pintrich, Andrew Elliot, and Judith Harackiewicz, with Carole Ames as discussant. This session set the stage for several days of intensive learning, as I came away with a number of

inspiring quotations ("Goals are motives with maindeadlines." Martin Covington), with new ideas (the possibility that goals have neuro-physiological bases, and therefore may be resistant to change), and with as many questions as when I entered the room (the one being: Why do performance goals show greater achievement results than mastery goals, when we've been pushing the latter as superior for the past decade?).

This may have been a highlight for me but the quality of presentations was consistently very high, and made the trip from Tokyo more than worthwhile.

I returned to Tokyo one day before the start of the new university academic year with renewed academic curiosity, and the pledge to attend again in the future, though this may not always be possible given the timing (early April) every year. Dates, and venues, for the next five years:

2002, April 1-5, New Orleans;
2003, April 21-25, Chicago;
2004, April 12-16, San Diego;
2005, April 11-15, Montreal;
2006, April 8-12, San Francisco.

AERA's website address is: <http://www.aera.net>

The Third International Congress of Cognitive Sciences, August 26-31, 2001, Beijing, China

Reviewed by Peter Wanner
Kyoto Institute of Technology

The Third International Congress of Cognitive Sciences conference in Beijing China was very successful bringing together scholars from over 20 countries. Social activities were organized well and conveyed many features of Chinese culture. All participants were invited to the Beijing Opera, an active and invigorating performance of three plays. The hotel was within close proximity to many scenic spots like Tian'anmen Square, the Palace Museum, and other places such as museums. The last day of the conference, many visitors joined a tour of the Great Wall and the Ming tombs.

This review will describe a summary of conclusions attained at the symposium for "Cognitive Science in Education." Mitchell J. Nathan presented a preliminary study of teacher development and instruction relationships. His findings suggested that teachers with higher knowledge content are not always the best teachers. He maintained that a certain degree of pedagogical knowledge is necessary to successfully help students

fully comprehend their material. Seakmin Kang and his colleagues extended Nathan's proposition showing the effects of explanation contexts on declarative knowledge acquisition. Their results confirm that the experience of explanation is a benefit to declarative knowledge acquisition. Other presentations addressed metacognitive processes in foreign language reading. These provided insight into processes such as read-aloud analysis. Finally, the remaining presentations provided examples of education strategies and their effectiveness. This symposium introduced a good overview of current research and theories of education in cognitive science today.

For further details on any of these areas refer to the published proceedings:

Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Cognitive Science. 2001. Press of USTC; Beijing, China. ISBN 7-312-01284-11B-28

Teaching and Researching Motivation

Zoltán Dörnyei. London: Longman. (2001) ¥2490. ISBN: 0-582-38238-6. p. 295.

Reviewed by Dexter Da Silva,
Keisen University

Book Review

In a new series, edited by Christopher Candlin and David Hall, the Applied Linguistics in Action Series, Zoltán Dörnyei has written a very important book for teachers.

Dörnyei has been one of the leading forces in the decade-long movement to expand the research agenda of motivation in Foreign/Second Language Learning. His first publication in the area (Dörnyei, 1990) along with Crookes and Schmidt (1991) provided the impetus and momentum for renewed interest in the area, and for the 'debate' carried on in the Modern Language Journal between those calling for research in the area to go beyond the Gardnerian-dominated research tradition (Dörnyei, 1994a, 1994b; Oxford, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), and Gardner himself along with his colleagues (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994a, 1994b). Gardner has since expanded his model (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997) and continues to do so.

Since his foray into the field, Dörnyei has followed up on his call for developing the concept, and has been prolific at doing just that. He has conducted research in the area of group dynamics, motivation as a *process*, levels of motivation, and attempted to import from educational psychology important related concepts. In this reader-friendly book, he compiles this previous work, and extends it to produce the most comprehensive work in this important area, which, prior to Gardner's work in the 70s and 80s, had been largely ignored. The book is divided into four sections:

The first section, *What is motivation*, is divided into three chapters. The first one looks at the main challenges to research on motivation. These include the issues of how conscious are our motives, the relative importance of cognition vs affect, the importance of the immediate environment or context, and the ideas that motivation neither exists in isolation, nor is it a fixed state. The second chapter covers the important theories of motivation in general psychology, such as expectancy-value theory, attribution theory, self-efficacy, and goal theories,

ending with Heckhausen and Kuhl's Action Control Theory which focuses on the time dimension of motivation. This makes a distinction between intention formation and implementation, and has influenced Dörnyei's own recent theory. The third chapter, concerning motivation theories in foreign language learning, starts from the prelude to Gardner's Socio-educational Model, continues to its recent expansion, and ends with Dörnyei and Otto's recent process model.

The second section, *Motivation and language teaching*, attempts to bridge the gap between theory & research on the one hand, and practice on the other. It starts with ideas introduced from general education, and includes techniques and strategies that can be applied to the classroom, both from Dörnyei's own work, and from other frameworks. The section ends with two aspects of motivation that until recently have been ignored: teacher motivation and student demotivation.

The third section, *Researching motivation*, is most relevant to those intending to undertake research in motivation, or to understand the research on a deeper level. It looks at some of the problems inherent in motivation research, the main methodological considerations, and the various types of research, both quantitative and qualitative, which have been conducted in the area.

The final section, *Resources and further information*, provides guidance in the form of connections with other topics and areas in the social sciences, and lists of a variety of very useful resources.

The book's format, with numerous quote and concept boxes, makes it very accessible to the novice reader in the area of motivation, but it also provides advanced readers with a broad and in-depth account of motivation in foreign language learning.

With the publication of *Teaching and Researching Motivation*, the concept of motivation will now become more accessible for teachers, and hopefully

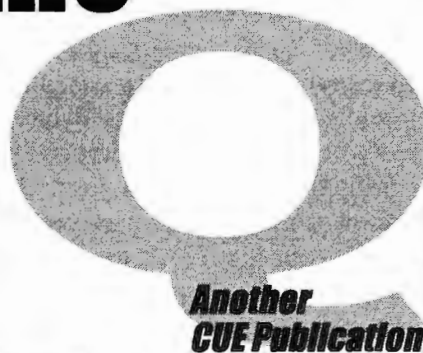
the area will rightfully take a more important role in foreign/second language learning theory and research. Dörnyei also should now be in greater demand to address audiences of teachers and researchers around the world.

At ¥2,490, the book is about half the price of most teacher reference books in Japan. There is also a companion website for the book and the series as a whole (www.booksites.net/alia), which includes a long list of forthcoming titles in the series. If *Teaching and Researching Motivation* is representative of these future books, then this new series will become a dominant feature of reading lists in TESOL/Applied Linguistics programs.

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Projects from the University Classroom



A collection of seven input-driven projects for sale through CUE.

**Edited by
Keith Ford and Eamon McCafferty
¥2,500**

Cyberpipeline

Steve Snyder

Kyushu University of Health and Welfare

Cyberpipeline

Linguist's Software:

<http://www.linguistsoftware.com>

For those of you out there that have tried to find IPA fonts or programs such as *TwinBridge*, here is a web site that you should know about. *The Linguist's Software* site is better known to language researchers and translators, but if your research interest occasionally requires special language fonts, or if you have other special, cross-language needs, then this site can help you. In my own case, I was looking for IPA fonts and *System Commander* software when I ran across this site.

This is not a low cost site and you have to deal with them through the mail; on the other hand, the site provides very helpful information about these products. Also, the *Linguist's Software* site has comprehensive listings of products for both Macs and PCs.

So, what are *TwinBridge* and *System Commander*? These are products for PC users—*TwinBridge* enables writing in Japanese and other double-byte languages on an English Windows operating system, while *System Commander* allows you to boot to different hard drives or partitions at startup. *TwinBridge* was the rage in Hong Kong several years ago when it first came out, because it made using English and Chinese on the same PC convenient. The Japanese version was popular in Japan, but Japanese-version Windows has dominated the market. Still, there are PC users who would prefer to have an English operating system and also be able to writing in Japanese and access Japanese dictionaries—*TwinBridge* is a product that can do this (something Mac users have been able to do for sometime).

Other people want to be able to switch between English-version Windows and Japanese-version Windows—*System Commander* lets you choose between operating systems. *System Commander* is not limited to Windows, you can select whatever operating system you have available. For the Mac

user, there are piles of fonts, converters and other products.

Much has changed since September 2001, and all of us have been caught up in the drama of what has happened. Here are some sites that provide a rather different view from the major media.

A is for Arab:

<http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2002/01/08/alphabet/index.html>

This is a listing of contributions from Islam and the Arab world to what many call "Western Civilization." The listing takes four pages. Simple, 'yes', but a clear challenge to the "unwarranted sense of superiority" that many westerners have adopted. This is just one of thousands of mind-opening pages available at Salon.com. Given the rhetoric these days, "A is for Arab" is good reminder how deep the debt of industrialized countries is to Islamic heritage.

Arts and Letters Daily:

<http://www.aldaily.com/>

For those looking for a contrast of opinions on world affairs, let me again recommend the Arts and Letters Daily <http://www.aldaily.com/>. This site uses a newspaper motif to present links on news, books and opinion. Links to major news services are provided, but links to a broader range of ideas and opinions are also provided.

ZNet:

<http://www.zmag.org/ZNET.htm>

For a progressive critique of world affairs a must see site is ZNet at <http://www.zmag.org/ZNET.htm> where you can find postings by such luminaries such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Said. ZNet is an outgrowth of Z Magazine, and is dedicated to social change. The web site is certainly controversial to

some— its mail list has the distinction of recently being banned by America Online/Compuserve.

The web site is a lot more than commentary and articles— there numerous news watch groups (including one on Japan), a learning section with essays and guides, interviews, and links. There is also a wonderful "Quotes Archive" with gems such as this one by James Baldwin,

It is very nearly impossible...to become an educated person in a country so distrustful of the independent mind,

and Dostoyevsky's

Nothing is easier than to condemn the evildoer, nothing is harder than to understand him.

Taken together, Arts and Letters Daily and ZNet can provide not only a contrast of views, but also a way of researching current events and social trends.

*Please send site
recommendations and
comments to me at
<snyder@phoenix.ac.jp>*

Billingsley, P. and Whalley, T. (2000). Acquiring a multicultural outlook through bilingual classes: Momoyama students on the front line. Momoyama Gakuin University Research Institute, International Culture Review, 21, pp. 29-64.

In this paper, we use the model of the Momoyama Gakuin University (Osaka, Japan) – Douglas College (New Westminster, Canada) program in Japanese and English to illustrate the advantages of the two-way bilingual approach to language learning.

The program, launched in 1992, is based on a simple contract between Japanese learners of English and Canadian learners of Japanese to the effect that: "If you help me learn your language, I'll help you learn mine". By allowing the students to spend sustained periods of time together in both structured and unstructured learning situations, the program has the advantage of enabling them to develop not only language skills but also a multicultural outlook, within the broader skill of intercultural communicative competence.

Homogeneous groups of ESL students tend to have a high degree of 'communicative inertia'. Bilingual programs, in which peers rather than a formal teacher act as the students' primary source of information, provide a stimulus to learn, create more authentic motivation than can be had in a teacher-centred classroom, and encourage students to speak each others' languages more readily.

Another advantage of bilingual programs is that they bring learners into regular contact with representatives of the target culture, giving them the chance to experience a more authentic cultural milieu. In addition, bilingual programs, by using students as peer teachers, validate those students' own knowledge. Being able to share their general knowledge of their own country and culture with others, hones their sense of awareness while increasing their sense of responsibility as teachers. Finally, the nature of the bilingual program makes it much easier for the students to develop friendships with one another.

A questionnaire distributed to participating ESL students revealed that the program was perceived by almost all of them as a total experience, one that brought both linguistic and socio-cultural enlightenment, profoundly changing their cultural perceptions as well as bringing them unprecedented linguistic confidence. In this sense, it may be said to have been an exercise in creating an environment in which education in its original sense – bringing out students' essential nature and contributing to their personal growth – could take place.

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- What courses are being implemented?
- What plans are there for the future in your institution?
- What ideas do you have that may be interesting to others?