

In this issue:

2018 CUE
CONFERENCE

JALT 2018 IN
SHIZUOKA

THREE FEATURE
ARTICLES AND
CUE CAREERS



CUE CIRCULAR

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



Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, in Hokkaido

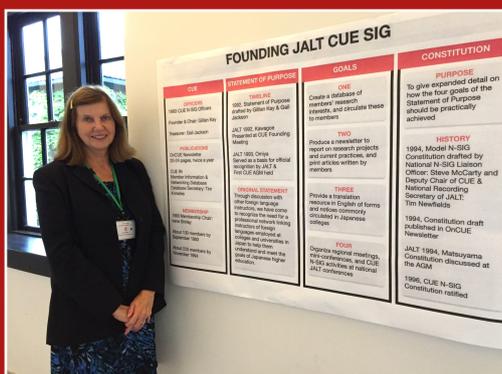
Photo by Honoka Kurochi, a second-year student

It's conference season!

Welcome to our seventh issue, as we head into our third year of publication.

The CUE Careers column returns in this issue, with valuable advice about keeping your “employment dossier” in good order. Our three feature articles once again cover a variety of topics. Guy Smith, in his second article for *CUE Circular*, discusses his perspective on the idea of the flipped classroom. Justin Pool has some interesting ideas on the topic of authentic materials, and Daniel Velasco shares how he's gotten his students thinking critically about some pretty big issues.

Behind the scenes, we welcome an additional Assistant Editor to the *CUE Circular* team: Mark Howarth, from Sojo University in Kumamoto. He's long been active with the Vocabulary SIG, and I'm very glad that he accepted my invitation to help produce *CUE Circular*.



The 2018 CUE Conference.

Well-written, practical, down-to-earth articles about the day-to-day realities of teaching in our sector is what *CUE Circular* is all about. Are you presenting at JALT 2018, but have concerns about whether a formal write-up for a peer-reviewed scholarly journal is feasible? Please consider giving CUE members the narrative version of what you did; how you came up with your project, what happened along the way, what you learned, and how things went. Your fellow CUE SIG members would love to read about your experiences, ideas, and observations in an easy-to-read, accessible style so we can try your ideas for ourselves without reinventing the wheel.

Please enjoy this issue of *CUE Circular*.
Steve Paton, Editor

CUE Conference 2018

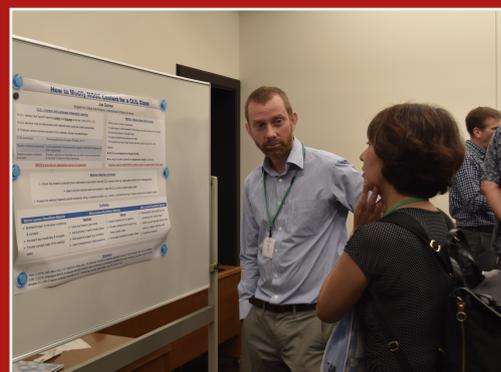
Over 100 people attended the 25th CUE conference at Rikkyo University on September 15-16. With 43 presentations and 14 posters, the weekend was quite an active one. Attendees were also treated to plenary talks by Kay Irie and Jo Mynard, as well as an opening greeting by SIG co-founder Gail Jackson on how CUE got started from the original concept by Gillian Kay.

Walls outside presentation rooms were adorned with posters that displayed various aspects of CUE history. All attendees were presented with a special USB flash drive containing virtually all CUE publications since its inception in 1993. Glen Hill gave a brief but moving memorial to the late Terry Fellner, a CUE comrade and officer for many years. In addition, CUE held its traditional raffle, and this year the recipients were Howard Brown and Yasushi Miyazaki, who got certificates and 10,000 yen to spend on reference books of their choice. Congratulations!

Thanks to everyone for braving the Saturday rain, and to all the volunteers and organizers for such a wonderful time!

CUE in Shizuoka at JALT 2018

- Don't miss our combined pecha kucha forum with the TD SIG (Moments of Creating Culture in the Classroom, Saturday, 11:00-12:30, Kaigi Hall, 11F).
- Get to know the CUE officers and the SIG agendas for 2018 and 2019 at the AGM. (Saturday, 3:45-4:30, Rm. 904).
- Stop by the CUE SIG information table anytime Saturday or Sunday. Ask about publishing, grants, events, and anything else you have in mind.



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Feature articles

Flip the teacher

**Guy Smith, International
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Guy Smith teaches academic reading and writing. His research interests are Self Determination Theory, well-being in education, critical thinking in language learning, and educational technology.
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In 1987, Sylvester Stallone starred as Lincoln Hawk in *Over the Top*, a movie about the world of competitive arm wrestling. Perhaps some of you recall the movie, since there have not been a great many movies about the world of competitive arm wrestling? It was not particularly well received; on the TV and movie review and rating website Rotten Tomatoes it has a positive rating of only 40% from the critics (general fans like it just a little more, at 49%). The movie has stayed with me through all these years, though, mainly due to the psych-up routine Stallone uses to get ready for arm wrestling matches against his huge, massively muscled, and ferocious-looking opponents. Usually a mild-mannered man, when Hawk turns his baseball cap around, he turns himself into a demon of concentration and focus, willing to push himself to any lengths to win. He switches from mild-mannered truck driver to a man possessed, channeling his killer mind-set. In that mode he is remarkably

successful, going on to become the arm wrestling champion.

As Stallone playing Hawk demonstrates, switching mind-sets is a common and successful strategy in sports, visible in expressions commonly used in the sporting world such as “psych yourself up,” and “get your game face on.” For athletes, switching mind-sets and psyching up helps them to achieve higher levels of performance and focus.

But what kind of “game face” might it be useful for our students to have, and after figuring out what it might be, how we can get them to turn their caps around?

Recent research seems to indicate that the use of mind-sets may be able to help our students reach higher levels in our classrooms. One way this can be done is by creating teacher mind-sets amongst our students by “flipping the teacher.” Flipping the classroom, we know, involves assigning tasks that are often done in the classroom (such as reading texts or listening to lectures) to home learning before the class. One of the earliest and most influential teachers to experiment and apply the flipped classroom idea was Eric Mazur. A professor of applied physics at Harvard University, Mazur used the term *peer instruction* to describe his teaching approach and found that this kind of learning improved test scores, performance in problem solving skills, and student engagement with the

coursework (Crouch & Mazur, 2001). Another person who has made a significant contribution to the success and spread of the flipped learning style is Salman Khan, creator of the website *Khan Academy* which uses video instruction at home to flip the classroom. The flipped classroom has become a useful approach to teaching, and so too could “flipping the teacher”.

Rick Nauert (2016), in his article “Student Mindset Can Enhance Learning,” reviewed research from a study in the journal *Memory and Cognition* which investigated how learners would approach learning if they were anticipating teaching the material to other students (flipping their mind-set to being a teacher). Other groups of learners in the study were told they needed to learn the material for a test. The result was that the group of learners who approached the learning in the teacher mind-set naturally and actively tended to seek out and employ more effective learning strategies. Nauert commented, “The study suggests that instilling an expectation to teach may be a simple, inexpensive intervention with the potential to increase learning efficiency at home and in the classroom” (2016, para. 11). The idea is simple yet powerful. By simply asking our students to “be a teacher”, we might be able to initiate a mind-set that will encourage our students to naturally utilize more active and effective learning strategies. In their preparation to teach, students will be thinking about how to effectively present the material to the group, and selecting examples might be relevant. Thus, students will apply learning processes that

are more active in nature than passive re-reading of material or trying to remember lists of ideas for a test.

In the college classes I teach, the focus is on the development of academic skills, such as writing, reading, research, and critical discussion. In one class, we may cover two or three academic writing tips and some reading skills, we may spend time discussing the content of a reading, and we may look at some ideas and concepts connected to expanding on the ideas in the reading. Thus, within the class, several learning opportunities arise, some introduced by the teacher and some generated by the students themselves. At the end of each class, I usually spend some time reviewing what was covered and answering questions or taking comments from students. After the class, I select two or three students and send them an email. In the email, I explain they have been selected to “be a teacher”. Their job in the next class is to teach one or two of the points or information we covered in any of our previous classes and add an opinion, an example, or a fact. Some students become very motivated by this, making an appointment with me and coming to my office to practice their teaching, asking for my feedback and advice. Further, while most of my students say they felt nervous about teaching the class, afterwards they almost always say it was a valuable experience. As the term progresses, I ask students to do longer “be a teacher” presentations and to add to the presentation a question and answer section. This also gives me the opportunity to give my students advice on presentation skills for future “be a

teacher” attempts. One of my colleagues who also started to do “be a teacher” told me recently that when she forgot to assign student teachers for the next class, the students who were next in line came up and told her so, and asked her to schedule them!

Not only is “be a teacher” a great way to activate effective learning strategies in your students, but you may find the students starting to teach you. Some of my “flipped teachers” have added information, ideas, or ways of explaining things to their presentation that have been so interesting and relevant to the learners that I have added them into my lessons. In my two years of using “be a teacher” as a warm-up in my classes, I have found it to be an activity my students find valuable and enjoyable, and one that has given me much food for thought when it comes to reflecting on my own teaching.

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Pondering the nature of authentic materials

Justin Pool, Osaka Kyoiku University



Justin Pool is a member of the English Education Department and a learning advisor in the school's Global Learning Community. He is genuinely pleased to be participating in humanity and all of its extravagances.
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Imagine you know nothing about lions (I will leave it completely up to you as to what kind of scenario you want to create in your head to explain this situation). To remedy this gap in knowledge, you are told that there is one in town at the local zoo. You peer through a barred enclosure to see this isolated beast with eyes glazed over staring vacantly into the distance. You spend all day watching as the docile giant occasionally stands and ambles back and forth between the barren walls of its enclosure before returning to its previous state lying down with an apathetic yawn.

Now, imagine that instead of going to the zoo to learn about lions, you were able to observe them firsthand in the savannas of Namibia. You watch as they interact with their pride. As your safari guide attempts to quietly inch closer in the jeep, the lion becomes alert, muscles tense, as it protectively scans the landscape for danger. Later in the day, you watch in awe as the pride works together, covering the vast area with bounding leaps to viciously take down a fleeing water buffalo.

It is quite clear in which of these scenarios you would garner a more accurate understanding of the nature of a lion. Only by observing a lion in its natural habitat can we understand how it behaves in those conditions. Similarly, learning about a language outside of the confines of its natural environment can also offer us a distorted view. When the language is restricted to decontextualized sentences in a textbook, the learner has no way to see how the language interacts with its vibrant surroundings. Authentic materials, however, offer learners the opportunity to see the language performing natural functions in its natural environment.

It is quite easy to say that EFL teachers ought to integrate authentic materials into their curriculum. This conventional wisdom acts as a dull magnet pulling at us consciously or subconsciously, influencing our pedagogical choices and material selection. However, as is often the case, taking a closer look reveals a much more complex picture.

What are authentic materials?

Authentic materials are often defined as those materials which the L2 community produces for the intended consumption of the L2 community. However, do these two conditions alone make the use of the material an authentic experience? I would argue that when taking a literalist view of the term authentic materials there are numerous other conditions that must be met and that the likelihood of fulfilling all of the conditions in a classroom setting is extremely low. Therefore, we should not ask the question of whether materials are

authentic or not, but rather to what extent are they authentic.

First of all, material selection itself is an obstacle to materials being truly authentic. Teachers, with good reason, tend to select “authentic” materials that challenge their students but are ultimately digestible for students at a certain level. There are also a myriad of other pedagogical reasons why an educator would select one “authentic” text over another. The selection of materials itself, however, reduces the authenticity of the materials. In real-life situations, language learners will not have simpler, level-appropriate language chosen for them. Instead, they will need to make do with whatever language input they are offered in a given context. Thus, the act of selecting linguistically appropriate language provides an inauthentic language scape for the learner. In short, selection is modification.

Another obstacle to materials used in the classroom being authentic is the fact that they are often not being used in their natural context. The materials are often being pulled from their natural context (be it a restaurant menu, an advertisement, or a newspaper article) and are then used in a decontextualized state. The teacher can give background information about where the text comes from, who the intended audience is, and what the greater scope and context of the text are, but if the text wasn’t designed for the language classroom, then the authentic material is being used in an inauthentic way. (If it were indeed designed for the language classroom, it

wouldn't an authentic material in the first place).

Beyond these two additional characteristics, in order for authentic materials to truly be authentic they must not be altered for pedagogical purposes, and they must allow for normal interaction with the L2 community in accordance with the type of material it is. For example, a restaurant menu ought to be used to perform its true function as a vehicle for selecting and ordering food.

How can we create lessons with a high level of authenticity?

Allow me to offer one example of how I try to have my students engage with authentic materials in an authentic way. In a restaurant unit, I use online restaurant reviews. The use of these itself would traditionally be seen as using authentic materials in class. However, does simply reading these reviews constitute engagement in an authentic way? As an introductory activity, I select a few English reviews of well-known restaurants in the area. I delete any direct reference to the restaurant's name and ask the students to use the reviews to figure out which restaurant the review is referring to. Despite lacking certain characteristics of authenticity, engaging in reading activities can bring positive rewards. Learners practice dealing with texts using top-down processing, they learn the types of words and phrases used by actual people, they acquire genre-specific knowledge, and they develop confidence that they can successfully deal with English texts to gather meaning.

To also ensure that students have the opportunity to engage with the restaurant review website in a more authentic way, I assign learners to write their own review of the restaurant of their choice in English. This requires learners to write something that will be meaningful for an authentic and real audience (English language speakers visiting Japan). Beyond the benefits mentioned in the previous paragraph, learners are writing a published piece for a broad, though unknown audience. This seems to increase both focus and motivation. Additionally, learners are able to associate English with localized topics that are of interest to them.

Conclusion

The idea of a truly authentic material is a myth. It is certainly fair to point out that even observing the lion in the savanna will alter the lion's behavior by the observer's presence. However, this is still much more preferable than trying to understand what a lion is by observing its existence in a zoo enclosure. Instead of striving for perfect authentic materials, we must understand our pedagogical goals and ask how our materials help to achieve those goals with the belief that, overall, materials that embody more authentic characteristics will generally offer more pedagogical rewards.

Incorporating TV commercials in university classes

Daniel Velasco, Rikkyo University



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

It all started when I first played the *Pathways 2: Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking* DVD. I rarely use textbook DVDs, especially in my reading and writing classes, so using one was out of the ordinary for me. However, I wanted to mix up my strategy for the current lesson, so I decided to pop the *Pathways* DVD into the player. Unfortunately, it was a strange video on a German artist with a mullet hairstyle that would make Patrick Swayze's *Road House* character jealous. The video documented the artist's attempt at making people aware of the global trash problem by creating a thousand "trash people"—sculptures of people made from landfill trash.

Those who swear by *Pathways* will most likely label my cynicism as EFL heresy, but it's not meant to be an insult to *Pathways* or the German Patrick Swayze. The video is actually pretty interesting, but none of my students appeared to find it interesting at all, and follow-up

activities fell flat. I was reaching for high levels of critical thinking and analysis but instead got a room full of silence and blank stares.

This is the dilemma many university educators find themselves in. With the coming of globalization and the relaxing of immigration laws, Japanese universities are scrambling to "internationalize" their programs by challenging students to think more critically, open-mindedly, and globally. Although this is a great step forward for the Japanese education system, the burden falls squarely on university educators to energize their classes with critical thinking activities that challenge students to move out of their comfort zones.

This leads me back to the German Patrick Swayze. At the end of the video, I asked a usually kind and soft-spoken student, "Would you like to see the Trash People in person?" She looked bewildered and responded with a resounding "No! Would you?" Her question caught me off guard. "No," I sheepishly replied, causing the students to erupt in laughter. Following this, I was able to save the lesson, but I learned to be much more careful about using textbook DVDs.

Neuman, Wong, Flynn, and Kaefer (2018) argued for the usefulness of incorporating videos into classroom lessons, and I am confident no one will debate this. However, other researchers admit that "very little is known about video's role in knowledge development and helping critical thinking" (Carmichael, Reid, &

Karpicke, 2018, p.5).

My goal was to reach what I termed “Global Critical Thinking” (GCT), which combines both critical thinking skills and cultural understanding (one’s own culture and other cultures) through lesson plans centered around videos. The “Swayze” incident led me to my search for videos that would present serious global issues while providing adequate entertainment to my millennial audience. I remembered a great video of a Chinese detergent commercial that I had used in a few other classes (discussed below), and soon found myself searching for more controversial television commercials. I collected three, and I will briefly list them here along with the activities that I found success using.

The first video is actually a collection of old Folgers Coffee commercials from the 1960s depicting the typical pretty, subservient stay-at-home housewife attempting to please her hardworking husband but failing in dramatic fashion with each cup of coffee she serves (Folgers Coffee Sexist 60s Ads, 2011). After the video, I placed students into groups of two or three and asked them to choose from one of the following:

- 1) Recreate one of the coffee ads to reflect a more “modern” family;
- 2) reenact one of the commercials, switching the genders; or
- 3) act out one of the commercials as it is presented, and afterwards discuss how you felt during the performance.

The students really enjoyed putting on little performances and were surprisingly

candid about how they felt about traditional gender roles, as well as the pros and cons of modern family situations.

The second video is titled “Kool-aid Kids in Japan” and tells the brief story of two American children traveling to Japan, only to be disappointed to find their traditional Japanese meal was not served with their favorite sugary beverage (Kool-Aid Kids in Japan 1960 commercial, 2013). The Japanese stereotypes are numerous, and so I chose to use an exercise I created called the E.A.D. (Evaluate, Analyze, Describe) (Velasco, 2015). Briefly, students are asked to first **evaluate** how they feel about what is happening; next, **analyze** the situation—i.e., why it is happening; and finally, **describe** the situation in the video in the simplest terms. The activity is more complex than simply evaluate, analyze, and describe, and it takes some time to properly explain it, but supportive resources can be found online for those interested in trying it.

The last video is the one previously mentioned—the infamous Chinese laundry detergent commercial. It shows an extremely attractive Chinese woman shoving a laundry detergent pod into an African man’s mouth before cramming his body into her washing machine (Racist Chinese Laundry Detergent Ad Qiaobi (俏比) ad, 2016). Instead of killing him, though, the detergent magically transforms him into a skinny Chinese guy. In classes with only Japanese students, I find there are two kinds of response—they either express how unbelievably racist the

commercial is or say it's funny and that they don't see a problem with it. For this reason, I ask small groups to prepare a 5-minute presentation on possible issues in the commercial (Was the commercial racist, or were there simply cultural differences/ misunderstandings?), and what they learned from the experience.

Teachers are certainly not tied to these videos, connected themes, and the accompanying activities. Other topics/themes teachers can explore are:

- Culture/cultural differences
- Gender roles (e.g., traditional vs. modern)
- Sexual/racial discrimination
- Hierarchy/power distance & struggles
- Socioeconomic status
- Collectivist vs. individualist societies
- Stereotypes

When creating and implementing lessons, the following steps consistently work for me:

- Create a vocabulary list/handout (e.g., cloze) to give to the class before you show the video
- Provide a pre-viewing discussion topic/question, and hold small-group discussions
- Show the video several times, if necessary
- Hold small-group discussions or activities (e.g., summarize the video) that lead into a full class discussion
- Offer insights/guidance—don't be afraid to tell students what you think
- Other in-class assignments or homework: have students write journal entries; assign a related article and have students write a reflection paper; assign

group or individual presentations/speeches.

Finally, make sure you consider the following points before your lesson:

- Conduct a needs assessment for your class—what's missing that will help students understand more?
- Investigate themes that may be appropriate for your class—don't push them too far!
- Consult with a colleague about your ideas. If something makes them uncomfortable, chances are your students will be, too.
- Plan to show your videos early in the lesson. Give your students time to process and discuss what they've seen before they leave your class.

In conclusion, catching and keeping students' attention is a global issue in education, and almost every teacher struggles with it. If classes become more challenging and, dare I say, uncomfortable, then perhaps we can begin helping our students become better critical thinkers and intercultural communicators. And who knows—maybe one of those videos will inspire a few of your students to get mullet hairstyles. Patrick Swayze would be proud.

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Autumn colors outside Fukuoka University library

CUE Careers

Cultivate your employment dossier

Any downtime from teaching duties is a good time to organize and update your professional dossier. Having your professional life's work in an accessible and easily manageable format benefits your professional development in preparation for performance reviews, job promotion, and most importantly, in applying for a new job.

Although some universities' application processes require only a CV, most require a variety of documents to assess a candidate's qualifications. A good CV and a copy of your master's degree is just the beginning. Schaaff (2012) reminds us there are two kinds of applications: "complete and incomplete." The best way to ensure that your application is read, rather than shredded, is to include all the items requested in the posting. Be sure to follow all instructions to the letter, even the niggling details such as writing "English Instructor Application" in red ink on the envelope, if asked. It may seem nitpicky, but it will guarantee that your application lands on the correct desk. I applied to one university that required a short video of a sample lesson. I ignored the request three times, and when I finally added the DVD on the fourth try, I got an interview. The same goes for using university-specific forms. Even if you have a perfectly organized and formatted CV, if the university wants applicants to use a

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

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



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



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particular format, use it! It makes it easier for the institution to hire you. The additional effort is minimal, as the information required is quite similar across institutions. It should only require some careful cutting and pasting to complete. If you cannot provide some required document by the deadline, do not ignore the requirement. Instead, explain why you could not deliver it and when you will be able to do so. For example, it may take a few weeks for original university transcripts or letters of recommendation to be delivered.

One additional point is professionalism in communication. Respect the modes of communication specified in the posting. Do not call if email is requested. Also, make sure that you are easy to contact via email, post, or phone. Be sure to use an email address that looks professional, not

<sexy.beers69@hotmail.com>. If your main email is “cute,” you can create a simple, professional email address and have all incoming mail forwarded to your main address. It is not advisable to use the email for your current job for job hunting correspondence, as there may be issues of privacy and using company resources for private matters. (The same applies for making copies of your CV and publications at work.) Other popular means of communication are the web-based video conferencing services, such as Skype or Facetime. If you are applying from abroad, having such an account can be invaluable. Again, an innocuous screen name is appropriate.

Below is an itemized list of the documents typically required in an application for a contract or a tenure-track position. Not every application requires each item, but most require some combination of the items listed.

Academic curriculum vitae (ACV)

This is the most basic and widely required document. You should have a complete academic CV (ACV), and it should include everything that is related to your academic work. Your ACV should include a list of all publications and presentations in APA or MLA format. The ACV, in a nutshell, is divided into four basic areas of your professional life: your education, research (publications, presentations), teaching experience, and service (committees, etc.). (For a detailed description of the ACV, see Miller, 2011a, 2011b, 2017, 2018; Parrish, 2014.) The cornerstone of this is the philosophy of the “balanced scorecard” (Miller, 2011b)

that helps indicate the areas of professional self-improvement where one should focus. The ACV is not just a history of your accomplishments; it is something that should be reflected upon and used later to help guide your professional goals.

List of academic publications

One of the ways that academic job applications differ from those of other professions is the emphasis placed on published research, which serves as the primary criterion that differentiates candidates. An articulate and chronological list of all of your work should be ready to go at any time. That applies to those actively searching for employment and those who have no plans for any change, as institutions often require periodic reports on research and professional activities to justify research funds and/or retention. The list should be divided between “academic publications,” consisting of articles, chapters, or books, and what is termed *sonota* in Japanese, or “other published work,” which includes shorter academic works, published fiction, or journalistic writing. The former is the important one, and may be the only list that a hiring committee will be interested in seeing but the list of *sonota* publications can be of interest for some committees and presents a broad view of the candidate. While it might not be enormously influential, any positive effect will help. The list should also include brief summaries of the works. Ideally this document would also be translated professionally into Japanese.

Employers typically request a sample of your academic writing, that is, copies of

your articles in peer-reviewed journals or chapters in academic books, or even the books themselves. Keeping several offprints or neat photocopies of your best publications saves time before sending applications. Some ask you to indicate on your ACV which publications were included with your application as well as which were peer reviewed.

Documentation of educational achievement

Even in the digital age where everything is available online or in the cloud, there are cases where physical evidence is necessary. The first and foremost is the educational degrees you have earned. While a photocopy is usually sufficient, some employers may need you to produce the original degree. Original diplomas and original (or photocopies of) university transcripts are increasingly required to verify that a candidate actually attended and completed a course of study and to determine how rigorous the course of study was. Cases of fraud and misrepresentation are occurring more and more frequently. It is a good idea to order several copies at once. One would be used for photocopies and the others used in case the employer requires a sealed transcript. Transcripts take time to arrive from abroad, so ordering them early is important. Additionally, transcripts are useful if an opportunity for further study arises. Having the required documentations at hand will be helpful.

Evidence of educational and professional excellence

Employers want to get a sense of what kind of teacher or person you are. One

way of obtaining this is to ask for a written statement regarding your teaching approach or philosophy. The specific questions vary, but the gist is the same. Writing a basic version ahead of time can save time when applying. Of course, the statement would need to be tweaked for each individual institution. Similarly, employers ask candidates to provide an example of a detailed model lesson or sample curriculum. Sometimes they can be lessons or courses you have taught, but other times they are expected to be unique to the application. In either case, finding and preparing a few excellent lessons and syllabi ahead of time and getting feedback on them saves time when preparing an application. Some universities require a video of a sample lesson. This may sound daunting, but a video of a lesson taken on a smartphone may suffice. Some universities require a list of all courses a candidate has taught during their career. Your employer can provide the course titles, semesters taught, and enrollment figures. Take the time to collate a concise and complete document.

Another thing employers want to know is whether the candidate is a good teacher. Getting “proof of good teaching” means one of several things: teaching awards, letters of recommendation, or student evaluations. Try to ensure that you are recognized for your pedagogical skills and keep those records. The easiest to forget are likely to be the student evaluations, so keep good records of those. Keep in contact with the people on your list of professional referees, and update any changes in title, institution, or email address. Make sure you choose a referee

who can speak confidently about your abilities and qualifications, not just the highest-ranking member of staff.

Closing notes

Remember to visualize each job as a combination lock that has a set of criteria that the hiring committee is looking to fulfill. You may not have every criterion listed in the advertisement, but as a jobseeker, you need to fulfill as many of the requirements as possible. By being organized and focused, you will increase your chances of checking as many of the boxes as possible.

The importance of being prepared with an up-to-date academic or professional dossier was highlighted for the authors when we were both applying for jobs in June. Both of us put a significant amount of time into preparing our applications, but one author had most of the materials ready to go, while the other was scrambling to re-assemble a portfolio. In the end one dropped out and the other ultimately received a job offer. Congratulations, Richard!

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