

Teachers Helping Teachers

The Proceedings of 2010 Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

Lao-American College

Vientiane, Laos
March 20 – 25

Hue University, College of Foreign Languages

Hue, Vietnam
June 11 – 13

**American International University of Bangladesh
Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association**

Dhaka, Bangladesh
July 2 – 3

Village Montessori School

San Jose del Monte, Philippines
July 31 – August 1

Bishkek Humanities University

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
September 13 – 15

Edited by

Brent Jones & Richard Silver

ISBN 4-931-42432-5 C3482 1000

With the cooperation of Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

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Introduction

It is with great pleasure, and a fair bit of both pride and humility, that we offer this collection of papers from delegates who presented at Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) conferences, seminars and workshops during 2010. These proceedings are the fifth volume to be published by our “grassroots” organization, and mark the first collective effort at editing.

Starting in 2006, the aim of the proceedings has been to provide a healthy balance of theory and practice in the field of language teaching. We believe the volume you hold in your hands (or have downloaded from our website) succeed in this area quite admirably.

Also, as an organization, we decided early on that the annual THT Proceedings would not be limited to one specific event (conference, seminar or workshop), but instead aim at offering a glimpse of the professional endeavors of our membership during that year. Again, we think we have upheld this tenet.

The THT Proceedings continue to evolve, and hopefully improve. With this volume, we have begun moving toward a full, blind process of reviewing as a way of maintaining and possibly improving the standing of the journal. At the same time, we have obtained an ISSN number so that this and future volumes might be properly registered.

We sincerely hope that readers will find something in these pages to inspire and/or stimulate their teaching, creativity and humanity.

Warmest Regards,

Brent Jones and Richard Silver
Editors, THT 2010 Proceedings

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Message from the Coordinator

Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) has grown since its inception 2005 when it was founded by Bill Balsamo. His dream was to reach out and provide outreach programs in countries that need it, but he went beyond his original goal by starting a program to bring faculty development to teachers abroad who cannot attend such sessions because they are too expensive or they are too far away. Since then, THT has grown to include seminars, workshops, and outreach programs in five countries and that number will most likely increase to 7 or 8 countries in 2011. In 2007, when the founder Bill Balsamo passed away, THT applied to become an official Special Interest Group (SIG) under the umbrella of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). In this way, THT began reaching a wider audience and potential delegates and event organizers. This journal is produced and published by the JALT Teachers Helping Teachers SIG. It is a collection of feature and forum articles from some of the seminars and workshops presented at the joint conferences of JALT THT-SIG and its affiliates. We hope you find the articles in this journal useful and practical.

Sincerely yours,

Peter John Wanner, Ph.D.
JALT THT-SIG, Coordinator

Programs

Vietnam Seminar at Hue University (June 11 – 13, 2010)

Friday, June 11, 2010		
08:15 – 08:45	Opening Ceremony	
Time	Presenter	Topic
09:00 – 10:00	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Reading comprehension tasks using visual aids with context</i>
	Kathleen Riley	<i>Rhyme, rhythm and repetition: Exploring the value of jazz chants</i>
	Joseph Tomei	<i>Functional grammar and explaining English usage</i>
10:15 – 11:10	Joseph Tomei	<i>Utilizing Lemov's taxonomy to improve your classroom</i>
	Alexandra Shaitan	<i>Cooperative Learning in the Content-Based Programs</i>
	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Google Docs Web-based Word Processor Applications to the Classroom</i>
11:10 – 14:00 Lunch Break		
14:00 – 15:00	Joseph Wood	<i>What are communication strategies and how can we teach them?</i>
	Christopher Fulton	<i>IM and collaborative writing activities</i>
	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Enriching language development in the brain</i>
15:10 – 16:10	Alexandra Shaitan	<i>Teachers' Creativity in creating ESL teaching materials</i>
	Joseph Wood	<i>Building communicative competence with communication strategies (CSs)</i>
	Christopher Fulton	<i>Computers in the classroom: activities for young learners and observations on classroom management</i>

Saturday, June 12, 2010		
Time	Presenter	Topic
09:00 – 10:00	Joseph Wood	<i>Building communicative competence with communication strategies (CSs)</i>
	Alexandra Shaitan	<i>Cooperative learning in the content-based programs</i>
	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Google Docs application of online spreadsheets for classroom records</i>
10:15 – 11:15	Kathleen Riley	<i>Reflection: Connecting experience and beliefs</i>
	Joseph Wood	<i>What are communication strategies and how can we teach them?</i>
	Joseph Tomei	<i>Music in the classroom</i>
11:15 – 14:00 Lunch Break		
14:00 – 15:00	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Bafa Bafa: Incorporating cultural understanding into the classroom</i>
	Kathleen Riley	<i>Using songs for language learning</i>
	Joseph Tomei	<i>Utilizing Lemov's taxonomy to improve your classroom</i>

15:20 – 16:20	Christopher Fulton	<i>Visual aids for teacher training Vietnam seminar</i>
	Kathleen Riley	<i>Rhyme, rhythm and repetition: Exploring the value of jazz chants</i>
	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>i-know computer based independent vocabulary study workshop</i>

Sunday, June 13, 2010	
Time	
09:00 – 10:00	Mock Classroom Activity (All delegates)
10:30 – 11:30	Closing Ceremony and Certificate Awarding

Bangladesh Seminar (BELTA-AIUB-THT Seminar July 2 – 3, 2010)

Theme: *Bringing Innovation into the ELT Classroom*

Friday, July 2, 2010		
09:00 – 10:00	Opening Ceremony	
Time	Presenter	Topic
10:00 – 11:20	Patrick Dougherty	<i>Building a learner-centred classroom in the 21st century</i>
11:25 – 13:00	Patrick Dougherty & Steve Cornwell	<i>Using student heritage and native culture in the EFL classroom</i>
13:00 – 14:00 Prayer & Lunch Break		
14:00 – 15:10	Steve Cornwell	<i>Vocabulary learning: Theory and techniques</i>
15:10 – 16:00	Patrick Dougherty	<i>Assessment for learning</i>
16:20 – 17:30	Steve Cornwell	<i>Grammar dictation and other grammar fun</i>

Saturday, July 3, 2010		
Time	Presenter	Topic
09:00 – 10:10	Steve Cornwell	<i>Preparing students for exams</i>
10:10 – 11:30	Steve Cornwell & Patrick Dougherty	<i>Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS) and five-minute activities.</i>
11:45 – 12:55	Patrick Dougherty	<i>Classroom management: A velvet approach</i>
13:00 – 14:10	Steve Cornwell	<i>Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for classroom teachers</i>
14:10 – 15:00 Lunch Break		
15:10 – 16:15	Patrick Dougherty	<i>Creative writing in EFL/ESL</i>
16:15 – 17:15	Panel Discussion: Dr Patrick Dougherty and Dr Steve Cornwell	
17:15 – 18:00	Closing	Closing Ceremony: Certificate Awarding and Cultural Show

THT in the Philippines (San Jose del Monte, July 31 – August 1, 2010)

Saturday, July 31, 2010

09:00 – 10:00		
Opening Ceremony		
Time	Presenter	Topic
10:30 – 11:30	Dr. Peter Wanner and Junko Fujio	<i>Bafa bafa: Incorporating cultural understanding in the classroom</i>
	Diem Tran Thi and Melvin Jabar	<i>Bafa bafa: Incorporating cultural understanding in the classroom</i>
	Peter Wells	<i>Using jokes to teach English</i>
	Rizalie Mibato	<i>Reinvention of classroom instruction</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Teaching spoken forms through movie dialogues</i>
	Steven Gershon	<i>Teaching presentation skills: Reducing the fear factor</i>
	Mayumi Asaba	<i>What's wrong with intensive reading? Five rules for successful intensive reading</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Searching for writing tools: Google in the L2 writing class</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the art of introductory practice in English teaching</i>
Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Multicultural content through graded readers</i>	
11:30 – 13:00 Lunch Break		
13:00 – 14:00	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Enriching language development in the brain</i>
	Thi Diem Tran Thi	<i>Classroom observation for teachers of English in high school</i>
	Melvin Jabar	<i>A day in a Japanese classroom: An ethnographic study</i>
	Magarete Wells	<i>Games to improve tense formation</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Learning journals and theatre journals</i>
	Cecilia Silva	<i>Classroom management in accordance to classroom activities</i>
	Steven Gershon	<i>Culture in the classroom: Window and mirror</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Using peer assessment in the language classroom</i>
	Hairong Meng	<i>Code switching in the EFL classroom</i>
Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Guidelines for using the FAQ approach to student report writing</i>	
14:15 – 15:15	Margarete Wells	<i>Speaking games to improve vocabulary</i>
	Thi Diem Tran Thi	<i>English testing in high schools in Vietnam</i>
	Melvin Jabar	<i>Parental involvement as a form of social capital in a Japanese elementary school</i>
	Peter Wells	<i>Writing short stories to improve English writing skills</i>
	Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska	<i>Politeness and cross-cultural misunderstandings</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Speaking and listening in large classes: Involving all students</i>
	Cecilia Silva	<i>Classroom activities with folk-tales</i>
	Mayumi Asaba	<i>Methods for creating a music-based course</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the principle and pedagogy in</i>

		<i>English text teaching</i>
	Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Using songs with content for reading comprehension</i>
15:45 – 16:45	Peter Wanner	<i>i-know computer based independent vocabulary study workshop</i>
	Thi Tran	<i>Designing authentic tasks based on textbooks</i>
	Margarete Wells	<i>Games to improve sentence making</i>
	Cecilia Silva	<i>Multiple intelligence and multiple literature</i>
	Mayumi Asaba	<i>Using peer assessment in the language classroom</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Methods for creating a music based course</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the art of introductory practice in English teaching</i>
	Hairong Meng	<i>A case study on code switching of a Chinese-Japanese bilingual infant</i>
	Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska	<i>Teaching pragmatics through consciousness raising tasks [CR tasks]</i>
	Peter Wells	<i>Using SRA materials</i>
17:00 – 18:00	Plenary Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska – Pragmatics and communicative competence	

Sunday, August 1, 2010		
Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 09:30	Dr Peter Wanner	<i>Enriching language development in the brain</i>
	Thi Diem Tran Thi	<i>Classroom observation for teachers of English in high schools</i>
	Melvin Jabar	<i>A day in a Japanese classroom: An ethnographic study</i>
	Margarete Wells	<i>Games to improve tense formation</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Teaching spoken forms through movie dialogues</i>
	Steven Gershon	<i>Teaching presentation skills: Reducing the fear factor</i>
	Mayumi Asaba	<i>What's wrong with intensive reading? Five rules for successful intensive reading</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Searching for writing tools: Google in the L2 writing class</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the art of introductory practice in English teaching</i>
	Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Multicultural content through graded readers</i>
09:45 – 10:45	Dr. Peter Wanner and Junko Fujio	<i>Bafa bafa: Incorporating cultural understanding in the classroom</i>
	Diem Tran Thi and Melvin Jabar	<i>Bafa bafa: Incorporating cultural understanding in the classroom</i>
	Peter Wells	<i>Using jokes to teach English</i>
	Rizalie Mibato	<i>Reinvention of classroom instruction</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Teaching spoken forms through movie dialogues</i>
	Steven Gershon	<i>Teaching presentation skills: Reducing the fear factor</i>

	Mayumi Asaba	<i>What's wrong with intensive reading? Five rules for successful intensive reading</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Searching for writing tools: Google in the L2 writing class</i>
	Hairong Meng	<i>Code switching in the EFL classroom</i>
	Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Multicultural content through graded readers</i>
11:15 – 12:15	Peter Wanner	<i>i-know computer based independent vocabulary study workshop</i>
	Michael Carroll	<i>Teaching grammar through meaning: communication first, grammar second</i>
	Margarete Wells	<i>Games to improve sentence making</i>
	Cecilia Silva	<i>Multiple intelligence and multiple literature</i>
	Mayumi Asaba	<i>Using peer assessment in the language classroom</i>
	Paul Marlowe	<i>Methods for creating a music based course</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the art of introductory practice in English teaching</i>
	Hairong Meng	<i>A case study on code switching of a Chinese-Japanese bilingual infant</i>
	Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska	<i>Teaching pragmatics through consciousness raising tasks [CR tasks]</i>
	Peter Wells	<i>Using SRA materials</i>
12:15 – 13:00 Lunch Break		
13:00 – 14:00	Margarete Wells	<i>Speaking games to improve vocabulary</i>
	Thi Diem Tran Thi	<i>Designing authentic tasks based on textbooks</i>
	Melvin Jabar	<i>Parental involvement as a form of social capital in a Japanese elementary school</i>
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	Mayumi Asaba	<i>Methods for creating a music-based course</i>
	Zhixin Fang	<i>An analysis of the principle and pedagogy in English text teaching</i>
	Michael Furmanovsky	<i>Using songs with content for reading comprehension</i>
14:15 – 15:15	Plenary Steven Gershon – Developing oral communication skills: What, why and how	
15:30 – 17:30	Closing Ceremony and Certificate Awarding	

Program Schedule – THT in Kyrgyzstan (September 13 – 15, 2010)

Monday, September 13, 2010		
09:00 – 10:00	Opening Ceremony and Plenary Roger Palmer – <i>Transforming education through blended learning</i>	
Time	Presenter	Topic
10:15 – 11:15	Richard Silver	<i>Autonomous learning groups: Why students need them and how they work</i>
	Brent Jones	<i>Instructional design 101</i>
11:30 – 12:30	Steve Wolfe	<i>Using cultural parables for critical thinking</i>
	Patrick McCoy	<i>The big challenge: Teaching multilevel classes</i>
12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break		
13:30 – 14:30	Eric Gondree	<i>Re-reading charts as an integral part of writing</i>
	Brent Jones	<i>A bag full of tricks</i>
14:45 – 15:45	Greg Rouault	<i>The teacher as facilitator</i>
	Marian Wang	<i>Vocabulary retention through lexical chunks</i>

Tuesday, September 14, 2010		
Time	Presenter	Topic
09:00 – 10:00	Brent Jones	<i>Fast, fun & furious: Workshops for L2 classrooms</i>
	Marian Wang	<i>Encouraging English use in the classroom</i>
10:15 – 11:15	Greg Rouault	<i>Using multiple intelligences to teach the way your students learn</i>
	Richard Silver	<i>How devolving power to students fosters leadership</i>
11:30 – 12:30	Plenary Steve Wolfe – <i>Creating creativity: Combining haiku and photography</i>	
12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break		
13:30 – 14:30	Eric Gondree	<i>Free internet resources for English teachers</i>
	Patrick McCoy	<i>Warm-up activities workshop</i>
14:45 – 15:45	Roger Palmer	<i>Considerations in classroom management</i>
	Steve Wolfe	<i>Haiku workshop: A walk on the creative side</i>

Wednesday, September 15, 2010		
09:00 – 10:00	Plenary Brent Jones – <i>Service learning in a content-focused EFL program</i>	
Time	Presenter	Topic
10:15 – 11:15	Richard Silver	Helping students adapt to higher education
	Patrick McCoy	<i>Using comics in the classroom</i>
11:30 – 12:30	Roger Palmer	<i>Bringing sociocultural theory into classroom practice</i>
	Marian Wang	<i>Motivating EFL students to write clear compositions – looking at learner reflections</i>
12:30-13:30 Lunch Break		
13:30 – 14:30	Panel Discussion: Brent Jones, Roger Palmer, Eric Gondree, Patrick McCoy, Richard Silver, Marian Wang, Steve Wolfe	
14:45 – 15:45	Closing Ceremony and Certificate Awarding	

Feature Articles

Using Comics In The Classroom

Patrick McCoy

Developing a Vocabulary Learning System

Marian Wang & Hector Luk

Filipino Mothers' Involvement in Children's Education: Experiences and Challenges

Melvin Jabar

Bringing Sociocultural Theory into Classroom Practice: a Workshop

Roger Palmer

Multiple Intelligences and Multiple Activities

Cecilia Silva

Promoting Strategic Competence in the L2 Classroom

Joseph Wood

The First English Class in University: What Teachers Do and Why

Richard Silver

Service Learning and the Language Teacher

Brent A. Jones

Using Comics In The Classroom

Patrick McCoy
Meiji University

Abstract

This paper will discuss how the popularity of comics among young people makes them a useful conduit for engaging students in second language acquisition. There are several reasons to use comics in classes that are related to principles from second language acquisition, brain-based teaching, and progressive literacy. First, a number of classroom activities will be discussed: "Make-A-Title," "Add-A-Panel," "Comics Jigsaw," "Fill-It-Up," "Putting Panels In Order." Then, the steps for student made comics will be discussed. Comics can be used as the main focus of a course by having students make their own comics or simply can be used as classroom activities, e.g., as a warm-up or extension activity.

Introduction

Comics have been a popular source of entertainment for decades. Banking on the popularity of comics can be useful in the teaching of English by capturing student interest and creating motivation for meaningful English production in the classroom. It is useful to define the term comics before investigating the subject any further. Comics are defined by Horn (1999) in *The World Encyclopedia of Comics* as: "A narrative form containing text and pictures arranged in sequential order (usually chronological)" (p. 852). The four major types of comics are: cartoons (a single stand alone panel); comic strips (stories in sequenced horizontal blocks of three to five panels); comic books (similar to comic strips but increased to 20 to 40 pages); and graphic novels (full-length comic books often carrying entire runs of stories previously serialized). There are several reasons to use comics in classes related to principles from second language acquisition, brain-based teaching and progressive literacy (Carey, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Krashen's (2003) theories regarding dynamics and optimal conditions for second language development are deep-rooted in modern approaches to ESL teaching. The most important ideas are those of input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis. The input hypothesis suggests that second language is acquired through comprehensible input or messages when involved in activities using language for communication. This theory suggests that it is not the form of the message from which learners learn, but rather the message itself. The affective filter hypothesis suggests that emotions can have an impact on second language learning. That is students who are self-confident and highly motivated tend to make more progress in second language learning than those who are not. In addition, a student's level of anxiety (affective filter) is crucial in the amount and speed of second language development. Comics can provide input and positive affect. There are many visual clues which help increase the amount of comprehensible input and can boost comprehension. This increased comprehension keeps the affective filter low. The affective filter might also be low due to the enjoyment of comics by students.

Several authors (Hatch, 1992; McGroarty, 1993; Johnson, 1995; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000) emphasize the importance of interaction in language. There are many ways students can collaborate using comics as materials for interaction in pairs or small groups. Many such activities will require students to exchange ideas and opinions, edit each other's work or collaborate in teams for original comics production. When students interact with each other or the teacher they are using language for real communication.

Brain-based teaching is concerned with using practices that can increase student learning. These activities include hands-on, manipulative-based activities, simulations, role-plays, projects, and small group work. The emphasis is on more student-to-student interaction, which creates greater opportunities to use and develop language. Comics use an emphasis on engaging content and greater use of visual materials. Relevant and engaging materials, like comics, create a strong emotional buy-in and students become more engaged and learning accelerates. Added visuals are extremely useful with beginning to early intermediate second language learners who are largely visual learners at these stages. Pictures can make oral and written text more concrete and understandable. Visuals can also increase the number of concepts learned and the length or time those concepts are remembered.

Another theoretical framework for using comics in the classroom borrows from progressive literacy: engagement through authentic literature, using language for real communication, and a focus on content over form. This theory suggests that authentic materials, books and stories that are whole rather than excerpted use natural language and are meaningful, are much more likely to engage students (Smith, 1997, 2003).

Activities for Use in the Classroom

There are a number of ways to incorporate the use of comics in the classroom. These activities can be used to build critical thinking skills, help students to learn comprehension strategies, and increase literacy among other skills. The following activities have been used in a reading class and a special summer intensive group activity class focused on making an original comic in English (this process will be discussed after classroom activities): “Make-A-Title,” “Add-A-Panel,” “Comics Jigsaw,” “Fill-It-Up,” “Putting Panels In Order.” Most of these activities can be done in about ten to twenty minutes, allowing time for students to share their work or discuss their answers. Thus, these activities are ideal for warm-ups or cool downs at the end of class.

Make-A-Title

One of the advantages of this activity lies in the fact that most comic strips from newspapers do not have titles. Thus, preparation for this activity is quite easy-instructors need only to find comic strips and then ask students to write titles for the strips after modeling the activity, which will reflect comprehension and help build critical skills and test comprehension of the comic strip. (Some sample strips can be seen in Appendix A)

Add-A-Panel

This activity also needs little preparation, since students will be using prediction skills as well as learning comprehension strategies while adding another panel to the comic strip. After giving students a strip you can ask: “What happens next?” and students will create an additional panel. One variation is that you can pass several sheets around the class and have students continue the story by adding several panels after the original last panel. (An example comic strip can be seen in Appendix B)

Comic Jigsaw

In preparation for this activity, the instructor needs to remove the text from comic panels and compile it on a separate page so that partners can match the dialogue with the comic panel in question. It is possible to use a whole page, but it is simpler to use single panel comics. Again, students learn comprehension strategies while they try to match the text with the single panel comics (See Appendix C for examples).

Fill-It-Up

Preparation for this activity involves removing the text from a page of a comic, so that students can create original dialogue or narration. Students use learning comprehension strategies as well as activating their knowledge of English by creating their own original stories from the context of the pictures in the panels from which the text has been removed (See Appendix D for an example page).

Putting Panels in Order

This activity usually requires the instructor to find a comic with same sized panels on a page so that it can be photocopied and cut up into individual panels. Students then try to put the panels back into original order. In this activity, students need to use prediction skills as well as learning comprehension strategies to put the stories back into original order (See Appendix E for an example page).

Student Made Comics

Step 1: Production Teams

There are several ways for students to create their own comics. One method involves dividing students into groups of a minimum of four. This way students can choose one of the four jobs: researcher/writer, penciller, colorist/ inker, letterer/editor.

The researcher/writer gathers background information for the story and checks facts/ drafts and reviews the script, all the comic's written text. The penciller is the chief artist and does the roughing (first draft) and final versions of all pictures. The colorist/inker adds color to the penciled drawings/ traces over pictures with black ink, adds shading when necessary, and erases leftover pencil lines. The letterer/editor prints the words in captions and dialogue balloons/ reviews all visual and written work for accuracy and consistency. If the groups are larger than four two or more students can be assigned to each job. Most of this activity has been adapted from *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom* (Cary 2004).

Step 2: Plotting

The writer begins with a log line, which summarizes the story in a single sentence, for example: "A small village hires a band of samurai to protect the village from raids by bandits in the Edo period of Japan." Then the log line is expanded by using a narrative template. A typical template includes: title (What the comic is about: orientation / time / setting / characters introduced), conflict/problem, plan/action steps, resolution/climax, coda/moral. The template serves two functions: (1) it reminds the writers of the key ingredients that go into a good story, and (2) it provides a basic plotting sequence for writer and penciller-what they write/draw for the beginning-middle-end of the story (See Appendix F for a sample worksheet).

In this example, adapted from Akira Kurosawa's film *Seven Samurai*, an eight-page sequence will be discussed as a model. Students will then plan the eight-page sequence. Here is an example: Page 1: the when, where, and who of the story "Edo Period, Japan, small village, farmers, samurai, bandits," Page 2-3: the conflict "bandits raid the village for their food and valuables," Page 4-6: action steps "the villagers hire samurai to protect their village from the bandits," Page 7: resolution "the samurai protect the village but some of them are killed," Page 8: moral/coda/upshot "good prevails over evil but not without some sacrifice and cost." (See Appendix G for sample worksheet)

Step 3: Panel Descriptions

Next the writer takes each plot page and plans out the story per individual panel, adding details along the way. By the end of the plotting step, estimating three to six panels per page, this will result in 25-50 panel descriptions. Here is an example from page seven (resolution/climax) using the story from *Seven Samurai*: Panel 1: “Bandits are shown riding toward the village to plunder as usual,” Panel 2: “The villagers and samurai lie in wait to surprise attack the bandits,” Panel 3: “The villagers and samurai attack and kill some of the lead bandits,” Panel 4: “More fighting in which some villagers are killed by bandits,” Panel 5: “The fighting continues and one of the samurai is killed.” (See Appendix H for sample worksheet)

Step 4: Roughing In

The penciller takes the descriptions made by the writer and goes to work, roughing in (lightly sketching) the main action of each panel, translating words into pictures. Background detail will come later. Pencillers and their assistants (other group members) will need some drawing support. It is useful for pencillers to use HB or B lead pencils for roughing in. Erasers will be necessary since this is a rough draft. Eight sheets of A4 paper should be enough for this step. It might be helpful to remind the pencillers to leave room for captions and dialogue.

Step 5: Captions and Dialogue

Working from the written panel descriptions and penciller’s roughs, the writer creates a first draft of captions and dialogue. Captions, typically placed inside rectangles (or runners) at the top of a panel, provide information on character background, setting, and time shifts. Dialogue is placed in different types of word balloons, and it tells what characters say, think, and feel. The first draft of the text is down on the same sheet as the panel descriptions (below or to the right of each description), not on the panel roughs, because words and visuals will often change during the revision process.

Before starting the final draft the group should edit the rough draft by checking all the panels and text to make sure there are no errors. For example, the panels need to be checked so that all of the characters look the same in all of the panels. The group needs to make sure that the captions and dialogues make sense. The narration and captions need to be checked for proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

Step 6: Finishing: Lettering, Inking, and Coloring

Lettering is the process of adding the written text to the final draft. The letters can be written using an H or HB pencil. An alternative to lettering is to do all the text on a computer, print it out and cut and paste everything into caption blocks and word balloons. Lettering is usually done in all caps. The next step in the process is inking. After the comic is fully drawn, written, and lettered, it’s ready for inking. However, another option is to leave it in pencil. Once the inking has been completed the students might want to color the comic and this process is known as coloring. The last step involves adding a front and back cover. One option for the cover is copying and enlarging a scene from one of the panels. Another option is to make an original cover. For the back cover students can use a blank, make a small logo, present a staff box or make their own advertisement.

Conclusion

Comics can be used in a variety of ways as motivating input to capture student interest. As discussed earlier, there is significant theoretical backing for using this type of comprehensible

input with second language learners. Using authentic comics can reflect the rewards of progressive literacy by motivating students to learn. Furthermore, comics can provide a valuable opportunity for interaction in English. There are a number of activities that reflect brain-based learning, which could be used as the main focus of a course by having students make their own comics or simply can be incorporated into other lessons as a warm-up or extension activities during regular classroom instruction.

Biographical Statement

Patrick McCoy is currently teaching English in the School of Global Japanese Studies at Meiji University in Tokyo. He has a M.A. degree in Education from Western Washington University. He has been teaching in Japan for 13 years and 10 years at the university level. He is originally from Washington state in the US. His research interests include authentic materials, methodology, and Japanese film. He has presented at Teachers Helping Teachers events in both Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan.

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Appendix A

Make-A-Title

Read the following comic strips and discuss the meaning with your partner, then come up with a title.

1. From *Calvin and Hobbes* Title:



2. From *Peanuts* Title:



3. From *Garfield* Title:

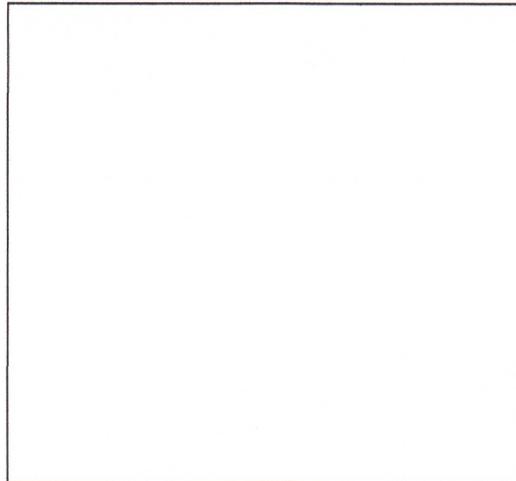


Appendix B

Add-A-Panel

What happens next? Add a panel to the comic strip to continue the story.

The Duplex by Glenn McCoy



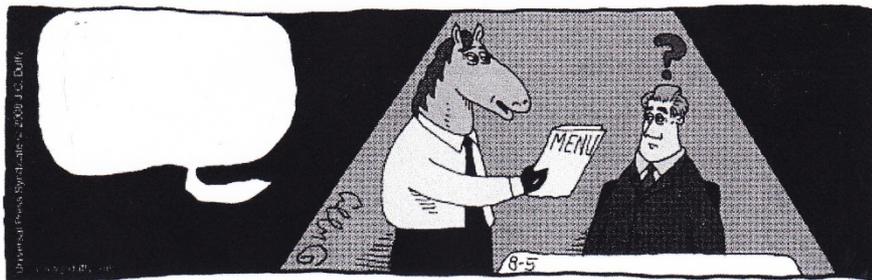
Appendix C

Comic Jigsaw B

A.



B.



C.



Appendix D

Fill-It-Up

Fill in the dialogue and captions for this series of panels.



Appendix E

①



Appendix F

Log line:

Title:

Time:

Setting:

Characters:

Conflict/Problem:

Plan/Action Steps:

Resolution/Climax:

Coda/Moral:

Appendix G

Making Comics:

Page Plots

EXAMPLE:

Page 1: the when, where, and who of the story

(Edo Period, Japan, small village, farmers, samurai, bandits)

Page 2-3: the conflict

(bandits raid the village for their food and valuables)

Page 4-6: action steps

(the villagers hire samurai to protect their village from the bandits)

Page 7: resolution

(the samurai protect the village but some of them are killed)

Page 8: moral/coda/upshot

(good prevails over evil but not without some sacrifice and cost)

YOUR TURN:

Page 1: the when, where, and who of the story

Page 2-3: the conflict

Page 4-6: action steps

Page 7: resolution

Page 8: moral/coda/upshot

Appendix H

Page #:

Panel 1:

Panel 2:

Panel 3:

Panel 4:

Panel 5:

Panel 6:

Page #:

Panel 1:

Panel 2:

Panel 3:

Panel 4:

Panel 5:

Panel 6:

Developing a Vocabulary Learning System

Marian Wang & Hector Luk

Kwansei Gakuin University

Abstract

The present study was carried out to determine how students at a private university in western Japan felt about studying, recording and sharing vocabulary with their peers on a regular basis. According to the responses to a questionnaire from 74 students, most students supported structured learning of vocabulary words in context followed by interactive classroom activities geared towards explaining and guessing vocabulary words in English. Students felt empowered by being able to select their own words for their homework and were inspired by their peers who would find useful words to share in class. Although writing sentences and definitions in English proved to be challenging for students, the weekly vocabulary tasks were inherently beneficial in helping them review, recite, and recycle words that they had learned over the week.

Introduction

One of the most common concerns of language students is their lack of vocabulary to convey their ideas to others. They understand that having a sufficient knowledge of words is essential for effective communication and are keen to learn new words. Krashen (as cited in Lewis, 1993) notes that “when students travel, they don’t carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries” (p. iii). In Japan, where this study took place, increasing vocabulary is a major goal of language students (Barrow, Nakanishi & Ishino, 1999). In many schools, it is not unusual for language teachers to present students with word lists, often with Japanese translation of the words. While this approach could help with increasing students’ vocabulary, it fails to show that the meaning of a word could change depending on the context. By giving the meaning in Japanese, it also diminishes the students’ opportunity to use English in multiple situations. In addition, the act of simply memorizing words and definitions, often for the sole purpose of preparing for a test, does little to motivate students. Furthermore, it does not take into account the students’ own knowledge, so potentially there are students who may know most or all the words on a list and will gain little from it. For these reasons, the authors were hesitant to simply provide students with word lists but they also wanted to help students to increase and improve their vocabulary, so they set about to establish a systematic way for students to learn vocabulary. Students were asked to choose 10 to 15 words weekly and to record each word, along with its corresponding meaning, synonyms, antonyms, and to make an example sentence incorporating the word to show its use in context. Then during class, the students tested their peers on the words they had prepared. After two months, the authors wanted to find out about the students’ opinions on these ways of studying vocabulary and to make any changes that might improve this teaching strategy and further help learners.

Literature Review

Vocabulary is an essential component of any language. It is necessary for successful and effective communication for native speakers (Herbertson, 2003) as well as second and foreign language learners (Alderson, 2005). Folse (2004a) considers vocabulary to be “the most important component in L2 ability”. Wilkins (1972) goes as far as to say that “without grammar very little is conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 111). The importance of vocabulary leading to its inclusion in language teaching may seem to be obvious, but in fact it is often overlooked, even up until recent years (Folse, 2004b, Zimmerman, 1997a).

Researchers who have examined vocabulary learning have come up with two beliefs that seem to contradict each other. On one hand, some have argued that vocabulary is learned implicitly (Krashen, 1989). They believe that vocabulary acquisition occurs unconsciously when the learner is exposed to a word in its natural context, and that this happens mostly through reading. Nation (2001) adds that the learner must have multiple encounters with the word in various contexts to learn the word successfully. Some researchers, on the other hand, have advocated for vocabulary to be taught explicitly. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) stress that it is essential to teach students explicit strategies for learning vocabulary. Viewpoints concerning vocabulary acquisition have gone back and forth between these two theories, and Sökmen (1997) concluded that the “pendulum has swung back to the middle” (p. 239), where teachers believe that both concepts are relevant and are in fact complimentary to each other (Zimmerman, 1997b, Zhang, 2009).

Context

The present research was conducted with the participation of students of English at Kwansai Gakuin University (KGU), a private university in Nishinomiya, Japan. The Language Center (LC) at KGU offers a number of different English courses, including Intermediate English (IM), an option for students with a TOEFL score between 400 and 530 to fulfill their English course requirements in three semesters instead of the usual four. In the IM classes, to encourage students to learn new vocabulary, teachers use various methods such as word lists from the back of the book or quizzes of essential vocabulary words. In this study, the authors asked students to prepare a weekly list of 10-15 self-selected vocabulary words from the assigned textbook, other English classes, and materials that they had chosen for their own English learning. The students were then instructed to write down definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and sample sentences in English. Moreover, the authors emphasized that students write sentences in their own words and elucidate the meaning of the new words in context. In class, to encourage collaborative learning of new vocabulary, the students had their peers guess the meaning or the actual word by reading aloud sample sentences, definitions, synonyms and antonyms. Some students gave hints of new vocabulary words using gestures, drawings, number of syllables, or intonation and rhyming patterns. The ultimate goal of this activity was for students to revisit and share words they had selected and learned while expanding their vocabulary base by learning new words in context from their peers.

Research Questions

The present research was conducted on the basis of two research questions:

- 1. How do students feel about learning and recording new vocabulary on a regular basis?*
- 2. How do students feel about sharing vocabulary words with their peers on a regular basis?*

Methods/Procedure

The research questions were addressed using a survey distributed to 74 Intermediate English (IM) students between the ages of 18 and 20 majoring in Sociology and Humanities. In November 2010, approximately two months after starting the vocabulary tasks, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire in class in English. The questions on the survey were based on their vocabulary learning strategies and their attitudes towards the vocabulary activities that were done for homework and in class. The questionnaire consisted of five questions:

1. What strategies do you use to remember vocabulary words? Why?
2. What strategies do you NOT use to remember vocabulary words? Why?
3. For homework, you have been writing vocabulary words weekly and have written definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and sentences. Has this been helpful? How?
4. In class, you have been asked to share your vocabulary words with classmates by testing them. Has this been helpful? How?
5. What is the most difficult part about learning new vocabulary words?

Results

The comments were examined and analyzed. Some students did not provide answers to some questions or gave answers that did not address the questions. The comments were recorded, put into categories and tallied. For some of the questions, students wrote comments that would apply to more than one category. The comments presented here have been edited only for spelling.

Strategies used

To discern what strategies facilitated students' learning of vocabulary words, the authors asked their students to respond to the question, "What strategies do you use to remember vocabulary words?" Students specified strategies ranging from writing down words repeatedly to using pictures to help them remember the words. The most common responses were writing down the words numerous times (28%), recording the words on a card or in a notebook (15%), and repeatedly reading the word (11%). Writing down the words helped students with the spelling of words. Several students noted the importance of combining writing with other skills such as listening, reading and saying the words aloud because using only one skill such as reading did not necessarily lead to remembering the words. One student said, "I think it is better that I use eyes, ears and mouth when I remember words." Some students created personal word or vocabulary cards because of the convenience of being able to test their knowledge wherever and whenever they had time. A student explained, "I use vocabulary cards because I can remember anytime and anywhere." A student used her commute to the university to review vocabulary. "I usually look at word lists in the train to use time effectively." Vocabulary notebooks also proved effective as indicated by a student's comment, "I make word notebooks. And I write English words and Japanese with orange pen. Because orange color is vanished by red sheet." Although Japanese was used by this student to record English words, some students advocated using English to remember English words because "remembering words in Japanese is easy, but if I can speak English and understand English, remembering words in English is the best way in the long run." Students also relied on other strategies such as using the words immediately in class or outside of class either in speaking or writing tasks while others chose to link the words to particular contexts by writing sentences with the words or drawing images related to the word.

Table 1
Strategies Used

N = 74	f	%
Repeat (writing)	21	28
Record words	11	15
Repeat (reading)	8	11
Check dictionary	6	8
Repeat (saying and writing)	6	8
Repeat (writing and reading)	6	8
Repeat (saying aloud)	6	8

Use immediately	3	4
Remember in sentence	3	4
Visualize	2	3
Repeat (saying and reading)	1	1
Memorize	1	1
Do exercises in textbook	1	1
Guess	1	1

Strategies not used

For the second question, students commented on strategies that they felt were not effective in learning new words. The most frequent response was simply looking at and reading the words because they said they would forget words they had read only once or twice. With respect to writing, although writing down words helped students to remember words as noted in the section above, some students did not share the same enthusiasm of rote writing of vocabulary words because it was “boring,” “painful,” “useless,” or time consuming. Some students recognized that their strategies for learning new Japanese words using Chinese characters (kanji) did not help their learning of English words. When Japanese students learn kanji, they often write them repeatedly to learn the proper stroke order and the correct spacing of the parts of the character. For English, however, writing the same word numerous times proved to be ineffective. One student observed, “I don’t just write words on the paper again and again like remember kanji. Because I don’t want to write the word and I think English words and kanji aren’t the same so I should change the way to remember.”

Table 2
Strategies Not Used

N = 74	f	%
Repeat (looking and/or reading)	18	24
Repeat (writing)	14	19
Record words	3	4
Check dictionary	3	4
Repeat (saying aloud)	4	5
Listen to words and/or say them	5	7
Translate, use English-Japanese	2	3
Memorize/remember	1	1
Remember multiple meanings	1	1
Write only once	1	1

Homework

Students were asked, “For homework, you have been writing vocabulary words weekly and have written definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and sentences. Has this been helpful?” An overwhelming majority (99%) said “Yes” and elaborated on the benefits of the homework. For students who said “No,” most students did not explain their reasons. The primary benefit was that by going through the entire process of selecting new words and writing definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and sentences in English, some students said they were able to remember these words and subsequently increase their vocabulary base. Outside of class, the homework activity played a practical role when students were taking language tests, writing letters to foreign friends, reading newspapers or books, listening to music, or watching movies because they could understand words that they had written down for homework. Students also mentioned improvements in their study habits because they “could get the habit of studying English,” look words up in dictionaries, file new words and review words learned

over the week. They also admitted that without this homework, they would become “lazy” or simply ignore words that they could not understand. Finally, some students found that the process of selecting interesting, helpful or important words was motivating because “finding a new word is enjoyable for me.”

Table 3
Homework

N = 74	f	%
Remember words	13	18
Increase vocabulary/knowledge	13	18
Use words out of class (TOEIC, essays, letters, newspapers)	9	12
Develop habit of studying regularly	7	9
Understand meaning (in English)	7	9
Explain words, meanings	6	8
Be able write sentences	5	7
Write synonyms, antonyms	5	7
Organize, file	2	3
Have fun	2	3
Notice words	2	3
Use words in class	2	3
Recycle, review	2	3
Know how to use words	2	3
Prepare for class (textbook)	1	1
Learn spelling	1	1

Sharing in class

After the students had completed their homework, they were asked to share vocabulary words with their peers on a weekly basis. Sometimes they would work in pairs, small groups, or even larger groups of six students. The authors underlined the importance of having peers guess the vocabulary words based on definitions, synonyms, antonyms, or surmise the definition of the new words by sharing the sentences with the new word. The interactive nature of this in-class sharing was considered useful by 92% of respondents. For students who did not find it helpful, they thought that the words that their peers had selected were too complicated or that they found explaining words demanding. The most noted benefits were that students could understand, remember or learn new words and develop their ability to explain and communicate with their peers in English. When students were successful in explaining or guessing the words, they would believe that they had successfully acquired and retained the new words. If, on the other hand, they failed to explain or guess the words, they recognized that they had to review the words again. Sharing words and definitions stimulated students’ desire to know what their peers were selecting as useful vocabulary. When students discovered that others were choosing words that were unfamiliar to them, they would ask for the original source of the words such as when the word was said in class, from which book it had come from, or from which movie or soundtrack they had taken the word. If students chose the same words from class, they were often encouraged when they could recall the words as well as the context of when the word was mentioned in class. The skill of guessing words and definitions was noted by a student as being useful not only in the classroom but also for surviving overseas. “If I go to America, I can’t understand everything what American says. I must guess the meaning.”

Table 4
In-class Sharing Useful

N = 74	f	%
Understand/remember/learn words	22	30
Learn how to explain, communicate	11	15
Communicate with peers in English	10	14
Recall forgotten words, check	8	11
Find out what peers are learning	6	8
Have fun/motivate	4	5
Able to guess	3	4
Listen to English	1	1
Help peers	1	1
Make sentences	1	1
Remember meaning	1	1
Use imagination	1	1

Difficulty in learning words

The last question was related to what students found most challenging when learning new words. Spelling and pronunciation of new words frustrated students. Word length, words spelled similarly and technical words exacerbated the possibility of spelling mistakes. In addition to not being able to remember the spelling, many students were not able to recall the correct pronunciation of a word and would avoid trying to say the words repeatedly aloud or to themselves for fear that they would remember the incorrect pronunciation. Students also found that multiple meanings of words made them confused as to which definition they should memorize or use to write example sentences. Even if students could define the new words, students were not always able to use the word when speaking as indicated by this student's comment, "It's easy remembering just a meaning, but it's difficult to use new vocabulary in conversation." Lastly, many students noted that they simply could not remember words because of "poor memory," "too many words to remember by heart," "forgetting it in a few days" and "not knowing how to remember the word."

Table 5
Difficulty in Learning Words

N = 74	F	%
Spell (length of word, similar spell, technical)	18	24
Pronounce, saying	16	22
Understand meaning (multiple)	13	18
Remember	10	14
Explain	6	8
Find synonyms, antonym	4	5
Use words	3	4
Make, remember sentences	3	4
Understand slang/idioms	2	3
Be motivated	2	3
Understand grammar	2	3

Discussion

In Japan, students are usually introduced to English in junior high and high school starting from writing and reading English. Furthermore, most students memorize words with Japanese translations and learn the words out of context mainly for college entrance exams, so by the time the students have entered college, they are often frustrated by their inability to understand or speak English. When asked what students want to be able to do with their English, many say that they want to be able to communicate with foreign people, but they cannot understand what foreign people are saying because of vocabulary, rate of speech, and pronunciation. Therefore, some university students in Japan may come to realize that rote memorization of words out of context and input via reading and writing alone have not helped them to communicate in English.

To address these issues, the vocabulary learning tasks were assigned to give students opportunities to remember words in context and talk about the words with their classmates to help them remember and learn new words. Although students came equipped with some strategies to learn vocabulary, the goal of the vocabulary learning tasks was to provide a structured learning of vocabulary words that would ideally be adopted into their lifelong learning of English. According to Sannoui (1995), a structured approach to learning vocabulary is more successful than an unstructured one. By leaving it up to chance for students to learn vocabulary, the teacher is left uncertain as to whether or not vocabulary words have been acquired or retained. Although some students in this study wrote vocabulary on words cards or in their notebooks, many of the students did not. The authors agree with Folse (2004b) that students should be encouraged to have a written record of their vocabulary because much of the vocabulary growth depends on the students. Of the students who already had some form of vocabulary record, none of the students mentioned that they wrote definitions, antonyms, synonyms, and sentences in English. It was especially important for students to write example sentences because it moved the students away from simply writing word lists. Zhang (2009) asserts that example sentences promote vocabulary learning and retention.

In addition to providing them a structure, the tasks were created to give students the responsibility of selecting vocabulary words from classes, textbooks or other resources. By giving students the responsibility of selecting the words, rather than putting the onus on the teacher to select words, the students were able to create customized word lists that were suited to their own interests and level of understanding, ensuring that all students are increasing their knowledge regardless of their abilities and what they already know. Also, as it is important to learn words in context (Folse, 2004b), when students select their own words, they are more likely to be exposed to the words in authentic contexts, allowing them to learn in a meaningful way.

The lists often gave insight into what the students paid attention to in class, what they were learning in other classes, and what they were doing in their own time to learn English. With the list, students felt ownership of what they had learned, and when students selected words that were of particular interest to their peers, they often felt a sense of pride that they had chosen a word that was “popular” and were able to help their peers learn a new word. If they had difficulty explaining the words to their peers, they realized that they needed to simplify their explanations or give better clues to help their peers. In short, the interactive nature of the follow-up task contributed to a cooperative learning environment as students wanted to help their peers and learn from their peers.

The vocabulary tasks also helped when using the textbook in class. Since students previewed words in their textbook, wrote them down for their homework, and shared them with their peers, when working on textbook activities, students felt more confident with textbook tasks. Furthermore, the researchers did not have to spend time selecting words that their students may or may not know because the students were responsible for choosing words before their teachers covered the textbook materials. Therefore, the vocabulary tasks helped direct classroom activities away from the researchers going over unfamiliar vocabulary words with students and towards more interactive textbook activities.

Teaching was indirectly enhanced by the vocabulary tasks. The researchers became more aware of the kinds of words that students enjoyed learning so that when the researchers were teaching in the classroom, they would try to teach words that students might be interested in noting for their homework. Moreover, if new vocabulary words were used in the classroom, the researchers attempted to give clear definitions, write the words on the board to ensure proper spelling, repeat the words several times to help with pronunciation, and give phrases that would help the learners complete their homework. The researchers also began to recall the words that the students chose and would create situations where the teachers themselves could use the words and give credit to students who chose the words.

Any conclusions drawn from these data must be qualified by the fact that there were only 74 participants in the study and that the vocabulary tasks were assigned for only eight weeks. Of particular note is that students mentioned that the main difficulty of learning vocabulary was spelling and pronunciation, indicating that English teachers should make sure that students can pronounce words that they have written or else students would be less inclined to use them in oral speech. Moreover, if they are unable to spell the words, they will not use it in writing.

Conclusion

While most teachers recognize that vocabulary is essential for language learning, they may not necessarily enjoy teaching vocabulary because they are uncertain if the words that were selected for the students are of any interest to the students. Without student motivation to learn the vocabulary words, teachers may find themselves relying on more implicit ways of teaching vocabulary. This study shows that the students surveyed supported structured learning of vocabulary because they could take ownership of their vocabulary learning, choose the words, learn the words in context, and test their knowledge of their vocabulary words with their peers in the classroom. Therefore, the authors hope that teachers would be inspired to explore ways to involve learners in the process of independent vocabulary learning to help them to remember vocabulary words that will maximize their language learning development within and beyond the classroom. As Kojic-Sabo and Lightbrown (1999) state, learner independence is the key to further success.

Biographical Statement

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Filipino Mothers' Involvement in Children's Education: Experiences and Challenges

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Abstract

This study describes the different parental involvement strategies of Filipino mothers in relation to their children's public elementary education in Oita Prefecture, Japan. Data of this paper were obtained from the in-depth interviews of eight purposively and conveniently selected Filipino mothers. This is an offshoot of the author's dissertation on the educational outcomes and experiences of children (aged 10-12 years old) of Japanese-Filipino marriages. All eight Filipino mothers reported diverse ways in which they have participated in their children's elementary education. Involvement of Filipino mothers in their children's education were both direct (e.g., monitoring child's homework; attending school activities; helping child accomplish homework) and indirect (e.g., providing nourishment to children; preparing lunch box). As reported by the Filipino mothers, the challenges they have encountered in their participation include (a) feeling of discomfort in attending PTA meetings, (b) issue of efficacy, (c) time constraints, and (d) language issues.

Introduction

Parental involvement is a "social relation" (Coleman, 1990) in which exchange of capitals is taking place. Using Coleman's terms, it involves a structures of action in which activities or events happen within a given system. As a social structure, such involvement consists of actors namely but not limited to parents, teachers, and students. The structure is characterized by an exchange of resources driven by the interest of the actors (p. 130).

Broad in scope, parental involvement may include keeping children safe, attending children's activities, and participating in community activities for the purpose of affecting children's academic performance (Epstein, 1992 as cited in Domina, 2005, p. 235). Parental involvement can also mean performance expectations, verbal motivation, direct involvement for academic progress, and academic supervision (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum & Aubey, 1986 in Bempechat, 1992, p. 37). It can also include parent's provision of educational resources to children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994, p. 238).

In Japan, the school-home relationship is notably strong because teachers consider parents as partners in children's education (Jabar, 2010; Moorehead, 2007a). Teachers and parents are partners in "promoting the well-being of children's minds and bodies" (Moorehead, 2007a, p. 77). This connection is further strengthened through school programs such as the *jyugyousankan* (open school) and school practices such as the *renrakuchou* (contact notebook) and *kateihoumon* (homeroom teacher's home visit) (Jabar, 2010). In and outside the family contexts, mothers more than fathers are said to be more involved in children's education (Bempechat, 1992; Griffith & Smith, 1987/2000). In fact, the strong bond between the mother and the child is the pillar of success of the Japanese educational system (Le Vine, 2003, p. 176). Given this backdrop, this paper, therefore focuses on the experiences of Filipino mothers.

However, owing to language and cultural differences, Filipino migrant mothers in Japan may experience challenges or difficulties as they participate in their children's education. Although in a different context, the study of Moorehead (2007b) described how Peruvian parents complained about the way Japanese teachers viewed them negatively (p. 9). Language

difficulty was also seen by some of Moorehead's (2007b) study participants as a hindrance to participation.

The Filipino mothers' experience in relation to their children's education in Japan is the focus of this research. The purpose of this study is to look into the Filipino mothers' involvement in their children's elementary education, the challenges they encounter, and the potential assistance that the Japanese government can provide to enable them to fully participate in their children's schooling. Specifically, this paper is aimed to answer the following questions:

How do Filipino mothers in Japan participate in their children's education?

What are the challenges Filipino mothers encountered in their participation?

What possible institutional assistance can the Japanese government provide to help migrant mothers participate in their children's education?

Method

This paper is an offshoot of the author's doctoral dissertation on the academic outcomes and experiences of children in Japanese-Filipino marriages. In the author's dissertation, eight families were included as case studies consisting of Japanese fathers, Filipino mothers, their elementary (n = 7) and junior high (n = 1) school children (four girls and four boys), and the children's homeroom teacher during the previous school year (triangulation of subject). However, the discussion of this paper only focuses on mother's responses.

Interviews were conducted with eight (8) purposively selected Filipino mothers residing in Oita Prefecture, Japan (northeast part of Kyushu region). Using a set of criteria, participants were chosen through non-probability sampling (convenient and referral). Prior to conducting the interviews, the parents were given a prior and informed consent form with which they have to sign to express their voluntary participation. Most of the interviews took place in the informants' residence. Interviews ran from an hour to about 2.5 hours. During the interviews, mother-informants were required to recall their and their children's past and present experiences.

Interviews were conducted either in English, Filipino (the national language of the Philippines), or Cebuano (another Philippine language). All interviews were recorded to enable the researcher to fully capture the stories. Verbatim (word for word) transcriptions were then prepared after the interviews. Prior to fieldwork, the researcher prepared an interview guide in English which was then translated to Filipino by a hired research assistant. After the translation, the Filipino version was then back translated to English by another hired research assistant to ensure consistency. The interview guide was also pre-tested. For the data analysis, NVivo 8 (computer software) was used to code the interview transcripts.

Participants

The research participants are all Filipino mothers in Japanese-Filipino marriages. The average age of the informants is 45 years. Dulce and Rosanna are the oldest (49 years) among the group while Divorrah is the youngest (39 years). Four of the eight informants are English teachers, two are housewives, one is a grocery store staff, and one is a hotel room cleaner. All of the informants have been married for more than 10 years (range: 12 to 21 years) with an average of 16.4 years. See Table 1 for the profile of the informants. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality and to protect the privacy of the informants as agreed upon in the prior informed consent.

Table 1 Profile of the mother-informants.

Name*	Age**	Occupation	Years of Marriage***
Dulce	49	English Teacher	16
Rosanna	49	English Teacher	20
Martha	48	English Teacher	21
Diana	47	Grocery Store Staff	15
Daisy	46	Hotel Bed Maker	19
Amanda	42	Housewife	12
Roxanne	40	English Teacher	15
Divorrah	39	Housewife	13

*Pseudonyms **Mean: 45 years ***Mean (as of this writing): 16.4 years

Although this paper focuses on Filipino migrant mothers, it is also important to present the profile of their children. The average age of their children is 10.75 years. See Table 2.0 for the profile of children. Seven children are enrolled in public elementary schools while one is in public junior high school. Among the elementary school children (n = 7), three are in fourth grade, two in fifth grade, and two in sixth grade. One child is in the first year of high school. However, during the interview, discussions were highly focused on the said child's elementary school experiences.

Table 2 Profile of children.

Name Name*	Age**	Sex	Year Level*** (Grade)
Yuichiro	12	Male	1st year junior high
Shino	12	Female	6
Taisei	11	Male	6
Mika	11	Female	5
Masayoshi	10	Male	5
Kenji	10	Male	4
Sachika	10	Female	4
Yuka	10	Female	4

*Pseudonyms **Mean: 10.75 years *** As of this writing

Results and Discussion

This section provides the readers with the results of the study. Divided into three parts, the first section discusses the different ways in which Filipino mothers were involved in their children's education. The second section talks about the challenges that Filipino mothers encountered as they participate in school-related activities and practices. The last section provides suggestions on how the Japanese government can help immigrant mothers to enable them to fully participate in their children's education.

Types of Involvement

Each of the Filipino mothers reported diverse ways and means in which they participated in their children's education. Some of the types of involvement were directly related to studies (e.g., monitoring child's homework, attending school activities, helping child accomplish homework) while others were indirect (e.g., providing nourishment to children, preparing lunch box, bringing child to school, picking child up from school).

Participation of Filipino mothers occurred both at home and school. Mothers' activities at home included but were not limited to helping child accomplish homework, discussing with child about school matters, and checking their contact notebook. Parental involvement activities at school included attending PTA meetings, volunteering at school activities, talking to the teachers, and participating in school activities. Table 3 exhibits the activities that the mothers engaged in relation to their children's education.

Table 3 Informants and their respective involvement.

Name	Type of Involvement
Dulce	Taking care of child's needs; bringing child to school; monitoring child; motivating child to study; providing nourishment; buying child school supplies; attending school activities (e.g., sports day, open school); attending PTA meetings
Rosanna	Attending PTA meetings; picking up child at school; attending school activities (e.g., sports day)
Martha	Helping accomplish assignments; attending school activities (e.g., sports day, open school); talking to the teacher; volunteering in school activities; checking studies; providing nourishment; listening to the child's stories; discussing with the child about school matters
Diana	Helping accomplish assignments; attending PTA meetings; participating in school activities (e.g., sports day); checking contact notebook; checking/monitoring child's assignments
Daisy	Providing comfort; volunteering in school activities (bellmark); attending school activities
Amanda	Attending school activities/events (e.g., school festival, open school); motivating the child to study; attending PTA meetings; volunteering at school (bellmark); checking assignments
Roxanne	Waking child up for school; monitoring child's homework; attending PTA meetings; attending school activities (e.g., open school, class observation)
Divorrah	Helping accomplish assignments; attending school activities (e.g., sports day); attending PTA meetings; volunteering at school (bellmark)

Challenges Encountered

The Filipino mothers reported several factors which inhibited them from participating in their children's education. Four themes emerged during the coding process namely (a) feeling of discomfort in attending PTA meetings, (b) issues of efficacy, (c) time constraints, and (d) language issues.

Feeling of discomfort

The first factor that discouraged three parents from attending PTA meetings was the issue of feeling of discomfort. One informant explained that most of the Japanese mothers viewed her as Japanese. When asked about the reason why she had this feeling of discomfort when she attended PTA meetings, Martha had this to say, *"They (school authorities) expected that I will do the same like the Japanese. This is because they thought I speak good Japanese. They did not look at me as a Filipina. This is what they told me."*

Another Filipina mother, Dulce, also expressed her awkwardness toward the Japanese mothers because of the way they looked at her. She felt she was alienated because of her being Filipino. She uttered, *“Yeah, I felt some Japanese parents were aloof towards me . . . When my son was in fifth and sixth grade; I was not comfortable with the other parents because they stared at me from head to foot. Maybe because they think I am a Filipina. Sometimes I felt like they were aloof at me.”*

Rosanna, an English teacher and a highly educated mother, expressed her bias toward the Japanese. She disliked the strong “groupism” among the Japanese mothers. She narrated, *“groupism is really strong among the Japanese. Sometimes you really have to be part of the group. I do not see the sense in it. I find it so difficult, why? They just criticize the teacher and when there is formal meeting, nobody tries to voice out their feelings. That is really difficult for me. I mean you have to deal with them in a very superficial way.”*

Issues of efficacy

Two mothers, Daisy and Amanda, pointed out the issue of efficacy, in terms of their perceived inability to teach their children because of their lack of knowledge, as hindering factors to their involvement. Daisy, a hotel room cleaner, narrated that she only engaged in activities that were easier and did not require Japanese proficiency. Because of her mindset, Daisy chose not to be involved in tasks she deemed difficult. When she was asked whether or not she had difficulty engaging in school activities, she answered, *“It was easy for me because I only volunteered in activities that I knew I can do it just like the bellmark (a seal found on pet bottles that Japanese schools collect in exchange for school supplies or vaccination for underprivileged children). This only involves cutting and computing. Before I involve myself, I make sure that I can do it.”*

Amanda (who did not finish college) thought that as her daughter moved from one grade level to another, the lessons were getting harder. According to her, the level of difficulty of the lessons, besides language problems, inhibited her from helping her daughter. She had this to say, *“When she reached grade 6, her lessons were getting harder and harder. I thought it was really getting difficult. And her grandmother even warned her that in grade 6, lessons are hard.”*

Time constraints

Another factor hindering Filipino mothers’ involvement in their children’s education is time constraints. As indicated in Table 1, six out of the eight informants are working mothers. Because of work and time constraints, two mothers narrated that they could no longer participate in school activities. Diana, a grocery store staff, shared, *“I can no longer attend activities at school because of my work . . . I find it hard to attend to school meetings because of my work schedule.”* Roxanne, an English teacher, similarly reported, *“I became a PTA officer when my child was in first and second grades but I stopped when she was in third grade because I was already busy (working).”*

Language problems

All eight informants cited language problems as the most crucial factor that hindered or discouraged them from participating. Although they have the enthusiasm and willingness to take part in their children’s education, the level of their Japanese language is inadequate, so much so that they could not help their children accomplish their assignments. Daisy, Diana, and Roxanne shared the same sentiments:

“In terms of their education, I cannot personally teach them in their Japanese language subject. My kids really tried their best without my help. Language is really the main difficulty.” ---Daisy

“I find it hard to explain to my son (Masayoshi) because of the language. Even if I explain to my child in Japanese, he can hardly understand me. Unlike me, my husband can really explain to my son thoroughly.” ---Diana

“Unluckily I cannot help her (Yuka). I really want to join her, doing her homework, but I cannot do anything, even her Math (assignments) were written in Japanese characters.” ---Roxanne

Dulce, Daisy, and Divorrah pointed out that language problems were the main reason they did not want to participate in PTA meetings. Daisy and Divorrah shared:

“I don’t want to waste my time going to school (to participate in meetings and activities) because anyway I cannot understand (them).” ---Daisy

“I am the only Filipina among the PTA officers. Sometimes I cannot really understand. In this case, I really have to ask. They know that I am not Japanese and I don’t know how to write but at least I can read some. At first, I was hesitant to be involved because I am not Japanese.” ---Divorrah

Diana and Amanda shared their difficulties in reading school correspondence (letters and printed materials) because they were all in Japanese. Diana, for instance, when asked whether or not she signs her son’s contact notebook, she responded, *“of course, my husband does the signing of the school prints because he can read Japanese characters. Maybe if they were written in Hiragana maybe I can do it myself.”*

Amanda also shared the same feeling, *“I really want to sign her school letters but the thing is my handwriting is not good. To tell you the truth, even if I cannot read those materials, I just stare at them and I am trying to understand them. Even if I really want to sign those materials, I really don’t want to force myself.”*

What Can The Japanese Government Do?

The informants were also asked about the potential assistance that the Japanese government could provide in order to help foreign migrants cope with the demands of the schools, particularly in relation to parental involvement. Five of the eight informants recommended some ways by which parents will be motivated to be active in their children’s education. One informant underscored the importance of providing free language lessons to foreign migrants. Martha suggested, *“It is good if they can provide lessons, free lessons to mothers and it should be held at the school. We have to learn the language especially writing. I think this is a good cause and I myself would like to join.”*

Two other informants advised that schools should provide English translation to school materials for easy reading and understanding. Rosanna and Roxanne conveyed:

“Actually, I have made this recommendation once. My husband had an acquaintance at the local ministry of education. I suggested to his acquaintance to make a list of the Japanese

terms they used at school and translate it in Tagalog. I think it is a good idea and I was not able to follow through and he moved to a different area.” ---Rosanna

“They should have someone to translate the school correspondence. I think schools should pay someone to translate those materials in English. [They can even translate] just the dates, the titles, and the basic information. These are the things that most parents are only interested in. I think they (schools) should allot a time to this matter.” ---Roxanne

One informant suggested that the Japanese government should conduct a needs assessment survey to be able to design policies that are responsive to the genuine needs of the foreign migrants. Diana recommended, *“I think the government has to do a research on the needs of migrants especially that international marriages is increasing.”*

Conclusion

All eight Filipino mothers reported diverse ways in which they participated in their children’s education. As described in this paper, involvement of Filipino mothers in their children’s education can be direct (e.g., monitoring homework, attending school activities, helping accomplish homework) and indirect (e.g., providing nourishment, preparing lunch box, and attending sports day). Participation of Filipino mothers took place both at home (e.g., helping accomplish homework) and school (e.g., attending PTA meetings).

As reported by the Filipino mothers the challenges they encountered as they participated in their children’s education included (a) feeling of discomfort in attending PTA meetings, (b) issues of efficacy, (c) time constraints, and (d) language issues. Of the four areas, language problems seemed to be the most significant factor hindering Filipino mothers’ involvement. Thus, many of the mothers suggested that the Japanese government should conduct free Japanese lessons and provide English translations of school materials and correspondence.

What is then the implication of this research on the Japanese society? If Japan decides to welcome immigrants due to its aging population, a people-friendly policy should be crafted to make sure that there is a smooth enculturation process. International marriage in Japan is fast becoming a trend. It is therefore imperative for the Japanese government to carefully examine this social phenomenon and its consequences, including the increasing number of children of international marriages.

Biographical Statement

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Bringing Sociocultural Theory into Classroom Practice: a Workshop

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Abstract

This workshop begins by asking about beliefs underlying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), especially in regard to the influence of Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) and Task-based Learning (TBL) frameworks. It considers their suitability for teaching and learning in classrooms and contexts familiar to participants, and asks what works and what does not. It then looks in more detail at commonplace assumptions in CLT, including what Sullivan (2000) identifies as ‘choice,’ ‘pair and group work,’ and ‘information exchange.’ Viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory, where exactly do they fit? Participants are asked to reflect on their own beliefs about teaching, and in so doing come to a deeper understanding of some common assumptions surrounding language acquisition. The aim is to introduce an element of sociocultural theory into classroom practice, helping instructors make informed decisions about what to teach and what to leave out of their lessons.

Introduction

The main idea behind this session was to introduce and elucidate a number of ideas outlined in *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning* (2000), edited by James Lantolf. According to Verity (2007), “Lantolf has become identified with the sociocultural approach to second language acquisition, as developed from the original ideas of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and others.” It was intended that the presentation and discussion of such ideas would offer an alternative prism through which to view the familiar learning space of the classroom.

About Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory holds that the human mind is mediated, and in the realm of second languages it follows that learning itself is a socially situated activity. In the words of Ohta (2000):

“Through social interaction, L2 constructs (whether vocabulary, grammatical structures, etc.) appear on two psychologically real planes, first the interpsychological or ‘between people’ plane, which is developmentally prior to the intrapsychological, or mental, plane. In other words, social processes allow the language to become a cognitive tool for the individual. These planes of functioning are dynamically interrelated, linked by language which mediates social interaction . . . and thought . . .

...Internalization of social interactive processes happens in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the interactional space within which a learner is enabled to perform a task beyond his or her own current level of competence, through assisted performance.” (p. 54)

Thus the imposition of an artificial construct in the classroom, such as a methodology or approach, needs to take account of the socially situated nature of learning. Predominantly cognitive approaches to language learning seem to have taken over from older, now discredited ideas about learning being mainly the formation of good habits, but do not seem any more likely to succeed due to their own limitations in describing the processes at work.

With this in mind, the workshop attempted to come up with other more satisfactory ways of accounting for these processes.

Rethinking CLT

When reassessing accepted wisdom in the teaching community it makes sense to start with CLT, the most visible face of English Language Teaching (ELT), to see how it operates in classrooms. One of a number of common threads running through CLT (see, for example, Sullivan, 2000) is the insistence that class materials should be authentic, in other words they should link what is done in class with what we accept as happening in real life outside the class. Another is that communication should take place in the class, and that this communication should ideally be achieved through interaction among students. Furthermore, CLT should have a learner-centred and content-centred focus, with neither the teacher at the heart of the class, nor the learning of grammatical structures as its main focus. In order to achieve its explicitly communicative focus, the CLT class emphasises pair and group work and tends to describe the results of this activity in class as genuine, meaningful interaction. Countless practitioners of CLT and materials writers are native speakers of English, who have a high comfort level with this kind of class. Participants in the workshop were asked to notice the assumptions and attitudes underlying this form of instruction. One commonly-held belief holds that language use is primarily driven by the need to communicate meaning, and that the classroom environment and goals of instruction mimic this assumption, placing little emphasis on identifying other aspects of language use. An attitude that appears to underlie such an assumption is that native speakers of English ‘own’ the language, know it best, and thereby know the best way for non-native speakers of English to learn it.

A more critical view of CLT was posited, and to paraphrase Bax (2003), this *CLT attitude* is one in which CLT is assumed to be the whole solution to language learning; that no other method could be any good; that people’s views of who they are and what they want are ignored; and in which the local context is neglected as irrelevant.

Workshop Musings

In this workshop, I related a story of how my own teaching assumptions gleaned from a CELTA course in the UK had run up against the realities of teaching in a Japanese classroom. Among other things, I had learnt to pose questions in quick succession with the aim of adding pace to the class and energising it, but the students watched me jumping around energetically and raising my voice excitedly as if I were an untamed animal. My behaviour only made sense in the context of the UK where students were expected not only to learn English but to be or become English. My Japanese students had a multitude of reasons for being in my class, very few of which revolved around my persona, my beliefs about teaching, and my context. Their immediate concern was with their own needs as learners, the ideas and background they brought with them, and their own local and relevant context, where one was not supposed to express strong or divergent opinions in public, or interrupt the teacher and disturb fellow students by asking questions. Participants then reflected on their own narratives and experiences, recounting their acceptance of CLT and how they had tried to integrate it into their teaching practice: just how far they embraced it, and in what situations they might reject it.

What CLT means

Perhaps one of the most common fallacies about CLT is to assume that it means the same thing to all-comers. Sullivan (2000) draws attention to the terms *weak CLT* and *strong CLT* (see Howard, 1984). Fundamentally, weak CLT offers learners in class opportunities to use

English for communicative purposes, through Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), for instance. Essentially, the job of CLT is the use and practice of the target language. In contrast to this, what strong CLT sets out to do is engender learning, with its contention that the very act of language acquisition takes place through communication.

Workshop Musings

Participants examined what their own classroom approaches could best be described as. For some, it was the way they had been trained; for others, the textbook dictated how they taught; and for yet others, they had changed the way they managed classes based on their own experience. The weak versus strong argument was useful for refining where people stood on these issues and also for questioning beliefs about how languages should be taught and learnt.

Unquestioned Assumptions in CLT

Participants were asked to investigate a number of terms in common use in contemporary English classrooms. For instance, Sullivan (2000) draws on the words group work and pair work as examples of how a set of values are easily embedded in the ways we operate in our classrooms. So from her argument it follows that when we discuss values in class, such as giving students more choice over what they learn, we reveal our own beliefs. Other terms highlighted by Sullivan with regard to (Western) values are independence, freedom, privacy, and equality.

The second set of values identified is grouped into the category of work. Within this particular category, it was easy for participants to find many examples in common usage. Some of those identified by Sullivan (2000) included pair work, task-based learning, co-construction, scaffolding, and collaboration. It was hard to say exactly where these ideas come from, and how they coalesced into ELT, but it was easy to trace the ideas through Puritanism and the Protestant work ethic to modern concepts of Westernization and globalization, and even the contemporary narrative of searching for full employment. Some participants commented on the notion of equating being busy all the time with leading a virtuous life, and that it was not applicable to or desirable in all cultures or contexts.

The third set of values is described by Sullivan (2000) as information exchange and technology. The kinds of culturally-loaded words represented in CLT include equality and reality, and the insistence within CLT on (its own version of) real life and authenticity has already been mentioned. It might easily follow that in lands where a monarch is deemed to be born superior to the common people, or where the political system is based on respect for elders and tradition and family ties, not on universal suffrage and the sheer weight of numbers manipulated by modern lobbyists and telegenic politicians with their slick soundbites, learning world Englishes would appeal more than learning or copying *English* cultural values. Furthermore, notions of input and output are used to describe language learning in a cold, robotic universe. Interestingly, these kinds of technological terms implicitly suggest a separation of language study from the social setting in which it takes place. Participants imagined a situation in which speech activity is only the exchange of information, but of course without a context and social milieu the speech activity would be extremely unlikely to occur in the first place. Such an analysis lends credence to the idea that in fact the classroom is an artificial setting, one that is not authentic in terms of the target language culture, but a community still bound by the local norms and school culture which has to abide by customs and rules and laws. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, with students tending to share Kyrgyz or Russian (and other minority) language blocs, exchange of information was evidently only one of a multitude of speech activities.

Workshop Musings

We discussed the situation in Japan, where in many cases it appears the aim of forming a group is to come to an agreement. One could generalize the Western experience by stating, conversely, that the purpose is to express one's own opinions and put a message across. In a number of Asian societies, that kind of speech act might run counter to the social cohesion of the group. Hence group work or pair work can act as a divisive factor, constantly bringing those involved into conflict with one another and the local culture.

Teaching Communicatively

One acid test for CLT could be described thus: its success or failure when approached from the point of view of how communicative a class was. Here again, a number of unsubstantiated *facts* about CLT being the way to teach communicatively were pinpointed and examined. Sullivan (2000) discusses the work of Holliday (1997) in China and India, whose classroom observations proved revealing and illuminating. Contrary to assumptions built into teacher training in the West, successful communicative involvement tended to occur as a result of activities centred on texts rather than through mainly speaking-based activities. In addition, group and pair work was no indicator of greater communication taking place in class. Moreover, and perhaps most distressing to preconceptions about how to teach, the teacher-led or teacher-focused class with a high degree of teacher talking time did not obstruct the communicative flow of learning.

Workshop Musings

Participants were asked to consider how and why it should be that a teacher-centred class could be equally or more effective than a learner-centred class - though there is no reason why a teacher-fronted class would not succeed in placing students at the heart of learning. The point was illustrated by explaining that the teacher-fronted class would not be devalued within sociocultural theory, since activities abound involving interaction between the teacher and their students involving play, especially humour and stories, as a mediated activity.

The Problem of Task-Based Learning (TBL) as a Cure-all

TBL is initially appealing for instructors disappointed by the dashed expectations of a CLT approach. Rather than deciding in advance to present a body of language or target forms, practising them mechanically in a controlled form and later more freely, then finally encouraging the class to produce the words and forms by themselves, TBL allows the task itself to drive the process, with the instructor drawing out particular language and forms to focus on. A key question was to decide whether tasks really function in the way described.

Donato (2000) makes a number of interesting observations about tasks. Firstly, though tasks seem at first sight to have a near universal appeal to teachers in a variety of teaching contexts, they are not in practice a form of learning that can work well in isolation from a specific educational milieu. Given what is understood about learning as a socially situated phenomenon, any task or activity will depend on the learners present at that moment in their context. Secondly, directing students towards the desired outcomes of a task and hoping they arrive there is counterproductive to learning, since tasks do not and never can make students perform in specified or hoped for ways. Learners will always take a given task and transform it. Just like an instructor, they invariably bring their own goals or beliefs, their open-mindedness and prejudices to the task. Thirdly, he discusses the perceived successes or failures of tasks. Much is made about task procedures, which seem to be externally directed and driven by the teacher, though garbed in the language of learner-centredness and

relinquishing control to students. Instructors may reject trivial activities in favour of grandiose-sounding, more substantial or convoluted tasks, yet there is much to be gained by having the students themselves take control over language and procedures of the 'lesser' and simpler tasks. Donato adds that tasks are inaccurately described, tending towards external factors like procedures, when they ought to be more appropriately described in terms of the internal processes of student motivations, their desires and their goals. More important than task outcomes and other extrinsic factors are the orientations that students bring to the task in pursuit of their own intrinsic and multiple goals.

To sum up, Donato (2000) argues that, "Here again we see an orientation toward participation as the predominant metaphor for learning rather than independent measure of the accumulation of knowledge." This theme of participation was then explored in more depth in the last part of the workshop (see the discussion under Acquisition and Participation).

Workshop Musings

Participants discussed the scope and limitations of task design. This topic was closely associated with evidence gleaned from class observations conducted in Kyrgyzstan during the seminar. There was evidence in some classes of a series of discrete and unconnected exercises or tasks taking the place of a teaching plan or syllabus. By allowing students the latitude to find their own orientations, course outcomes would be expected to vary; but the question was whether tasks furnished more participation, or less.

Acquisition and Participation

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) refer to the familiar acquisition metaphor (AM). The limitations of it are that it likens the mind to a computer and container, in which the learner accumulates knowledge as a commodity to store, and the mind is the place for the learner to hoard it. These days, many language classrooms are moving way from an excessive emphasis on the mind only and its emphasis on scientific objectivity. The proposal is not to reject the AM entirely, but to temper its effects with the Participation Metaphor (PM). By participation, what is meant is joining a community of learners and embarking on a process in which the self is reconstructed in a new language. It owes much more to a first-person narrative and much less to scientific inquiry.

Workshop Musings

Participants discussed the idea of *becoming* in a target language, a journey of crossing boundaries and borders from the first-language self to the newly reconstructed self. They were able to draw on their own experiences and narratives as language learners. There was a sense of empowerment expressed in viewing what we normally call *failure* as in itself an act that reveals part of the process involved in language learning.

Conclusion: What Sociocultural Theory Teaches Us

Within the limitations of the time available, the workshop offered some pointers towards ways in which sociocultural theory might illuminate our teaching. Donato's study (2000) discussed three important conclusions that participants discussed. Firstly, learning a language is a social process acted upon and mediated by the classroom in its various manifestations. These include factors like the choice of materials, the atmosphere or environment, and the actual discourse that takes place. Thus cognitive factors and the AM will always give an incomplete picture. It does not make sense to only concentrate on a learner receiving language and instruction as input and assume that those mental processes tell us everything. Knowledge

is gained through other channels too, and collaboration forms part of those channels that are frequently ignored.

The second conclusion is that the collaboration referred to above is key, and that when teachers and students are collaborators then the role of instruction is central. Meaning is created through this collaborative process, and the teacher, in a mentoring role giving help to make sense of learning and influence it, can be a powerful mediator. In this sense, theories that limit learning to controlled comprehensible input, or contrived negotiations of meaning, or programmed input, or implicit versus explicit instruction, are all incomplete.

The third conclusion concerns students as agents of their own destinies. They are the active participants, the ones that transform learning, with their own narratives and beliefs and accumulated experiences. The limitations of manipulation by the teacher via structured input or information exchange should be apparent. Whenever the aim of the students is to comply with the immediate demands of the teacher, language learning does not occur. The classroom as a learning community is alive and apt to change and invariably situated. It is hard to predict how it will manifest itself in a variety of contexts in a range of unique conditions.

Biographical Statement

Roger Palmer graduated from London University in European history. His postgraduate study was in Education, and current research interests include blended learning and strategy training. Roger's main teaching areas are global issues and European studies. He is co-author of iZone, Longman Asia's four-level blended print-digital communication series.

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Multiple Intelligences and Multiple Activities

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Abstract

In Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner (1983) presents the idea of multiple intelligences and formulates a list of them: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical-rhythmic, bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, naturalistic, and personal intelligences (interpersonal and intrapersonal). The theory implies that educators need to consider all intelligences as equally important in the classroom and that all people possess some amount of each intelligence. In the present article we will discuss the main characteristics of these intelligences and will propose activities with literary texts that might be suitable for them.

Introduction

In any class we encounter a multiplicity of learning styles and abilities to acquire new content. Our job as teachers is to reach these different ways of handling knowledge. One way of doing this could be to consider the Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory as a model to be followed for the sake of variety in classroom activities. In this article we propose working with literature (one poem and one chapter of a book) as both content and resource, and describe activities suitable for the multiple learning potential. Originally the MI theory was intended to define more accurately the concept of intelligence and to address the question as to whether methods which claim to measure intelligence are truly scientific. In this work we use Gardner's theory to provide a variety of activities to be used with literary texts.

Theory of Multiple Intelligences

In *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Gardner (1983) argues that intelligence, as it is traditionally defined, does not sufficiently encompass the wide variety of abilities humans display. In his conception, a child who masters multiplication easily is not necessarily more intelligent overall than a child who struggles to do so. The second child may be stronger in another kind of intelligence and therefore (a) may best learn the given material through a different approach, (b) may excel in a field outside of mathematics, or (c) may even be looking at the multiplication process at a fundamentally deeper level, which can result in an apparent slowness that hides an intelligence that is different from that of the child who easily memorizes the multiplication tables.

Gardner is not actually expanding the definition of the word intelligence; rather, he denies the existence of intelligence as it is traditionally understood, and instead uses the word intelligence where other researchers have traditionally used words like ability. Therefore, Gardner expands the definition of intelligence so as to include multiple forms, as opposed to being a unified entity as traditionally and previously considered.

In the heyday of the psychometric and behaviorist eras, it was generally believed that intelligence was a single entity that was inherited; and that human beings – initially a blank slate – could be trained to learn anything, provided that it was presented in an appropriate way. Nowadays, an increasing number of researchers believe precisely the opposite: that there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other; that each intelligence has its own strengths and constraints; that the mind is far from unencumbered at birth; and that it is unexpectedly difficult to teach things that go against “naïve” theories or that challenge the natural lines of force within an intelligence and its marching domains (Gardner, 1983, p. xxxiii).

Gardner outlines a theory that includes the following intelligences: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical-rhythmic, bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, personal (interpersonal and intrapersonal), and naturalistic. This implies different ways of learning and, therefore, different ways of teaching.

Verbal-linguistic intelligence

This intelligence involves the knowledge which comes through language, (i.e., through reading, writing, and speaking). It involves understanding the order and meaning of words in both speech and writing, and how to properly use the language, and also understanding the socio-cultural nuances of a language, including idioms, plays on words, and linguistically-based humor. People with high verbal-linguistic intelligence display a facility with words and languages; they are typically good at reading, writing, telling stories and memorizing words along with dates, tend to learn best by reading, taking notes, listening to lectures, and discussion and debate, and are also frequently skilled at explaining, teaching and oration or persuasive speaking. Gardner (1983) maintains that linguistic competence is the intellectual competence that “seems most widely and most democratically shared across the human species” (p. 78). This is due to four of the main uses of language: the rhetorical aspect of language – for convincing others of a course of action; the mnemonic potential of language – to use language as a tool to remember information; the use of language as a tool for explaining; and the meta-linguistic potential of language – using the language to reflect upon language (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004). A person with well-developed verbal-linguistic intelligence is likely to possess some of the following characteristics: listens and responds to the sound, rhythm and variety of the words, imitates the sounds, listens effectively, remembers and analyzes what he/she hears, reads, writes, and speaks effectively, can create original forms of oral or written communication, and demonstrates interest in journalism, poetry, storytelling or editing (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson).

Logical-mathematical intelligence

This intelligence uses numbers, math, and logic to find and understand the various patterns that occur in our lives: number patterns, visual patterns, and color patterns: “Like a painter or a poet, a mathematician is a maker of patterns; but the special characteristics of mathematical patterns are that they are more likely to be permanent because they are made with ideas . . . quite possibly the most central and least replaceable feature of the mathematician’s gift is the ability to handle skillfully long chains of reasoning” (Gardner, 1983, p. 139). Gardner affirms that while it is often assumed that those with this intelligence naturally excel in mathematics, chess, computer programming and other logical or numerical activities, a more accurate definition places less emphasis on traditional mathematical ability and more on reasoning capabilities, abstract patterns of recognition, scientific thinking and investigation, and the ability to perform complex calculations. Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (2004) maintain that a person with well-developed logical-mathematical intelligence tends to perceive patterns and their relationships, uses abstract symbols to represent concrete objects, is familiar with concepts such as quantity, time, and cause and effect, uses technology for mathematical problems, enjoys complex operations, creates new models in science or mathematics, and is likely to be interested in careers such as computer technology, law, engineering, and chemistry.

Musical-rhythmic intelligence

This intelligence refers to the whole realm of sound, tones, beats, and vibrational patterns: “For the musician the patterned elements must appear in sounds; and they are finally and

firmly put together in certain ways not by virtue of formal consideration, but because they have expressive power and effects” (Gardner, 1983, p. 127). People with a high musical intelligence normally have good pitch and/or are able to sing, play musical instruments, and compose music. Since there is a strong auditory component to this intelligence, those who are strongest in it may learn best via lectures. Language skills are typically highly developed in people whose base intelligence is musical. A person with well-developed musical intelligence tends to listen and respond with interest to a variety of sounds, seeks out opportunities to hear music, recognize different musical styles, collect information about music, the ability to sing or play an instrument, create original compositions or musical instruments, and is interested in careers involving music (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004, pp. 130-131).

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

The core elements of the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are control of one’s bodily motions and capacity to handle objects skillfully: “Characteristics of kinesthetic intelligence are the ability to use one’s body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes . . . and the capacity to work skillfully with objects, both those that involve the fine motor movements of one’s fingers and hands and those that exploit gross motor movements of the body” (Gardner, 1983, p. 206). Gardner maintains that this intelligence also includes a sense of timing, a clear sense of a physical action’s goal, along with the ability to train responses so they become like reflexes. In theory, people who have bodily-kinesthetic intelligence should learn better by involving muscular movement (e.g., getting up and moving around during the learning experience), are generally good at physical activities such as sports or dance, may enjoy acting or performing, and in general they are good at building and making things. In other words, those with strong bodily-kinesthetic intelligence seem to use what might be termed muscle memory - they remember things such as verbal memory through their body (Gardner, 1983, pp. 205-215). Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (2004) clarifies the difference between tactile students who “learn through touch and manipulation of objects” and kinesthetic learners who “involve their whole bodies in their activities or prefer to work with concrete life activities” (p. 65). A person with a well-developed kinesthetic intelligence tends to explore the environment through touch, learn best by involvement or participation and enjoy concrete learning experiences, is skilled in acting, athletics, dancing, sewing, carving or keyboarding, lives by healthy physical standards, invent new approaches to physical endeavors, and may be interested in careers related to those of an athlete, dancer, surgeon, or builder (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson 2004, p. 66).

Visual-spatial intelligence

This area deals with skills related to spatial judgment, and the ability to visualize with the mind’s eye: “Central to spatial intelligence are the capacities to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one’s initial perceptions, and to be able to re-create aspects of one’s visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli” (Gardner, 1983, p. 173). This intelligence represents knowledge that occurs through the shapes, images, patterns, designs, and textures we see with our external eyes, but also includes all of the images we are able to conjure inside our heads: “Spatial intelligence comprises the ability to recognize instances of the same element, to transform or to recognize mental imagery and then to transform that imagery, the capacity to produce a graphic likeness of spatial information, . . . the sensitivity to the various lines of force that enter into a visual or spatial display, . . . and the resemblances that may exist across two seemingly disparate forms or two seemingly remote domains of experience” (Gardner, 1983, p. 176). Gardner mentions chess masters as strong examples of this intelligence: their ability to predict moves and their consequences are signs of an outstanding visual memory or visual imagination.

According to Campbell, Campbell and Dickinson (2004) visual-spatial intelligence encompasses several related skills: “visual discrimination, recognition, projection, mental imagery, spatial reasoning, image manipulation, and the duplication of inner or external imagery” (p. 94). A single person can express any or all of those skills the mentioned authors “refer to this intelligence as both visual and spatial since people perceive and process information through both modalities” (p. 94). A person with visual-spatial intelligence is oriented to learn by seeing and observing, navigates self and objects effectively through space, perceives and produces mental imagery, decodes graphs, enjoys drawing, perceive patterns, creates visual representation of information, observe things from new perspectives and create original works of art, and is interested in visually oriented careers (p. 95).

Interpersonal intelligence

The central capacity of this intelligence is the ability to notice other people’s moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions “...(which) entails the capacity of the young child to discriminate among the individuals around him and to detect their various moods . . . permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires –even when these have been hidden– of many individuals and, potentially, to act upon this knowledge –for example, by influencing a group of disparate individuals to behave along desired lines” (Gardner, 1983, p. 239). People who have a high interpersonal intelligence tend to be characterized by their sensitivity to others' moods, feelings, temperaments and motivations, and their ability to cooperate in order to work as part of a group. They typically learn best by working with others, often enjoy discussion and debate, influence the opinion or actions of others, are skilled in mediation and organization, and express interests in interpersonally oriented careers such as politics, religion leaders, teaching, and social work (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004, p. 155).

Intrapersonal intelligence

At the heart of this intelligence are our human self-reflective abilities by which we can step outside ourselves and think about our own lives: “the capacity to distinguish a feeling of pleasure from one of pain and, on the basis of such discrimination, to become more involved in or to withdraw from a situation” (Gardner, 1983, p. 239). Gardner mentions as good examples of this intelligence to novelists, who can write about feelings, a patient who comes to have a deep knowledge of his feelings, or a wise elder who is able to give advice to members of his community out of his rich experience. This intelligence involves our uniquely human propensity to want to know the meaning, purpose, and significance of things. It involves our awareness of the inner world of the self, emotions, values, beliefs, and our various spiritual quests. People with intrapersonal intelligence are intuitive and typically introverted, are skillful at deciphering their own feelings and motivation, work independently, establish and live by an ethical value system, and are motivated to identify and pursue goals. These people can have a deep understanding of oneself; what your strengths/weaknesses are, and what makes you unique, and being able to predict your own reactions/emotions (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004, p. 188).

Naturalistic intelligence

Naturalistic intelligence, added by Gardner in 1996, involves the full range of knowledge that occurs in and through our encounters with the natural world, including our recognition, appreciation, and understanding of the natural environment (Wilson, 1998). This area has to do with nature, nurturing and relating information to one’s natural surroundings. It involves the ability to recognize and classify the species of the natural world and also to link with and understand the natural world and its phenomena. A person with well-developed naturalistic

intelligence is likely to explore human and natural environments, classify objects according to their characteristics, seek out opportunities to observe and identify plants or animals, recognizes patterns of classes of objects, is interested in how things work and how systems change and evolve, uses tools such as microscopes and computers to study organisms, may discover patterns and interconnections among objects (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004, pp. 221-222). These authors maintain that “Naturalistic activities make classrooms learning investigative and personal” (p. 222).

MI in English Language Teaching

In this part of the work we propose activities for the language class oriented to the intelligences proposed by Gardner⁽¹⁾.

Multiple intelligences and activities.

Visual-spatial intelligence	Mind mapping Pictures of the different stages of a story or the stanzas of a poem Drawing maps based on a story Flower poems Drawing the stanzas of a poem
Linguistic intelligence	Writing letters, poems, stories, etc. Giving oral presentations Conducting an interview Creating slogans Activities with everyday/literary words Discussing a story Playing “New word for the day” by learning and frequently using a new word during the day
Logical-mathematical intelligence	Predicting what will happen in a story Making outlines of stories Analyzing similarities and differences Supplying title and ending Analyze the differences and similarities between two poems
Kinesthetic intelligence	Embodying the meaning of vocabulary or the meaning of stanzas Learning vocabulary through body movements and physical gestures Drama-based activities Role plays/Pantomimes Biography with gaps
Musical intelligence	Creating songs/raps to teach grammar Illustrating literary texts with sounds, music, rhythms Suggesting music and songs related to a text Poems that became songs
Interpersonal intelligence	Experimenting with joint story-writing in which one starts and then passes it another student Reading poetry with different perspectives and different moods Language exercises with a partner Split sentences
Intrapersonal intelligence	Autobiographical essay “My life to date” Analyzing literature for “connections to our lives today” Imagining being a character in a story/novel and telling whether you would act differently or the same Feelings in lines
Naturalistic intelligence	Natural recreation/simulations for literature and poetry Writing based on nature experiences Understanding influences of environment on authors Creative story-writing using animal characters and their characteristics Vocabulary related to nature Creative writing

Literary texts in the language classroom

When we work with poetry in language teaching we can choose between working with the poem's heart (activities related to the content of the poem and activities involving reconstruction of the poem, word changes, gap fill ins, and other activities like these) or we can take the poem as a point of departure for activities that go beyond the limits of the poem (Naranjo, 1990, pp. 13-24).

Activities with a poem: "COME live with me and be my Love" By Christopher Marlowe

COME live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.

Visual-spatial intelligence

Ask the students to read the poem, choose a meaningful word, and make a flower poem with it.

Visual-spatial and naturalistic intelligences

Ask students to make a mind map with words related to nature (Fig. 1).

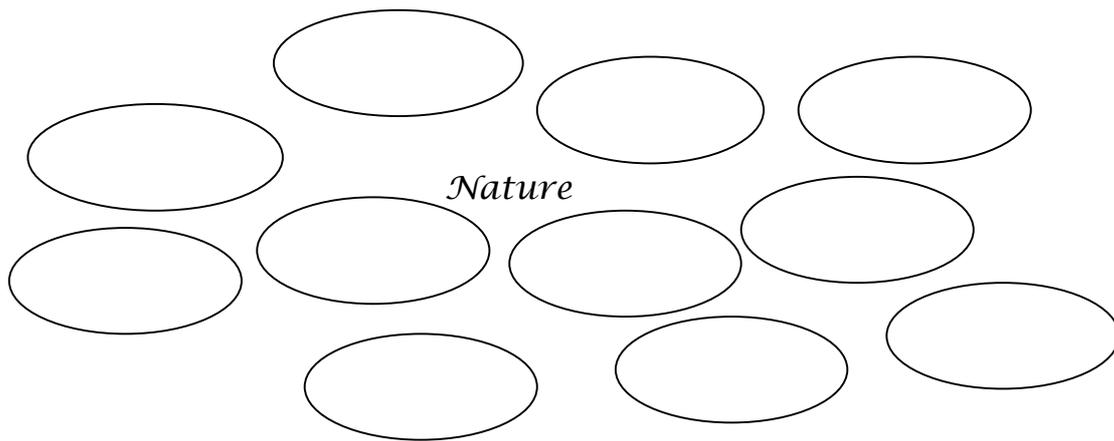


Figure 1. Mind Map

Logical-mathematical intelligence

Give the students the poem without the title and ask them to provide their own. After the students have understood the poem, ask them to think of an answer for that poem as a simple stanza or paragraph. After reading the students' answers to the poem we could choose working with the poem "Answer to Marlowe" by Walter Raleigh.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

Ask the students to mime the lines:

“there we will sit upon the rocks”
 “there I will make thee beds of roses”

Ask the students to make lines following the style of the poem and mime them. The others can guess the meaning of the mime.

Musical-rhythmic intelligence

Working with a musical version of the poem, students can supply missing words, or rearrange the lines of the poem. Students could then be asked to supply musical background for the poem and give the reason for their choices. Choose one of the melodies suggested by the students and ask them to read the poem with that musical background.

Interpersonal and linguistic intelligences

Ask the students to write two simple lines following the style of these lines:

Come live with me and be my Love,
 And we will all the pleasures prove

Then redistribute the written lines and ask the students to write an answer to these lines.

Intrapersonal intelligence, naturalistic, and linguistic intelligences

Ask the students to imagine they are the character of the poem they are working with; students have to choose one of the landscapes below (Fig. 2) and complete the line *Come live with me and be my love* with a description of the place.



Figure 2. Landscapes

COME live with me and be my Love,

Activities with a literary text

When working with a literary text, Acquaroni (2007, pp. 80-90) proposes classifying the classroom activities in the following three stages:

- (a) Stage of framing (getting ready)
 In this step the learners get a first glimpse of the topic and wake up their imagination without getting complete and direct information yet. In this stage students are provided with the context that will be useful to understand the text they are going to read and carry out activities to anticipate the topic and anticipate the way contents will be developed.
- (b) Stage of focusing (engaging)
 This is a step of discovery and comprehension. The activities here help students to fully understand the story: activities with vocabulary and grammar, activities centered on the content, and also activities that guide learners to use their imagination and start going beyond the text with which they are working.
- (c) Stage of diverging (moving on)
 Once the students have fully understood the text they can go on to activities that reinforce, broaden, and consolidate the insight they have now got and search for different situational frames or contexts. In this stage the relevant element is the learners' imagination and the activities could be to change the end, to think what will happen to the main character or build a dialogue out of the text or the other way round. Basically, in this step students can use the vocabulary they had learned in the text with a different frame or context.

In this case, we propose working with Platero, the first chapter of the book *Platero and I* by Juan Ramón Jiménez⁽²⁾. The objective of the classes⁽³⁾ is to make students (beginners' level) work with adjectives and nouns to describe animals.

Platero⁽⁴⁾

Platero is a small donkey, a soft, hairy donkey: so soft to the touch that he might be said to be made of cotton, with no bones. Only the jet mirrors of his eyes are hard like two black crystal scarabs.

I turn him loose, and he goes to the meadow, and, with his nose, he gently caresses the little flowers of rose and blue and gold.... I call him softly, "Platero?" and he comes to me at a gay little trot that is like laughter of a vague, idyllic, tinkling sound. He eats whatever I give him. He likes mandarin oranges, amber-hued muscatel grapes, purple figs tipped with crystalline drops of honey.

He is as loving and tender as a child, but strong and sturdy as a rock. When on Sundays I ride him through the lanes in the outskirts of the town, slow-moving country-men, dressed in their Sunday clean, watch him a while, speculatively:

"He is like steel," they say.

Steel, yes. Steel and moon silver at the same time.

Classroom activities

(a) Framing stage

My pet – Students are asked to write a very short composition about their pets: name of the pet, what is the pet like, what the pet eats, what the pet does (verbal-linguistic intelligence). Later, students can use that short text in a pair work: they ask each other about their pets (interpersonal intelligence).

(b) Focusing stage

In groups, students read the first chapter, Platero, of the book *Platero and I* and carry out the following classroom work:

Content

Reply questions about the donkey, Platero, and make several activities with colors, adjectives and vocabulary (verbal-linguistic intelligence). Propose a title for the chapter (logical-mathematical intelligence).

Grammar

Some students receive the subject of several sentences and some others receive the predicate. Students will have to ask several peers until they can complete all the sentences (interpersonal intelligence).

Listening

Divide the class in three groups. While listening and watching a video⁽⁵⁾ one group fills the missing nouns, another group fills the missing verbs, and the third one fills the missing adjectives. Then, make new groups, each one with at least one member of the former groups so that students can work and fill the complete text (musical-rhythmic intelligence, verbal-linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence).

Drama activity

Students work in groups, each group chooses a verb from the text, mime it, and the other groups should guess the verb (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence).

(c) Diverging stage

Drawings

Students choose representative words and make drawings of them. For example “silver” to draw a donkey (visual-spatial intelligence).

Feelings

Choose several sentences from the first chapter of *Platero and I* and ask the students, individually, to write the feelings that such sentences arouse in them (intrapersonal intelligence).

Animals in their natural habitat

In groups, using dictionaries and, if possible, the internet, students choose animals and write about their habitat and food. For example: “*Koalas are small and hairy animals, live in Australia, and eat eucalyptus leaves*” (naturalistic intelligence).

Conclusion

In accordance with the idea that “There must be more to intelligence than short answers to short questions,” Gardner (1983, p. 4) proposes an outstanding pattern for considering multiple intelligences that can be accommodated at the time of designing activities. Diversity in the tasks allows the teacher to reach as many learning styles as possible and also permits the students a better comprehension of the contents due to the fact that these are approached from several points of view. One answer or outcome is not the only acceptable measure of students’ understanding. For example, if our objective is for students to understand the literary structure of a story, one student might illustrate it through drawing, another might be able to recreate the elements through acting, and another might better be able to summarize it in writing. What is important in MI instruction is using Gardner’s theory as a frame for creating approaches that best suit the preferences of the students, the characteristics of the content, and the realistic expectations of the teacher.

Footnotes

⁽¹⁾ Some of the activities were done in workshops in San Jose del Monte, Manila, on July 31st and August 1st, 2010. However, in these workshops participants worked not only with the poem “Come live with me and be my love” but with a multiplicity of texts.

⁽²⁾ Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958) was a Spanish poet and writer; *Platero y yo* (*Platero and I*) is one of his main works. Platero is the name of the main character of the book, a small grey donkey, and means *silvery*.

⁽³⁾ Some of the activities described in this article were carried out with the original text in Spanish with students of Spanish as a second foreign language and were adapted to English classes.

⁽⁴⁾ English version taken from the site
http://albalearning.com/audiolibros/jrjimenez/platero_001-sp-en.html

⁽⁵⁾ In Youtube there are several videos with the first chapter of *Platero and I* (lyrics and melody).

Biographical Statement

Cecilia Silva is currently teaching Spanish at Tohoku University, Sendai. She is interested in media literacy, critical literacy, literature, and cultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning.

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Promoting Strategic Competence in the L2 Classroom

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Abstract

This paper introduces the topic of strategic competence as related to communicative strategies (CSs). The starting point is an introduction to strategic competence and a definition of communicative competence and communication strategies. The author then outlines a year-long study in which learners were introduced to CSs and were asked to listen to recordings of themselves as well as reflect on their own development in the area of CSs. The paper concludes with short introductions to various activities used by the author in his own classroom.

Communication Strategies as Part of Strategic Competence: An Introduction

How do L2 learners learn to harness the skills and confidence needed to build stronger strategic competence in language learning? Strategic competence is one element of a learner's overall communicative competence and is used by L2 learners dealing with the language in unfamiliar contexts. Strategic competence also helps students to overcome imperfect knowledge of rules and gaps in their knowledge of L2 with the use of communication strategies (CSs). Can explicitly teaching of CSs in class though improve students' strategic competence and thereby promote overall communicative competence? According to Savignon (2002), the effective use of communication strategies "is important for communicative competence in all contexts and distinguishes highly effective communicators from those who are less so." (p. 10) Along with the teachability debate revolving around communication strategies (Dornyei, 1995), there is also the task of finding an appropriate way to assess their usage among students. It is important to note though that competence cannot be measured, performance can (Canale & Swain, 1980). Researchers and teachers alike are still searching for ways to get students to use CSs, but students must at the same time be taught to monitor their own usage in order to strengthen their strategic competence and overall awareness. The first half of this paper will look at the theory and literature behind strategic competence and communication strategies, while the second half will focus on activities designed to teach communication strategies to L2 learners.

Communicative Competence and Communication Strategies: Definitions

Strategic competence is considered to be one of the four elements of communicative competence (Savignon, 1972, 1983; Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). The remaining three elements are: *grammatical competence*, *discourse competence*, and *sociocultural competence*. Grammatical competence is the ability of learners to demonstrate use of grammatical rules during communication, as opposed to only knowing the rule. Discourse competence refers to the ability to understand the meaningful whole of written words. Sociocultural competence, which requires an understanding of social context, applies to appropriate language use in a given situation.

Corder (1981, p. 103) defines a communication strategy as a "systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his (or) her meaning when faced with some difficulty." Cohen (1990, p. 56) writes that "a major trait of successful speakers is that they use strategies to keep the conversation going." Students are often taught CSs in class or read about them in their textbooks, but how or when do they decide to use them? Students are probably already using CSs, but are not consciously aware of doing so. In-class strategy training can help students to

realize when and how they are using CSs and when/if they should be using them more often or in a more directed fashion.

A Year-Long Study of First Year University Students' Communication Strategies Usage

In a one-year study of the effects of CS training on 44 first-year university students, Wood (2009) found that explicitly teaching CSs in class along with implementing extra strategy based activities resulted in increased usage and understanding of CSs (See appendix). Using the same CSs survey developed by Sato (2005) for his study (and administered 3 times over the course of one school year), similar results were obtained. Overall usage of CSs by the students went up although certain CS usage went down or stayed relatively unchanged throughout the year. After new strategies were taught in class, students had a chance to immediately use them while communicating with their partners. Throughout the year, more and more activities were created in order to allow students to practice using the newly learned CSs. This process gave students a quick way to experiment with the strategies and to hopefully realize their overall importance. Students eventually seemed more confident in using CSs and used them more freely throughout the year. During students' recordings over the year (4 in total) students were asked to listen to their recorded conversations and to search for and identify by name any CSs they had used, this resulted in students realizing that they had used many CSs, many they had not even noticed using.

Example Student Comments Concerning Communication Strategies

"In order to understand communication strategies, I have to read textbook and after that use it actively in practice. When I can't understand it, I have to ask teacher. I try to use strategies in casual conversations."

"When I start a conversation with a friend or teacher, I always forget to use communication strategies. Sometimes I don't know when to use it. So, I want to use communication strategies well."

"I want to ask many original questions and use communication strategies more and more."

"I want to speak more naturally. I should use many strategies."

"I tried to use more communication strategies, such as "using longer sentences," "follow up questions," "interjecting," "using gestures," "borrowing," "shadowing," and so on."

*No corrections were made to students' comments.

Activities for Teaching Communication Strategies

Activity #1: Follow up questions in a line (3 or 4 teams)

- One student stands in the front and faces the line (their team).
- The student makes a statement (e.g. I watched a movie last night.).
- Students in the line see how many follow up questions they can ask. The line moves while students continue asking questions and then moving to the back of the line. The teacher can keep count of students' questions.
- If a student takes more than 3 seconds to ask a question, the whole team is out.
- The goal is to ask as many follow up questions as possible in one minute. Teams compete against each other.

This activity is a lot of fun and students quite enjoy it. The pressure to answer quickly adds to the excitement and often produces interesting/funny follow up questions which in turn get laughs from other students. All around it is a fun way for students to practice asking follow up questions and can be adapted in many ways to suite any classroom level.

Activity #2: CSs and cartoons (useable with any CSs)

- Find an episode of a cartoon/animated show that features examples of certain CSs that are currently being taught to students.
- Have students listen for certain CSs used by characters and have them identify the CSs on a worksheet created by the teacher. The worksheet can show examples of CSs while also asking students to fill in the blanks. A list of CSs at the bottom of the page is helpful to students.
- Sponge Bob Squarepants is good because the episodes are only 10 minutes and since it's made for children the language is easier.

This activity is also open to being adapted depending on the class and level of the students. Movies could be used instead of cartoons, etc. Students can greatly benefit from hearing native speakers use CSs while communicating. This process can help students to realize that CSs are not just for L2 learners, but also an essential tool of native speakers in general.

Activity #3: Interjecting ball toss game

- Have students respond (interject) to other students as they toss a ball around the classroom. For example: That's nice! Sounds fun! Really? Wow! Etc.
- The student with the ball must say something (anything) and then throw the ball to another student and listen for that student's response. (Example: Student with the ball- "Yesterday I bought a new pair of shoes." ----ball is passed----S2- "That's nice.")
- The game can also include follow up questions after students respond. For example: "That's nice. Where did you buy them?"

Activity #4: Student debate (Agreeing and disagreeing)

- Divide the class into two groups (four if possible).
- Handout a list of possible debate questions/topics and let groups brainstorm pros and cons for each one. Don't tell students if they are for or against the debate topic until they have finished listing their ideas.
- Debate topics should be interesting for students, such as lowering the drinking age, lowering the driving age, letting students wear their own clothes instead of uniforms at school, cram schools, etc. (These topics were geared toward 1st year Japanese university students, but can be changed for younger/non-Japanese learners.)
- Let teams take turns giving their opinions while using the CS "I agree with you, but...." or "I disagree with you because....."

Activity #5: Asking for advice/Giving advice/Responding to advice

- Students stand and make a large circle around the classroom.
- One student holding a ball will explain a problem they have and then pass the ball to another student in the circle. The students' problem can be real or fake, but should not be too serious or too personal.
- The student who receives the passed ball must think about the other student's problem and then give advice. The student with problem then responds to the advice and then sits down at his/her desk.
- The new ball holder will repeat the process and the circle will continue to shrink.

Conclusion

CSs are an important part of an L2 learner's overall communicative competence and should be focused on in class. CSs help students to overcome communicative hurdles and are an important tool in increasing students' talking time. CSs teach students to use natural English as opposed to "textbook" English which can sometimes seem very unnatural or even generic. Willems (1987) writes that "if we think it important that our learners should be able to get by in real communication with speakers of the L2, we shall have to pay some serious attention to CSs in our L2 lessons" (p. 354). Paying "serious attention" to CSs in class requires more than just explicit teaching though and strategy based activities must be implemented if students are to really learn to use the CSs. After the CSs are taught in class students must have time to experiment and to use the newly learned strategies in order to better understand them. Regardless of the controversy surrounding the teachability of CSs, it is important to make students aware of them. "Whereas strong theoretical arguments reject the validity and usefulness of specific CSs training, practical considerations and experience appear to support the idea" (Dornyei, p. 60).

Biographical Statement

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Appendix

Comparison of the mean score of each communication strategy

Communication strategies	May 2009	July 2009	November 2009
1. How are you?	3.2	3.4	3.3
2. Nice talking to you!	2.9	4	3.9
3. How about you?	3.7	3.8	4
4. Pardon me? Could you say that again?	2.9	2.7	3
5. Let me see....	2.4	2.8	2.6
6. That's a difficult/good question.	2.6	2.9	2.6
7. Oh really? Oh yeah?	3.3	3.9	3.7
8. Shadowing (Repeating)	2.3	3.5	3.7
9. That's great! Wow!	3.3	3.7	3.6
10. That's too bad! Oh no!	2.8	3.3	3.4
11. For example? Like what/who?	3	3.3	3.7
12. Sounds nice/great/good!	3.1	3.9	3.4
13. Me, too. Me, neither.	3.7	3.8	3.5
14. Asking follow up questions	2.5	3	2.7
15. I agree with you. I'm afraid I disagree.	2.6	2.6	2.4
16. Summarizing	1.8	2.2	2.2
17. What does that mean?	2.8	2.9	2.8
18. Do you know what I mean?	2.1	2.4	2.6
19. What do you mean?	2.8	3.1	3
20. I mean....	2.4	2.6	2.6

The First English Class in University: What Teachers Do and Why

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Abstract

Busy teachers quickly develop routines and norms of classroom practice. These norms are built up with experience over time and it could be argued represent for them the most practical and effective ways of promoting an effective learning environment in their particular teaching context. This paper forms a summary of observations made by a teacher-researcher of seven native speaker university English teachers in their first class with groups of new 1st year students in Japan. Interviews were conducted following the observations to identify some of the issues for teachers concerning English learners entering tertiary education and to gain a deeper understanding of how they address them in the first class and over the semester. It begins by suggesting the value of research into teacher cognition. It continues by explaining some of the issues concerning incoming university students and connects those issues to the process that takes place in the first class both in terms of actions and discourse. It finishes by illustrating some of the choices that must be made, while giving examples of what teachers do in Japanese universities in the hope that other teachers, regardless of their context, may reflect on their own classroom practice and create more effective learning environments for their students.

Introduction

Researching the classroom

While theories about language learning, whether as a foreign language or as a second language, form the basis of teacher training courses and as a result become a part of teaching methodology, ideas about successful classroom practice are often shared between teaching colleagues, and more normally through casual conversation rather than formal research. What teachers learn from each other about effective teaching is often more useful than that postulated in academic theories because it is context-specific and underpinned by experience tested through practice. As many teachers are aware, what researchers believe should be done in the classroom is often different to what teachers feel they can do, something that is a source of antagonism for both parties. As identified by Allwright (1988, p. 209) the relationship between researchers and teachers has an “inglorious history”, while more recently Borg found that experienced teachers were skeptical of the benefits of published research for them (2009).

However, the argument for a body of research into teachers’ beliefs and decision-making was called for by Freeman and Richards (1996) who argued that “in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn” (p. 1). Since then, the study of what teachers believe (often described as teacher cognition) and its connection to what they do in the classroom has been growing, as shown by Borg’s comprehensive review of the field (2006) and later volumes of work such as that of Garton and Richards (2008) on practicing teachers in the field of TESOL. As a result, we are more aware of the myriad different English teaching contexts around the globe that successfully employ different methods of teaching; we know more about how teachers sustain their expertise in teaching (see Tsui, 2003); and we have learned more about how teachers make decisions, and adapt and employ methods so that they reflect their beliefs (see Smith, 1996).

In recent times, with the growth of action research, a belief that the practicing teacher is most ideally placed to do productive research has been increasing (Allwright, 2006). There is also a

hope that classroom-based research carried out by both researchers and teachers will give us more answers about language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This has led to more professional teachers researching their environments as teacher-researchers, whose goal is less the study of a universal theory of language acquisition but is rather the study of their learning environment, in order to improve it. The recognition that there are an enormous number of variables in the language classroom (Wright, 2006) and that language acquisition must be studied as a dynamic system of variables, that include the classroom and the teacher (Dörnyei, 2009) complicates the researcher's task, as identifying what works becomes different from being able to explain why this is the case. However, the benefits of research into classrooms and the beliefs of teachers in different contexts have been well-established.

To promote a greater understanding of teacher cognition and its connection to classroom practice is one of the aims of this paper. As Harmer (2007) suggests, teachers who reflect on their teaching situation will benefit from further development and growth. It is hoped that the description and analysis in this paper of the circumstances and decision-making of practicing university teachers with new groups of students will be useful for other teachers.

Why the First Class?

The first class with a new intake of university students is a potentially fertile site for research. University offers incoming students a different experience of learning that for most will be their final opportunity to study English in a formal setting. Because it is a significant turning point teachers must face up to two challenges: the first is introducing students to higher level learning and guiding them through its rigors, and the second is while doing this trying to foster autonomous learning habits that will sustain them after they graduate. So for teachers the first class is a combination of making individual students aware of the challenges to come in the semester ahead, while giving them advice on how to succeed not only during the 15 weeks of teaching but far beyond it; and also of trying to create a cooperative and cohesive learning environment in which students will be able to realize their full potential.

Over time, teachers build up layers of experience that then evolves into classroom practice (Tsui, 2003; Smith, 1996). Because classroom management has less to do with efficiency and more to do with promoting significant learning (Allwright, 2006) through observing how systems designed to manage learning are set up in the first class could help us reach a better understanding of the types of practice that create successful learning environments.

This Research

The aim of this research, as with many qualitative research studies, is not to generalize the findings. Underlining this study is a belief that there is not one correct way, but ways of creating successful learning environments could be transferred from one teaching situation to another. This paper summarizes the observations of a teacher-researcher of the first classes of seven native speaker university English teachers with incoming 1st year students in Japan. All were experienced teachers of English as a foreign language at university and none were new to the institution. Interviews were conducted following the observations to identify some of the issues for teachers concerning English learners entering tertiary education and to gain a deeper understanding of how they address them in the first class and over the semester.

Challenges for 1st Year University Students and What Teachers Do

There are several major issues connected to incoming first year university students that teachers seem to be aware of. These can be divided into the practical or organizational, and the emotional and psychological.

Practical and Organizational Issues

Acclimatizing to university change

For new students, university is an educational institution unrecognizable from high school. There is the lack of uniform, undefined rules and seemingly boundless freedom. In terms of classes, one of the most obvious changes is the length of a single class period. At high school it is 50 minutes but it becomes 90 minutes at university. Understandably some students find concentrating in an all English-language environment for an extended period of time very difficult.

An oft-repeated message observed in many first classes was of teachers telling students that they must take responsibility for their own learning through being organized, prepared and keeping to deadlines and be proactive in their dealing with the teacher. As one teacher said to his students, they have to chase him; he won't chase them. At the same time, students were reminded that they are no longer in high school. Many teachers identified the benefits of treating students like adults in their dealings with them and demanding high standards of independent thought and action from them.

Discovering independent learning at university

Some teachers feel that their students are unprepared for the academic rigours of university with its focus on independent study, and that they often don't know what they should do, particularly outside of the classroom. This is often attributed to the nature of high school with its teacher-centred classrooms and the focus on test-taking that is necessary for entering university. As a result teachers become aware of the need to give students clear directions on how to study and what is expected of them both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the first class all teachers were observed offering advice to their students about studying. In terms of more general advice, such as telling students to prepare early and be organized, teachers often linked it to their own experiences as a student. Specific examples of teachers advising students include the suggestions they form study groups outside of the class and explaining a method of studying using a listening CD that came with a textbook. Some also gave guidelines on how long students should study for.

Creating behavioural norms in the native speaker classroom

Students have a lot more freedom at university and are quick to realize that what happens in the university classroom or lecture theatre is different from high school. Though today incoming students are likely to have had contact with a native English speaker at some point in their primary or secondary education – either at a private English conversation school (*eikaiwa gakko*) or through the presence of an assistant language teacher at school – they are aware that a 90 minute class with a native speaker might differ from one with a Japanese teacher. This often results in uncertainty on the part of the students who not knowing how to act, often appear reluctant to do something in case that it is wrong.

Because of the possible uncertainty, some teachers offer explicit instruction on functional norms like whether or not to ask permission before going to the toilet and instructions on eating and drinking in class. Generally teachers will emphasise the need to refrain from private chatting in class and of not using mobile phones, even to check mails, although one teacher told his students that they should go outside and take a phone call during the class if it was important. A lot of teachers make explicit classroom rules that they print and give to

students with some teachers using PowerPoint slides or communication activities to teach students classroom norms.

In addition to setting out the classroom norms, a few teachers will also explain useful classroom phrases to students and give instructions on how they should address the teacher. This is done in order to make students more comfortable communicating with the teacher and also to encourage them to do so if they have a problem. All teachers observed in this study gave an email address to students so that they could be contacted at anytime, with one teacher also giving instructions on how to write an email, a skill students may not previously have done in English.

In all classes it seemed that the language in the classroom was non-negotiable. All the teachers who were observed were keen to stress that all activities in the class should be conducted in English, but at the same time explaining that it was for the students' benefit. Several teachers deliberately concealed their own Japanese language ability in order that the students would not try to communicate with them in Japanese. Some teachers have systems for maintaining an English only classroom that they explained in the first class, such as giving a red card to students who use Japanese and having those students make a speech at the end of the class, or by using a points system that is connected to the final grade.

Emotional and Psychological Issues

Creating motivation to learn English

Though students often cite university as being an opportunity for them to learn deeply about subjects that they choose, this is rarely the case with English classes that are normally required in the first and part, if not the whole, of the second year. Students who carry negative feelings towards English from their high school to university are often unmotivated to study.

Most EFL teachers can empathise with their students about the difficulties of learning and using a foreign language and try to create an enjoyable atmosphere that will encourage students to learn. One way they will try to motivate their students is through the use of humour. Though the term "entertainer" is often dismissed as a pejorative by native English teachers in Japan (as identified by T. S. C Farrell in a lecture at Korea TESOL in Seoul, October 2010), there remains no doubt that the use of humour in class can have a huge impact on creating rapport between a group of students and their instructor.

Many teachers break the ice in the first class with stock jokes that they know will get a laugh and typically these involve playing with the ideas of people's names (easy with Japanese names whose characters do in fact carry a meaning) or through their own cultural awareness; for example, asking a student if they are related to a famous person with the same name. Exhibiting a knowledge of youth culture, while dangerous for older people in different cultures and teaching circumstances, rarely seems to backfire in Japanese university classrooms.

Harmer (2007) writes that to develop a good learning environment the teacher-student relationship must be "positive and useful" (p. 113). To develop the teacher-student relationship, some teachers will allow students to ask them personal questions. Others add stories about their own experiences in university to try to create rapport with the students. Some teachers will also ask students how they prefer to be addressed, and address students by their nicknames if that is their preference.

Though some teachers exploit their otherness to motivate their students through them being the embodiment of another culture, more experienced teachers seem less inclined to reveal things about themselves. Perhaps there is a natural reluctance on the part of a long-term resident to be the centre of attention or possibly an awareness that building a strong relationship amongst participants should take priority in a first class. One experienced teacher also cited the negative perception among university students that what native teachers do in class is fun but what they do with their Japanese teachers is useful as being a reason to refrain from acting as a comedian. Though it was seen only occasionally in the classes that were observed, one or two teachers did try to connect the classroom to the outside world by telling students that the things they learned in class would benefit them in their future careers, so creating a sense of the class having value.

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) stress the importance of giving students positions of responsibility in the classroom and some teachers give roles to students such as “group leader” or “presenter” so that they feel they are a stakeholder with an investment in what happens in the classroom. These roles are sometimes introduced in the first class, though not put into practice. The first classes observed were notable for the central role of the teacher in proceedings, something that most teachers explained by the amount of information they have to give students in the first class. At the same time, one teacher observed that the first class is often unlike subsequent ones.

Struggle for identity and loss of a willingness to communicate (WTC)

It is easy to recognise that students in their first year at university experience threats to their identity. Not only do they have to find completely new sets of friends and gain membership to new groups, they also experiment with fashion, hairstyles, make-up and modes of behaviour.

In an English class students may worry about being judged by their way of speaking. For example, in communication activities they may perceive a danger of giving away too much about themselves in terms of likes and dislikes. Or they may feel awkward with new classmates, especially if they have not had an opportunity to mix with the opposite sex in the past. In the classroom a student’s feeling of their identity being in flux is likely to result in a period in which willingness to communicate (WTC) (Macintyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) is compromised if not seriously reduced.

Clearly for teachers, especially those teaching communication classes, a sensitive but practical approach is needed to balance student sensitivities at the same time as encouraging their progress in the language. Teachers, while being aware of individual differences in student behaviour, will often approach the potential difficulties primarily through building strong group cohesion that will lead to mutual support and encouragement. In the first class, teachers foster this by trying to create supportive learning environments where mistakes are acceptable and everybody’s contribution is respected. Some teachers, aware of the emphasis on accuracy in test-taking, explicitly stated that mistakes would not be penalized and play an important part in learning. Furthermore, teachers will employ pair and group work so that individuals are not put on the spot, thus reducing the risk of personal embarrassment. The first class is also an opportunity for the teacher to observe: he or she will look out for the stronger student, the shier students and the potentially disruptive students, all the time assessing how best to make a cooperative learning environment.

Arranging the classroom to enable greater socialization between students is a priority for many teachers. Most of the teachers observed exhibited a preference for the way in which

tables and chairs should be set up and introduced this in the first class. One even instructed the students to rearrange the class before he arrives each week. Even in the first class some teachers will move students around in the classroom, making use of pairs and small groups, starting a pattern that will continue over the semester.

In the first class teachers seem to make it clear that they control the space by both creating and policing it. However one teacher who began the class by moving all the students from the back row to the front then told the students that they would be free to choose where to sit in the coming weeks and that they should move around and try to learn in different parts of the classroom. Many teachers however choose where students sit every week, and tell students in the first class that they will have the opportunity to meet everyone over the course of the semester. Many teachers cited feedback from students, which says not only do the students enjoy the opportunities to meet other people but that they prefer the teacher to do the rearranging.

Finding a place in society

While teachers want their students to work hard in their class and fulfill their potential, students are often distracted by issues connected to them finding their place in a new societal structure.

While traditionally students have tended to live at home and commute to their chosen university or live in dormitories run by the university, increasing numbers of them are living alone in one-room apartments and consequently are having to deal with “learning to live” at the same time as adjusting to their new university. For many students this seems to be one of the greatest challenges as they are required to cook, clean and take care of themselves in all aspects, including getting themselves out of bed in good time for their first class.

For students who continue to live at home with their families a long commute to university might be an issue. They may also have a sense of being excluded from the society of those who have more freedom to choose what they do and when. Another developing issue is the increasing number of students who work long hours at their part-time jobs. If working in a bar or restaurant this might mean ending a shift in the early hours of the morning, and in conversations with students it is not unusual to discover that following their shift they began their homework for a nine o’clock class a few hours before the class.

Though teachers are aware of the potential issues, they can never know the full range of circumstances that might be affecting a student’s performance. Also, in the interest of fairness, it can be difficult to adapt rules and expectations to individuals. However, teachers are clearly aware of the challenges outside of the English classroom that students face and they will often display this awareness by explaining that homework must be completed and deadlines met in spite of part-time jobs. By setting out clear expectations in the first class, teachers hope to encourage their students to fulfill their potential. The teachers observed emphasised the need for students to communicate with them, and each other, especially if they had a problem. Again, the emphasis contained in the words of teachers was the need for students to be proactive and not wait for a problem to develop.

However, interestingly some teachers will offer explicit instructions about university life such as telling students to stay in bed if they are really too tired to stay awake in class. While this might seem to be going against the societal norm, the reasoning is logically underpinned because the teacher will mark the student as absent anyway if he or she sleeps in class. All

teachers interviewed said they would wake up students if they slept in class and many explicitly explained to students that sleeping would not be tolerated.

Key Decisions to Make in the First Class

How teachers make decisions

This research suggests that there are several key decisions that a teacher makes before he or she teaches the first class with a new group of students. Decision-making in the first class will depend on a combination of different factors. Amongst those that will influence what the teacher does are: (a) Previous experience with students from the institution, the course etc., (b) Length of teaching experience, and (c) Personal beliefs about teaching.

Though it is often believed that teachers want complete control over their classes, this is not always the case. A teacher who is new to an institution is likely to follow any syllabus provided by the university quite closely and will be grateful for any advice his or her experienced colleagues can offer. At the same time, no teacher gives up their beliefs in order to fit into a new place of work. Previous experience at other similar teaching situations is likely to impact how a teacher approaches a new group of students and it seems that once a teacher has found a favoured system of management they are likely to want to implement it wherever they work.

In the first class at university, the decisions teachers make can usefully be considered as a series of choices to be made.

Implementing or introducing systems in the first class

Harmer (2007) advises teachers of big classes in particular to be organised and establish routines from the very beginning of the course. In the first class some teachers only introduce verbally the types of things they expect from students at the same time as outlining their expectations. On the other hand, different teachers will have students doing things in the way they want them to, for example by moving tables into a fixed arrangement or “training” students in how they want group work done. This they consider to be more effective and easier for the students to understand.

In two content classes that were observed the teachers said very little about the week to week process that would unfold over the next fifteen weeks, but instead put an emphasis on group building and piquing students’ interest in the subject matter.

Open the textbook or create group cohesion

Some teachers stated their opposition to using the textbook in the first class, citing the danger of “losing the class”, a concept that can be summarised as putting off a group of students from engaging with the course for the whole of the rest of the semester. Some teachers made the point that students will often not have the textbook in the first class, making it impossible to use even if they want to. Most teachers after introducing themselves, outlining the course and giving rules and advice, will use the remaining time for introductory activities. Simple, fun and pressure-free activities can help the teacher discover the level of the class, learn the names and personalities of individuals and gives students the opportunities to get to know each other.

Refer to the syllabi or not

Teachers will normally enter a classroom with a new group of students assuming that they have not read the syllabus. The question then is whether or not to go through it and in how

much detail. While the teachers who were interviewed agreed that it was important to give students an idea of what they will be doing over the fifteen weeks, the official syllabus was normally considered too detailed and abstract to be useful for students. Most teachers had simplified syllabi and adapted the 15 week schedule, using it as a guide open to their interpretation, something which supported the earlier findings of Smith (1996). Most teachers also took the time to explain how students would be assessed, how they should submit work, and also told students of deadlines, at the same time as checking students understood terminology such as “submit”.

Student talking time or teacher talking time

Communicative methods of teaching promote the importance of student talking time. However, in the first class this can be difficult as the number of administrative tasks that teachers often set themselves or feel obliged to do means that they do most of the talking. In the majority of the classes observed it was felt that the amount of teacher talking time was substantial. However, it should be noted that in the interviews teachers did not consider the first class to be representative of what would happen over the semester.

Conclusion

As Borg (2006) reminds us, teachers are “active, thinking decision-makers who play a central role in shaping classroom events” (p. 1). By observing the teacher in action in the classroom we can understand more about how teacher cognition is the basis for decision-making and how it impacts on relationships with students. Moreover, by questioning teachers about their beliefs we can better understand how best language teaching practice is achieved in different educational contexts. This paper reported on observations of the first classes of seven university teachers in Japan. It suggests that teachers approach the first class in a highly calculated way that is sensitive both to the goals of the course and the needs of their students. Though what the teachers do is different, by using knowledge and experience built up over time they aim to create effective learning environments for their students over the fifteen week semester, and the seed that creates that successful environment will be sown in the first class.

Biographical Statement

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Service Learning and the Language Teacher

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Abstract

This article looks at service learning (SL) as yet another valuable tool in the language teacher's toolbox. The rationale for taking this approach centers on motivational issues, but support can also be drawn from other disciplines not normally associated with second language acquisition (SLA) theory, including customer experience management as well as change management. Two projects for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are briefly introduced together with a working definition of service learning.

Introduction

The list of methods, strategies and approaches to second language (L2) instruction continues to grow. The aim of such endeavors is (or should be) to help learners toward more effective, efficient acquisition of the target language, and a big part of our job as language teachers is to weave together approaches we feel would most benefit our learners. A healthy dose of skepticism is required though to keep our personal or collective set of beliefs from degrading into dogma. With this in mind, Service Learning (SL) is offered as yet another approach to help learners along the road to target-language proficiency. A better way to look at this might be to think of SL as a teaching framework, which can include language-learning outcomes as well as other objectives in the cognitive, interpersonal, physiological and affective learning domains.

Our starting point will be to look at various definitions of SL, after which we will explore the rationale for using SL in second-language (L2) learning contexts. Two examples will then be introduced to illustrate how SL is being used in a tertiary-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in Japan. Although the discussion here will center mainly on tertiary EFL learners, it is hoped that teachers in other context might also glean something useful from this paper.

Overview of Service Learning

Before outlining the rationale for including service learning in our language-teacher toolbox, we will visit some of the definitions offered in the field. A good starting point is the United States *National and Community Service Act* of 1990 (Sec. 101):

The term "service-learning" means a method (a) under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community; (b) that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity; (c) that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and (d) that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

Several key issues surface from this definition. First, the endeavor needs to be "*thoughtfully organized.*" Then, the questions that follow for us as teachers are: How will the activity benefit the learners and community? What "*actual community needs*" will be met? How will

the experience be “*integrated*” into the curriculum? How much and what kind of “*structured time*” should be devoted to reflection?

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2010) offers this concise definition:

Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

This is supplemented by the following:

Through service-learning, young people—from kindergarteners to college students—use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. They not only learn the practical applications of their studies, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Service-learning can be applied in a wide variety of settings, including schools, universities, and community-based and faith-based organizations. It can involve a group of students, a classroom or an entire school. Students build character and become active participants as they work with others in their school and community to create service projects in areas such as education, public safety, and the environment.

Here we see an emphasis on practical application, which will come up again in our discussion of motivation and relevance. This definition also delineates target age groups and kinds of projects that might be undertaken.

In her comprehensive guide to SL, Cathryn Berger Kaye (2010) offers the following (p. 9):

“Service learning can be defined in part by what it does for your students. When service learning is used in a structured way that connects classroom content, literature and skills to community needs, students will:

- Apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve the community.*
- Make decisions that have real, not hypothetical, results.*
- Grow as individuals, gain respect for peers, and increase civic participation.*
- Experience success no matter what their ability level.*
- Gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their community, and society.*
- Develop as leaders, who take initiative, solve problems, work as a team, and demonstrate their abilities through helping others.”*

Service learning can thus be defined as “*a teaching method where guided or classroom learning is deepened through service to others in a process that includes structured time for reflection on the experience as well as demonstration of the skills and knowledge acquired (Berger Kaye, 2010).*”

Together, the above definitions outline the who, what, when, where and why of service learning. They also highlight important outcomes of SL as well as stages of an SL endeavor, namely (a) preparation, (b) field work, and (c) follow up. These stages will be revisited when we get to our examples. Before that, however, we will look at the rationale for SL.

L2 Learning Motivation

Motivation has been identified as a major determinant in language learning success, but a clear understanding of motivation remains elusive. This opacity is alluded to in Dörnyei, (1998): “*Although ‘motivation’ is a term frequently used in both educational and research contexts, it is rather surprising how little agreement there is in the literature with regard to the exact meaning of the concept.*” Still, the expectation is that L2 learners that are motivated in their language learning endeavors and sustain a high level of motivation over an extended period will make better progress than their less-motivated peers. For our purposes, we can limit discussion to the four motivational factors identified by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and expanded on by Dörnyei (1994) as influencing second language learning: (a) interest in the topic and activity, (b) relevance to the students’ lives, (c) expectancy of success and feelings of being in control, and (d) satisfaction in the outcome. Interest here is closely aligned with the theme of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985); relevance covers the connection between instruction and personal goals, needs, and values; expectancy is related to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) and the learner’s perceived likelihood of success; and satisfaction comes in the form of both extrinsic (praise or grades) and intrinsic (pride or fulfillment) rewards.

These four motivational factors thus lay the foundation for our rationale. Through SL projects, these factors can be leveraged to increase and sustain motivation to study the target language.

Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation Theory

Although we cannot take it for granted, it is likely that the learning tasks and outcomes involved in an SL project will be intrinsically motivating for language learners. Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that learners interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake rather than for external rewards (extrinsic) are likely to become more effective learners. The teacher’s role will involve helping learners find the part of the project that is intrinsically motivating for them.

Relevancy

The real-life nature of the SL project helps ensure relevancy. At the same time, learners will gravitate toward parts of the project that align with their own personal goals and values. SL projects are also more likely to help fulfill learner needs at the upper levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1954), namely a sense of belonging, esteem and even self-actualization.

Self-efficacy

Individuals with high self-efficacy in a specific task are more likely to exert effort, and persist longer, than those with low efficacy (Schunk, 1990). A stronger sense of self-efficacy or expectations of mastery will lead to increased efforts (Bandura, 1977). On the other hand, low self-efficacy provides impetus to learn more about the subject (i.e. someone with a high self-efficacy may not exert as much effort toward a task). Our role thus includes designing in opportunities for learners to experience success but to balance this with challenges at the outer boundary of their existing skills. The importance of aligning the challenge with existing skills is also highlighted in Csíkszentmihályi (1996).

Satisfaction

Finally, students involved in SL projects are more likely to experience satisfaction than peers whose experiences are limited to the classroom and/or hypothetical problems. This satisfaction is related to the other motivational factors, and the rewards will be both intrinsic

and extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards will include increased self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment, while extrinsic rewards will come in the form of recognition.

This limited view of motivation as related to L2 learning provides the underlying rationale for our SL endeavors, but other support can be found in literature on business. We will look at two concepts that build on this rationale and add to our framework, namely *customer experience management* and *change management*.

Customer Experience Management

In their book *The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (1999) use the progression of value chart (Fig. 1) to describe how a company's offerings can be categorized as extracting commodities, making products, delivering services, or staging experiences.

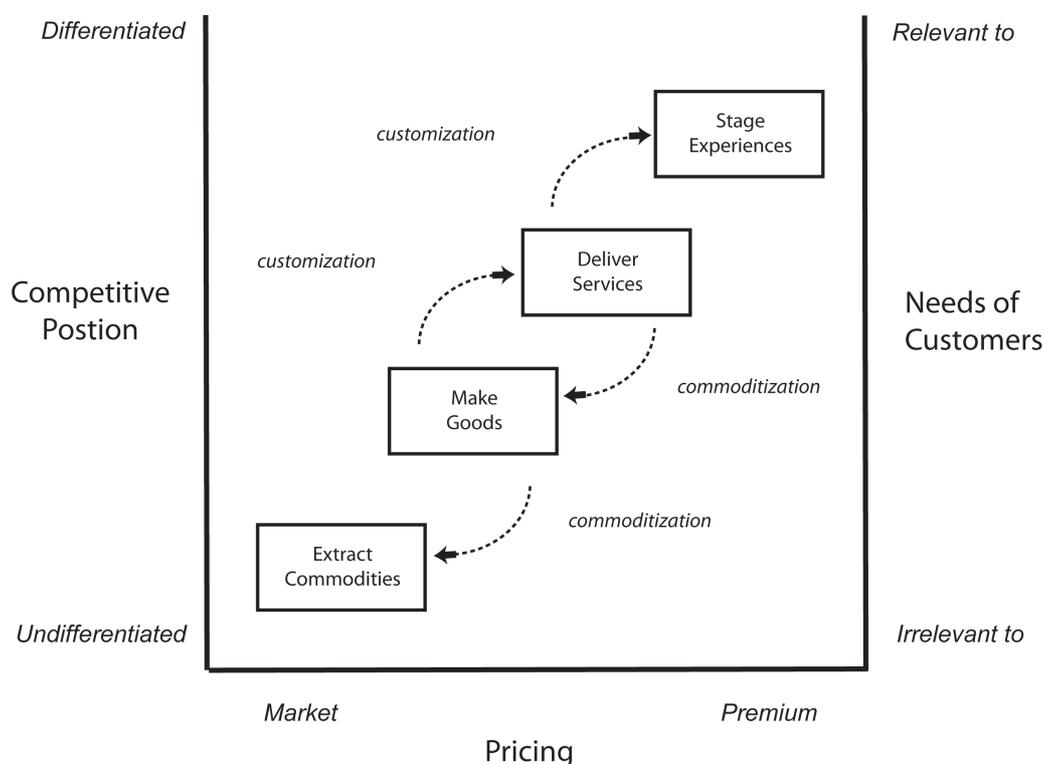


Figure 1. Progression of Value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

The authors emphasize that companies can move their offerings up (customization) the progression of value as well as down (commoditization). This relates to our discussion of service learning for the language teacher in that SL provides a platform for customization, i.e. the SL project is a way to ‘experientialize’ our educational offerings. Moving up the progression of value also involves making our offering more relevant to the needs of the customer (i.e. learner), which is related to our discussion of motivation above. Finally, by moving away from educational products and services towards experiences provides a platform for differentiating competitive position at the level of the individual teacher, program, department or even institution.

The other concept from Pine & Gilmore (1999) that is relevant to our discussion of SL is the realms of experience. The basic idea here is that experiences can be viewed along two dimensions: active to passive participation, and absorption to immersion (fig. 2). Experiences

that mainly involve entertainment would be passive in nature and would be absorbed by the participant. Participants would also absorb experiences that are mainly educational, but would be more actively involved. Activities in which the participant is actively involved and immersed in the experience would be categorized as escapist experiences (e.g. survival games, casinos). Experiences categorized as esthetic involve the senses (e.g. museums, aroma therapy), and the participant would be immersed in the experience but toward the passive end in terms of participation. The authors highlight that *“the richest experiences encompass aspects of all four realms”* and that *“staging experiences is not about entertaining customers; it’s about engaging them (p. 30).”* Bringing the discussion back to service learning, we have support for using rich community-service experiences with our learners. Language teachers can use these business-oriented ideas to design and develop SL projects that are engaging and motivate learners in their target-language pursuits.

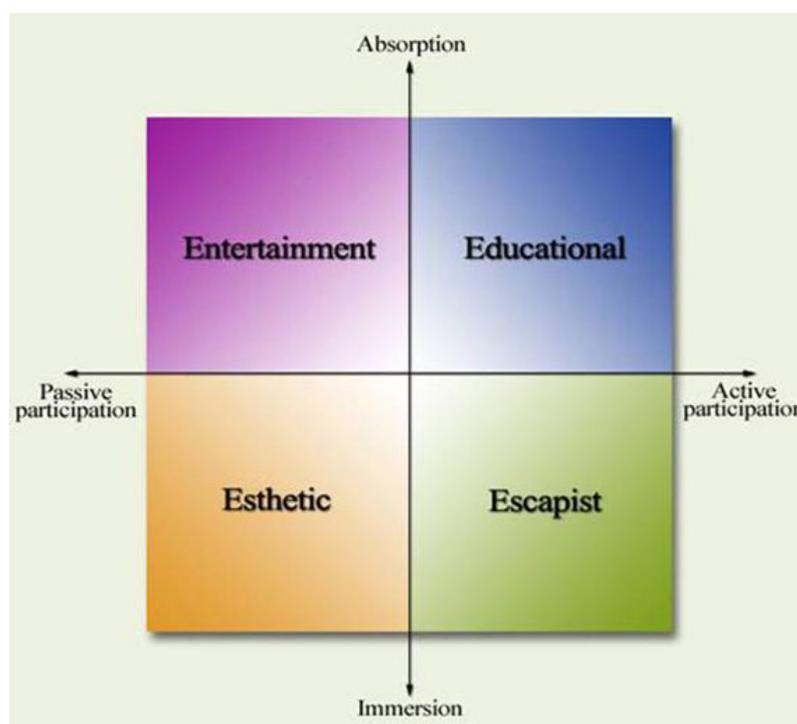


Figure 2. Realms of Experience.

Change Management

Another important part of our job as language instructors is to help our learners develop in the various domains of learning (cognitive, interpersonal, physiological, affective) as associated with learning a new language. Success in these endeavors often requires guiding learners toward new or altered behaviors, which are in turn dependant on attitudes and beliefs. The field of change management offers another piece to framework for designing and developing service-learning projects.

Change management has become an established part of business programs and the business administration curriculum, but has also found a home in other fields such as educational psychology and self-improvement. Although change management has many intricacies, we can limit our discussion here to ideas presented by the brothers Chip and Dan Heath, namely a framework for facilitating change outlined in their book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (2010). Their framework (see Appendix 1) is an extension of the analogy of an elephant (our emotions) and it’s rider (our rational mind), introduced by Jonathan Haidt

(2005). Specifically, they feel that change is facilitated by (a) directing the rider, (b) motivating the elephant, and (c) shaping the path.

Including these perspectives in our SL framework helps us address learning in all four learning domains, but for the sake of brevity I will limit my discussion to the affective domain. Service learning provides a platform for engaging learners in activities and behaviors that have a positive influence on their attitudes and beliefs regarding target-language learning pursuits. SL offers us a way to:

- script the critical moves (e.g. relevant practice in all four language skills),
- point to the destination (involves both expectancy and satisfaction),
- find the feeling (a natural part of helping others),
- shrink the change (by limiting the scope of the project),
- build habits (through repetition),
- and rally the herd (working with peers).

This is of course a simplistic view of both change management and how it fits with our SL framework, but the intention is to show that change management ideas are easily implemented within the SL framework and that doing so has affective benefits for our learners.

Sample Service Learning Projects

In this section we will outline two SL projects that have been used in a content-focused EFL program in Japan. The learners are first and second-year students enrolled in a management course at a private university in western Japan. The first project involves students in preparing educational programs for underprivileged children in the Philippines, and the second is an oral histories project.

Philippines Study Tour (PST)

This project was developed for first-year management students who had just finished a semester-long course titled Global Challenges. Two of the issues covered in that course are poverty and child labor. The main goal of the project was to provide learners with the opportunity to experience up close some of the issues presented in their course work. At the same time, a list of specific learning outcomes was developed, including target-language (English) performance objectives (Appendix 2).

The preparation phase of the project involved students in gathering information on the Mangyan (a local indigenous tribe) and non-governmental agencies working with street children. They also compiled a pre-departure booklet with background information, schedules, emergency contact numbers, useful phrases, maps, etc. Finally, they prepared short lessons and activities in the areas of math, science, literature and physical education. These were prepared for the Mangyan children in the remote village of Banilad we would be visiting on the island of Mindoro, as well as street children staying in two shelters in Manila.

The fieldwork part of the project was divided between Banilad/Mindoro (4 days) and Manila (3 days). In addition to conducting lessons and spending time with the children, our students interviewed students and teachers, as well as administrators working for three NGOs, Bukid Foundation (Mangyan), Virlanie (street children) and House of Refuge (street children). Throughout the fieldwork phase, students were required to record their activities and thoughts in an English journal and meet with the instructor to discuss their progress, problems, etc.

The follow up phase included a debriefing session, writing up findings, compiling a comprehensive report and delivering two presentations: one for other students and teachers in their department, and another for a general audience.

In the proposal for this project, the number of contact hours was listed as eighty. In actuality, the students spent somewhere near one hundred and thirty hours on project-related work. Signing up for the project was voluntary and the students earned two credits toward their undergraduate degree.

Oral History Project

This SL endeavor took the form of a semester-long elective project for second-year students majoring in management. The students chose community service in the form of helping one of two groups (a local neighborhood association and an international school) compile audio recordings, documents and other artifacts related to their past. In the case of the neighborhood association, the focus was on events immediately following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995. At the international school, the focus was on past teachers, who were members of the Marist Brothers religious order. Again, this project included specific learning outcomes, some of which were target-language performance objectives similar to those in the PST project (Appendix 2).

The preparation stage was spent (1) doing background reading on the theory and practice of oral histories, (2) writing group overviews/summaries of the readings, (3) gathering information on either the school or association, (4) identifying and contacting key individuals to interview, (5) preparing research and interview questions, (6) preparing a plan for archiving the recordings, and (7) learning how to operate the recording equipment.

During the fieldwork stage, groups of two or three students recorded three separate meetings with one of the interviewees, took notes, transcribed the interviews, clarified portions (or utterances) of the interviews that they did not understand, and analyzed the data. Interviews of the neighborhood association were conducted in Japanese while those of the international school were conducted mainly in English.

Finally, the two groups of students followed up by compiling reports from the different interviews, including their interpretations and opinions. These reports were presented together with digital copies of the recordings to the respective institutions for their archives. The students also prepared an archive of the reports and recordings for the school library.

Conclusion

Service Learning is probably not a viable option in many L2 teaching contexts, but for teachers with the freedom, means and courage to experiment with this type of project, SL offers a powerful framework for engaging learners in the target language as well as other studies.

“Community members, students, and educators everywhere are discovering that service-learning offers all its participants a chance to take part in the active education of youth while simultaneously addressing the concerns, needs, and hopes of communities (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2010).”

Expanding our view of our profession to include concepts from business such as customer experience management and change management can make these educational endeavors even

more engaging and meaningful, thus helping our learners toward more effective, efficient acquisition of the target language.

The author hopes that other language teachers will add service learning to their teaching repertoire, but also has some words of warning. To help ensure the success of such endeavors, the teacher needs to (1) consider what appropriate community needs might be, (2) identify and involve individuals and groups to support and promote the SL endeavors, (3) clarify for themselves and their learners what the actual target learning outcomes are, and (4) find effective ways to work toward those learning outcomes in the course of the project. With careful planning and a little bit of luck, it might just be possible to help our learners and make the world a better place at the same time.

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Appendix 1 - How to Make a Switch (Heath & Heath, 2010)

For things to change, somebody somewhere has to start acting differently. Maybe it's you, maybe it's your team. Picture that person (or people). Each has an emotional Elephant side and a rational Rider side. You've got to reach both. And you've also got to clear the way for them to succeed. In short, you must do three things:

--DIRECT THE RIDER

Follow the Bright Spots. Investigate what's working and clone it.

Script the Critical Moves. Don't think big picture, think in terms of specific behaviors.

Point to the Destination. Change is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it.

-----MOTIVATE THE ELEPHANT

Find the Feeling. Knowing something isn't enough to cause change. Make people feel something.

Shrink the Change. Break down the change until it no longer spooks the Elephant.

Grow Your People. Cultivate a sense of identity and instill the growth mindset.

-----SHAPE THE PATH

Tweak the Environment. When the situation changes, the behavior changes. So change the situation.

Build Habits. When behavior is habitual, it's "free"—it doesn't tax the Rider. Look for ways to encourage habits.

Rally the Herd. Behavior is contagious. Help it spread.

Appendix 2 – Learning Outcomes (Philippines Study Tour)

Upon completion of the project, students will demonstrate the ability to:

- identify useful and relevant text-based and web-based resources for the project,
- conduct project planning meetings mainly in the target language,
- prepare and implement lessons for children in the target language,
- conduct individual and group interviews in the target language,
- keep a daily journal of project-related activities in the target language,
- participate in target-language discussions at debriefing meetings during the fieldwork as well as follow-up sessions,
- prepare a target-language summary of their final report (written in Japanese),
- prepare and deliver a target-language presentation of their research findings and impressions.

Forum: Perspectives & Reviews

Process Writing as Applied to International Letter Exchanges

Elizabeth Lange

The Deployment of Tasks and Stylistic Approach in Teaching Poetry to Japanese Adult Learners

Alex Shaitan

Information Transfer Use in English Teaching

Tran Thi Diem Thi & Nguyen Thi Loan

Process Writing as Applied to International Letter Exchanges through Teachers Helping Teachers (THT)

Elizabeth J. Lange
Tokai University

Abstract

Through its activities Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) allows teachers to exchange ideas on teaching English as a foreign/second language. In this paper the author explains how THT can also promote cultural exchange between students and reports on a successful program of International Letter Exchange. She also introduces the steps of a process writing approach to letters that was instrumental in the success of the endeavour.

Introduction

Upon being invited by Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) to visit a school in Laos to conduct ESL research there, a big question on my mind was what I could provide. Of course, ESL books as well as pens, pencils, notebooks, and the like were an obvious choice but, beyond that, I decided to get my students involved by having them write letters to “Dear friends” for all to read.

The inspiration for this activity came whilst doing research at a school in Australia. An Australian student at the Maisie Kaufmann Learning Centre whom I was interviewing had written to me about his experiences whilst traveling in the United States. When I asked him to write a message to my students in Japan he agreed without hesitation, and wrote a long letter entitled “To my dear Japanese friends”. It was with great joy that I could share his letter – a correspondence full of wonderful description, detail, humor, warmth and new ideas – with my students in Japan.

I hoped this would inspire my students in Japan to introduce and write about themselves in a similar manner. This great gift of sharing through letter writing launched the idea of getting my students involved in my trip to Laos. I explained to my students about my trip, including all I knew about where I was going. I also told them how delighted I thought students would be in Laos to get letters from them delivered directly by me.

Following are the specific steps 1 to 9 (intended as guidelines only to support writing activities) outlining the process and approach⁽¹⁾ I used to teach writing for this international letter-exchange. Also included are student feedback as well as research and analysis of the potential benefits. It is hoped that these letter writing/exchange activities in the THT context will inspire other teachers to do the same thing towards strengthening the desire of students in both countries to learn English, improve their writing skills, and foster their international/intercultural understanding and goodwill.

The Steps Towards an International Letter Exchange

Step 1: Models and schema building of self-introductions

First the teacher needs to build a schema of the language, vocabulary, and style needed for introducing oneself by providing an ideal model. For instance, by showing the class the passage titled “Introducing Oneself” from *Talking about Japan* (pp. 2-3), students can learn how to introduce themselves, while explaining aspects of their cultural identity and life such as the English meaning of the Chinese characters in their name, how their family name comes first, and how their year of birth is referred to according to the Japanese emperor system. They can also include their interests, the subject they are studying at university, how they get

to school and their hopes/aspirations for the future, etc. This is a very good model self-introduction which has depth and introduces aspects of culture and fascination of special interest to people of another culture. Have the students read, practice and digest an exemplary introduction as above and then have them prepare and deliver a verbal self-introduction of their own during the next class as a prewriting activity.

Step 2: Establish the Audience and Purpose

Talk to your students in Japan about your THT trip, the foreign country you are visiting, and how happy the students there would be to receive and share letters describing Japan, hometowns, Japanese culture and traditions, and hobbies, etc. This will encourage them to have a sense of purpose in their writing activities for communication with people in that country.

Step 3: Emphasize Prewriting/Planning

Before attempting to make an outline, have the students brainstorm by writing down whatever pops into their heads by using, for example, the clustering technique as illustrated below (Fig. 1). Generating ideas freely like this is a very important step in the writing process to come up with a fine final product. I always emphasize to my students how important the ideas are and therefore what an important and necessary skill it is for good writing to develop strategies for generating ideas. The rest is a matter of organizing and polishing them. Some other popular prewriting activities include listing (making a list of details connected to a topic), free-writing (writing whatever comes into your head, not worrying about grammar, punctuation, or spelling), and questioning (using the 5 wh-questions to generate ideas) (see Hyland, 2003, p. 130).

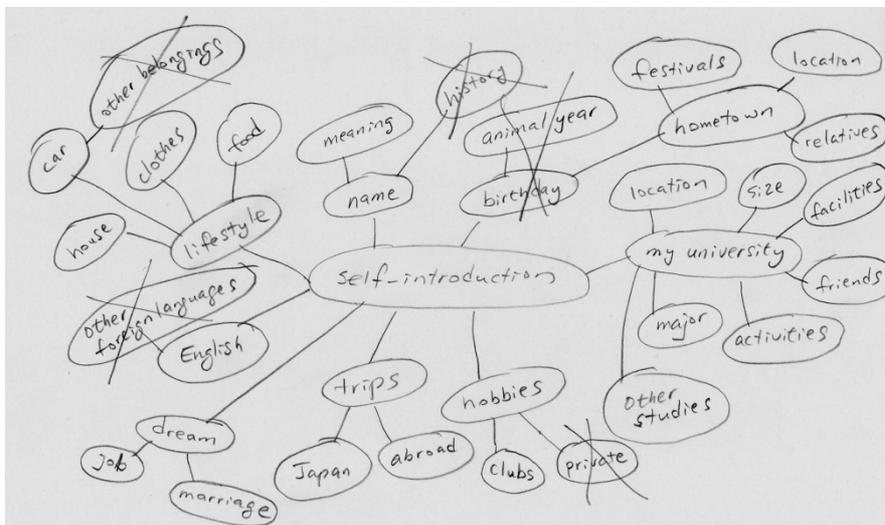


Fig. 1 Clustering Brainstorming Diagram

Listed below are some popular topics from the brainstorming activities by the respective Japanese and Laotian students who exchanged letters with each other for this intercultural letter exchange purpose.

Topics thought of by the Japanese students:

Name and its meaning; birthday; my university, major, and other activities; family; friends; hobbies; trips and places; hometown and festivals there; lifestyle; English and me; desire to make pen-friends with Laotians; desire to visit Laos someday and make friends; Japanese people; traditional things such as *kimono*, *yukata* and *geta* (traditional sandals); tourist

attractions including Mt. Fuji and Kyoto; traditional Japanese food such as sushi; traditional sports like sumo; cherry blossoms and autumn colors; popular animation and anime characters; *manga* (Japanese comics); fun places in Tokyo like Shibuya and Harajuku; Japanese alphabets and Kanji; Nagano Winter Olympics

Topics thought of by the Laotian students:

Self-introduction (name, age, birthplace, present residence, family); language study (English, Japanese, etc.); school life; sports; famous sites to see in Laos; desire to make pen-friends with Japanese; dreams about coming to Japan to study and visit some well-known places

As shown above, both Japanese and Laotians considered writing about themselves, their family and their immediate environment. They also wanted to share ideas about their own culture as well as information on other things in their country that they thought would be interesting or beneficial to foreigners to know. Other topics included those related to internationalization and the desire for international friendship.

Also, as a matter of interest, listed below are the topics about which my Japanese students raised questions in their letters to the Laotian people. These topics show my students' extremely strong motivation for intercultural communication. They could also serve as a brainstorming list for Laotian students in composing reply letters.

Topics for questions by Japanese students to their Laos counterparts:

School (size, etc.) and school life; school friends; subjects studied at school; how English is studied and liked; popular foreign languages at school; Laotian language; dreams; family (size, etc.) and living space; culture, customs and traditions including dance; weather (seasons); traditional food; sightseeing spots including mountains; lifestyle in Laos; popular sports including soccer; new year customs; famous or popular things in Laos; traditional Laotian tales; hobbies; knowledge of Japan and its people; cultural differences between Japan and Laos; things to do in Japan if they visit Japan; popular animation

Brainstorming topics to write about as a whole class is also a useful activity. Then, different topics could be chosen by different groups of students to write about aiming for a wide variety of topics in the final booklet(s) of letters compiled to be shared with others. Based on my experience, I found that, with the second round of letters, students tended to write about the same topics. Therefore, the teacher may need to guide groups of students to write about different topics in this way.

Step 4: Scaffolding with a template and a model letter

As another step to support their writing, draw a template of a letter on the board and explain the different parts of good letter-writing in English (see Appendix A for example letter template, and Appendix B for sample model letter).

Step 5: Drafting and editing/revising

Have the students draft their letters beginning with 'Dear friends' and encourage them to draw pictures to aid comprehension. The teacher's role is to walk around and encourage the students, pointing out where corrections might be needed. Have the students finish their letters for homework and collect them to check and help with the editing stage. During the next class, meet the students one by one to discuss their letters and discuss how they are good and how they can be improved. Students can also help each other through peer checking.

Step 6: Polishing the finished product

Have the students write their letters again incorporating necessary improvements and redraw or even improve any pictures they have drawn. You may even want to consider giving them special paper to write their final letters on which includes the address of your school, care of yourself, to facilitate return correspondence. You could also include in the letterhead different Japanese or international scenes, paintings and/or patterns to add to the aesthetic decoration of the letter itself.

Step 7: Displaying

Display the letters so that members of the class can enjoy each other's letters.

Step 8: Compiling

Compile the letters in the form of a booklet, and if possible, include a class photo so that the readers can put a face to the writers and understand a little bit more about them.

Step 9: Sharing

Some activities for sharing the letters during and after the THT visit are recommended as follows:

- (1) During the THT visit, deliver the booklet(s) of letters personally (and ask if it/they can be kept in a library for all to read).⁽²⁾
- (2) Have copies of the letters to give to the local teachers and education officials.
- (3) Get some replies, if possible, to take back with you to your students in Japan upon your return.
- (4) Make a booklet of these reply letters decorated with some photos of your trip.
- (5) Make copies and give them to your students while sharing stories of your trip and feedback about how their letters were received.
- (6) Get your students to reply to the letters using the process approach to writing, which they should be more skillful at by this time.

In my case, students were delighted to get letters back from Laos, to which my students were happy to reply with no hesitation. I felt that their desire to communicate in English took wings as a result. However, I reminded them of the importance of the process of good writing including making revisions by explaining it would be impolite to return letters with mistakes. (See Appendix C for example letters from Japanese students; and Appendix D for example letters from Laotian students.) Moreover, as a result of this common sharing under the umbrella of writing letters to the people of Laos, I noticed the students in my class bonded much more closely than before.

Students' Feedback and Analysis

Following are some representative comments from my students here in Japan after they had read some reply letters from Laos, thanking them for their letters:

- It is important for me to exchange letters. Letters connect people in the world.
- I enjoy exchanging letters with foreign people. I can understand another culture, tradition and so on.
- Thank you for your letters. I want to go to Laos after reading your letters. Please tell me more about Laos, such as famous places, popular sports, popular songs, and Laotian culture.
- I'm glad to be able to send and receive letters in English to/from Laotian students and teachers. It's my first experience. Before sending one, I felt fear because I felt the English I wrote was very childish and I couldn't communicate with Laotian people well. But upon

receiving letters back saying “Thank you for your letters. I hope I’m willing to meet you someday”, I felt happy. We have never seen the writers but, through the letters, we can talk and communicate! And I can also imagine the writers’ lifestyle. I want to go to Laos and meet my friends someday.

- Thanks to English class, I came to know more about Laos. Thank you, Elizabeth.

- I think exchanging letters is so beneficial for each other. We come to understand different cultures and personalities. So I hope to do cultural exchange through English at my university. Exchanging letters with foreigners enriches my life.

The above comments show a high degree of warmth felt and enthusiasm expressed by my Japanese students about real letter exchanges in English with people living in a foreign country. This warmth and enthusiasm is also summed up quantitatively in the responses by the students who participated in the letter writing exchange to a questionnaire about how much they became interested in Japan’s role in Asia, developing countries like Laos, internationalization, helping other countries, international goodwill, and English (see table below). Specifically, the percentage of respondents who said that they became much or very much interested was slightly more than half (51%) for “Japan’s role in Asia”, 76% for “Developing countries like Laos”, 72% for “Internationalization”, 69% for “Helping other countries”, 75% for “International goodwill”, and an overwhelming majority (87%) for “English”, which is strong evidence for the benefits of this kind of letter exchange.

Table: Areas and extent of interest expressed by Japanese student respondents after exchanging letters with the people in Laos (%)

Areas	Not at all	Not very much	Don’t know	Much	Very much
Japan’s role in Asia	3	15	31	43	8
Developing countries like Laos	1	4	19	65	11
Internationalization	0	7	21	57	15
Helping other countries	0	7	24	55	14
International goodwill	0	1	24	47	28
English	0	3	10	52	35

* n = 72

A Final Comment

THT provides a wonderful avenue for aiding international communication with students far away. ESOL letter-writing is one way this communication can flourish. I was very impressed at what my students were able to share of themselves and their culture. I was also captivated by their reactions to the letters they received back from Laos and by their desire to continue the communication. English grammar and correctness seemed incidental in their enthusiasm to share a part of their world with people from afar, with the hope of perhaps getting letters back to be able to glean something about a new and different culture and people not known to them. However, by guiding them with the process of writing with specific steps as explained above, the students were much better facilitated. These letters were clearly helping to break the barriers of a world unfamiliar to my students, thus enabling them to perceive English as an enjoyable and useful tool for international communication.

Biographical Data

Elizabeth J. Lange has taught English to speakers of other languages in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. She is a contributing author of Longman's *Impact Words + Phrases*. She has also made a number of contributions to various books in the New Ways series for TESOL, USA. Recently she co-authored an article titled *Flash Writing to Develop Students' Overall Writing Skills* in TESOL's Essential Teacher. She went to Laos with THT in November, 2010.

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Footnotes

(1) For your reference, see Appendix I of the writing textbook *Great Essays*, which explains the seven steps of the writing process. Also, Figure 1.4 (p. 11) in *Second Language Writing* is useful for understanding how the writing process works in teaching writing. It shows the importance of freedom to focus on any of the planning, drafting, revising, and editing activities at any time.

(2) The students at Norn Sa'at Secondary School in Vientiane, Laos were delighted to know that booklets of letters from Japanese students were in their school library for them to read.

Appendix A - Example letter template

 *Dr. Elizabeth Lange*
TOKAI UNIVERSITY
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER
1117 Kitakaname, Hiratsuka-shi, Kanagawa 259-1292 Japan
Phone: 0463-58-1211 / Ext. 4550 / Fax: 0463-59-5365 URL: www.flc.u-tokai.ac.jp

Date

Dear Friends,

Opening

main body

Ending

Best wishes,
Signature

P.S.



Peonies and Canary, Woodblock.
by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

Appendix B - Model letter from a Japanese student



26 November 2010

Dear Friends,

Hello! How's everything going?

My name is Eri Nishizaki. I work for the biggest train company in Japan called JR, which means Japan Railway. I also study English and law in Tokai University.

I enjoyed reading your letters. Someday I want to go to Laos, and I hope you can come to Japan!

Best wishes,

Eri Nishizaki

P.S. Happy 450 anniversary!

Appendix C - Some additional letters from Japanese students

October 11, 2010

Dear friends,

Hello, my name is Nozomi. In Chinese characters, "望見" "望" means "hope", and my name means "finding the hope". Its a concept is from Greek mythology. I'm eighteen years old. I live in Kanagawa, beside Shonan-beach. In this area, the Tanabata Festival is held on July 7, every year.

"Tanabata" is a Japanese traditional event, which is based on Japanese ancient mythology. In the mythology, there are Orihime (the princess of the star) and Hikoboshi (the prince of the star) in the night sky, and they are separated by the Milky Way. But only a day, a bridge is built over the Milky Way. Then, Orihime and Hikoboshi can meet. In this term, people wish on stars, and write down their own wishes on colorful papers, and display bamboo leaves which are decorated with many of these colorful papers. They are so beautiful.

This summer, I wore the Yukata (Japanese traditional dress), and I went to the festival with my friends (they

also wore their own Yukata). I suggest you should visit Japan and see some traditional festivals.

If we have an opportunity, I want to meet you.

Every good wish,

Nozomi



Dear friends,

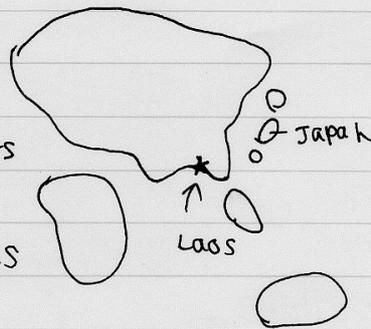
October 11, 2010

Hi! My name is Ayaka Kaise. I am a Japanese university student.

My country, Japan is an island country.

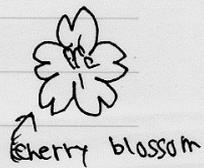
Japan has the four seasons.

In Spring, very beautiful flowers bloom. Specially, Japan is famous



for cherry blossoms. In spring, Japanese people eat food, and drink with friends and family under the cherry blossom trees. It's called "Hanami"

In Summer, various festivals are held at many places in Japan. When we go to festivals, women wear special clothes called "Yukata".



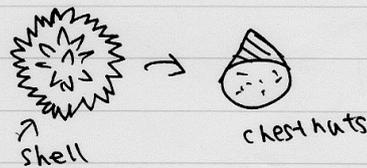
They have very beautiful patterns and colors.



In Autumn, the mountains trees leaves turned red. It's all very beautiful. And in Autumn, various fruits are harvested including grapes, pears, and apples. In the mountains, chestnuts are harvested. Chestnuts have a very sharp shell. But, the nuts in the shell are very delicious.

And, rice is also harvested.

My home town Niigata is especially

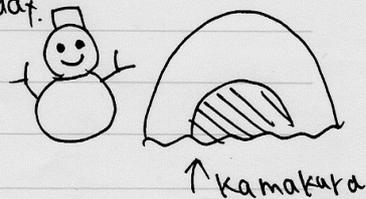


famous for delicious rice in Japan. Of course, I like rice!

In winter, Japan has snow. People enjoy winter sports including skiing and snowboarding. And children make snowmen and snowhouses called "kamakura"

I hope you can come to Japan someday.

Every good wish to you!



Best wishes,

Ayaka Kaise

My dear friends,

October 11, 2010

My name is Sayuri Sato. Sato is my family name and it's the most common family name in Japan. If you come to Japan, you will meet a lot of people with this family name certainly. Sayuri is my first name. Do you know the movie "SAYURI"? My foreign friend remembered my name from this movie.

I'm 19 years old and I'm a student in the first year at university. My hobby is looking at pictures of world heritage sites.

If you travel to Japan, you should go to Kyoto, because in Kyoto, a total of 17 sites such as Ryoanji have been placed on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites as "cultural properties of the old capital, Kyoto."

This picture is Kiyomizu-dera which I recommend you to visit. This picture is taken in winter but cherry blossoms can be seen in spring and leaves turn red in autumn. You can see a fine view.



Furthermore, Kyoto is a very exciting place. Do you like Japanese manga? If so, you should go to the Kyoto International Manga Museum.

This museum is very popular among some foreign tourists because you can read about 50 thousand manga for free inside the museum.



As you can see, you can experience culture in Kyoto!

Best wishes,
Sayuri

Dear Friends,

12 October, 2010

Hello, my name is Saya. I'm 18 years old. I'm from Japan.

Do you know Japan? I introduce "manga".

"manga" is one of Japanese culture. "manga" is comic in English.



This is "chibi maruko chan"s a main character.

"chibi maruko chan" is a comic title.

She's name is Momoko Sakura.
Everyone call her Maruchan.



Maruchan's best friend

classmate

Tamachan



Maruchan's mother

Sumire



Maruchan's father

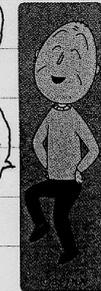
Hiroshi



Maruchan's sister

Sakiko

Tomozō



Maruchan's grand father

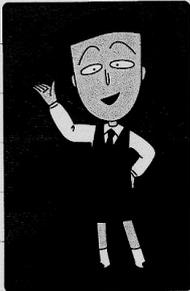
Maruchan's family

Maruchan's classmate.



Maruchan's grand mother

Kotake



Hanawa kun

Migiwa san



Maruo kun



Fujiki kun

Nagasawa kun



Noguchi san

There is it still more! 😊

This story is a comedy. This is very interesting.

There are a lot of comics else where. Please read by all means.

Best wishes,

Saya

October 17, 2010

Dear Friend,

Hello!! It hot today. My name is Ryota Sasaki. I'm 19 years old.

My name is witten 左々木 良太 in Japanese.

Sasaki means bamboo grass tree, Ryota means good thick in Japanese.

Have you ever been to Japan? Japan is a beautiful country.

Please come to Japan.

Japan may have Samurai or Ninja.



I hope that you come to Japan. Every good wish.
Ryota Sasaki



Dr. Elizabeth Lange

TOKAI UNIVERSITY
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

1117 Kitakaname, Hiratsuka-shi, Kanagawa 259-1292 Japan
Phone : 0463-58-1211 Ext. 4550 Fax : 0463-58-5365 URL : www.flc.tokai.ac.jp

Thu. 25 Nov. 2010

Dear Friends,

Hello, my friends! Thank you for your letters. I was very happy to receive

your letters. I now want to go to Laos. by Katsushika Hokusai



Peonies and Canary. Woodblock.

Do you know about Japanese culture? You introduced about your culture, tradition and so on. So I'm going to introduce about Japanese culture. First, the most famous historical cities, are, I think, Kyoto and Nara. Kyoto is famous for Yuzen-Zome. It is very beautiful. It is a work of art and is often used to decorate and color towels. Nara is famous for its Todai Temple. There is a great big statue of Buddha there. When you see it, you may be surprised. Please come to Japan!

Best wishes,

Keigo Imasato.



Yuzen



Buddha

Appendix D - Some letters from Laotian students

(5 日 1 2) 2 5 2 1 9 6 7 . N → ☺

Dear friends! Thank you for your letters.
 It was good hearing from you.
 My name is Monk Kham Feluang Pothipanyho
 I'm 21 years old. I was born in Luang-
 Prabang Province. But now I lives and
 studies in vientiane capital city. But
 my family they are lives in Luang Prabang
 province. Have you ever been to Luang
 Prabang? Now, I lives at Na temple,
 in xaythany district.
 I'm a student in Home college, now.
 I'm studying English at home college-
 school. I'm very glad and prouds,
 because I'm hearing my teacher he tell me
 about a friend from Japan. He says what
 you want to have and know about a friend
 in Laos. I think it will be very nice if I
 could have a good foreign friend, because
 it is first time in my life if I have foreign
 friends, because at the before I'm never
 have a good friend from foreigners.

I'm speak English quite well and Japan
 little. I like study English very much, but
 I'm not very well. I thinks in the future
 it will be very well in for me, and I want
 to study Japan languages but I don't have
 an opportunity because that school it is
 very far from my temple. Anyhow, I think
 about my letter it is quite mistake, so I
 want to give some friend suggest for me.
 I want to speak English with you if I
 have an opportunity meet you, Because
 I will get being practices in English with
 you.
 At the last! I wishing for every body
 have successful on your occupadions.
 and happy all the times.
 Best wishes...
 Well! Well! Well! Welcome to.
 Smile!
 Monk.

Dear my friend, ★

Hello, my name is Panh. I live in
Ban Thasavang Village. I like to have
a lot of friends to exchange life experience.

If you want to visit me, please come I
welcome you all the time. And if you

can speak English, I can practice
my English with you. I am looking
forward to your reply. Write to me
soon. ♥

♥ 10



The Deployment of Tasks and Stylistic Approach in Teaching Poetry to Japanese Adult Learners

Alexandra Shaitan
Chuo University

Abstract

There is currently enormous interest in task-based teaching and learning. Proponents of task-based teaching (TBT) argue that the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is done by designing tasks that require learners to use the language by themselves. In this paper, through a lesson plan on teaching poetry to a group of Japanese adult learners of English, the author highlights the importance of creating and sequencing tasks as part of a well-balanced approach to teaching a foreign language. The stylistic approach and the sequence of tasks ensure that there is an equal focus on grammar forms and the meaning of the linguistic material.

Introduction

One approach to teaching that has attracted a lot of attention over the past thirty years is a task-based approach to learning and teaching. It has assumed a central part in both pedagogy and research, especially in SLA. There is now a considerable volume of research on task-based learning and second language acquisition, and Ellis' (2003) book-length study confirms the maturity of this field, linking together language learning and teaching theory and practice in a coherent perspective.

In task-based approaches, the focus of classroom activities is on the task, and ultimately on the meaning. The advantage of the task-based approach, according to its advocates, is that during the task the learners are allowed to use whatever language they want, freeing them to focus entirely on the meaning of their message. This makes it closer to a real-life communicative situation.

What exactly is a task?

Ellis (2003, p. 2) concludes that, "in neither research nor language pedagogy is there complete agreement as to what constitutes a task." According to Skehan (1996), a task is "an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome" (p. 40). Ellis viewed assessment tasks as "devices for eliciting and evaluating communicative performances from learners in the context of language use that is meaning-focused and directed towards some specific goal" (p. 279).

Class and Course Background

This poetry-based lesson plan was designed for Japanese adult learners of English. The students' English level was high-intermediate with TOEIC scores of 600-675. There were 16 Japanese-speaking learners of mixed abilities in the class who were used to Communicative Language Teaching as suggested by their experience of task-based lessons in the past, in particular with information and opinion-gap tasks.

Surveys that were administered throughout the course suggested the majority of students preferred task-based lessons to audio-lingual or grammar-focused ones. They strongly requested that more task-based lessons be included in the curriculum designed by the instructor. At the same time, students stated that they enjoyed listening to English songs included in the curriculum, as well as watching American movies in English without subtitles

in Japanese. They had group discussions and performed tasks based on the movies or songs while the teacher supported them by acting as a guide. The students did both open and closed tasks and were informed at the beginning of the lesson about the tasks that were to be assessed after the students had accomplished their assignments. The students' oral performance was assessed by the teacher, by self-assessment or by peer-assessment.

The idea of implementing poetry in the syllabus was suggested by the answers in an open-ended questionnaire conducted by the author during the class in which all students but one found English poems to be boring and difficult, in spite of the fact that most of them loved songs in English. This served as the catalyst for including this poem-based lesson plan in the curriculum, guided by the belief that "reading poetry is the kind of activity that allows students to refresh themselves intellectually and emotionally by touching the deep sources of their own humanity" (Rosenkjar, 2006, p. 119).

Goals, Objectives and Rationale

The objective of the lesson was to develop literary competence, in particular to enable students to read and understand poetry for themselves through task-based learning, and then present their own interpretations of the poem. The lesson engaged learners in task-based activities by focusing on different language forms found in the poem. These activities move learners through a series of interactional groupings: from pairs to whole class to pairs to whole class. By the end of the lesson students should be able to produce reasonable interpretations supported by the evidence found in the poem.

This lesson is based on a short and simple poem, "Child on top of a greenhouse", by Theodore Roethke (see Appendix 1) that demonstrates how tasks can serve to integrate focus on form with focus on meaning, in a lesson based on a poem. The language used in the poem lends itself directly to the integration of form-focus and meaning-focus through tasks. Widdowson (1992) attributes this to the representational nature of literary language, a process which means that literary texts are intended to give readers the feeling of (re)experiencing some emotion or event rather than merely convey information. Short (1996, p. 9) points out that when the authors write, "they use various kinds of knowledge which they share with the reader (linguistics, contextual, general world knowledge) in order to constrain the reader into interpreting what he or she reads in a particular way." Therefore, focusing on the formal features of a poem can lead to an ability to perceive its represented meaning.

In this poem-based lesson plan form-focused tasks lead students to discover the salient linguistic features of a text for themselves. The students possess objective evidence from the text that allows them to move on to more meaning-focused tasks for interpreting what the poem represents. According to Willis (2005, p. 9), tasks are "both the means by which this evidence is found and the context in which students discuss and negotiate their interpretations." Rosenkjar (2006, p. 129) concludes that when students learn that they can "use their existing knowledge of English to achieve a clear and solid understanding of a poem based on objective linguistic evidence that they are capable of discovering, they often become interested in poetry."

Teaching Poetry in EFL Classes

A balance between form-focus and meaning-focus is necessary for learners to acquire a second language and it is important to include poems in the ESL course syllabus and to teach them through lessons based on stylistic tasks. However, when the author of this paper asked her students what they thought of English poetry, they all "agreed" that English poems were

“difficult, boring and of little communicative value.” The reason for such opinions was that the students’ experience of English poems learning was based on the traditional grammar-translation method. In this lesson, Roethke’s poem, “Child on top of a greenhouse”, is used to demonstrate that poems can be interesting, motivating, and oriented to communication between writer and reader and among readers, and how this is achieved through tasks.

Tasks and Activities

Pre-reading schema-setting task

Before reading the poem students are guided to the topic of the poem by discussion questions based on their own experiences. Students are asked to bring their childhood photos to the class and ask each other questions and share opinions (see Appendix 2). After that the teacher introduces the poet (see Appendix 3) and the students are given a handout (see Appendix 4) to introduce new words like: *chrysanthemum*; *putty*; *plunge*; and *billow*. The students then read the poem. It is a non-task preparation activity.

Tasks during reading

After students have read the poem they analyze various grammatical features of the poem in a stylistic exercise (see Appendix 5).

Further activities based on the poem

Further activities (see Appendix 6) that focus on students’ grammatical knowledge are done in pairs and small groups. As a result, students will be able to understand how the speaker felt, thought and perceived what was happening around him. While students work in pairs, the teacher acts as a language adviser and a monitor and encourages students to discover salient features of the text, as well as ensures students understand task instructions. This is an especially important role in mixed-ability classes.

Conclusion

This poem-based lesson plan was implemented in the classroom through task-based teaching where students were involved in learning through closed tasks, bottom-up processing, decision-making, problem solving, creative, and consciousness-raising tasks. This learning process required students to reach a single, correct solution in some of the tasks; involved understanding of the poem by analyzing words and sentences in the poem itself; and required the students to exchange opinions on the issues, and agree or disagree to a solution or problem.

Although the students were reluctant to participate actively at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher observed that they got really carried away by performing tasks through group and pair work. As a result, they were able to capture the essence of the poem and understand its meaning themselves. As part of the homework assignment, students were asked to bring their reflection papers to the next class. They were also asked to bring their favorite poems to the next class.

After having reviewed the reflection papers written by the students, it became clear that including poetry and literature in the curriculum would be effective for the students’ oral second language proficiency. Moreover, the author of this paper realized that using a stylistic approach and managing the sequence of tasks throughout the lesson helped students to develop “the feeling for language” through the negotiation of tasks.

Although many teachers argue that Japanese students tend to be shy and unwilling to participate in group work, the opposite can be inferred based on the results of this lesson: if teachers create the “right” atmosphere for the class and choose appropriate tasks for the students’ English level, it will definitely boost students’ confidence so they can make the most of their language with all its shortcomings and inaccuracies. After all, “the success of a teaching program would be judged in terms of the learners’ growing ability to use the language for communication” (Willis & Willis, p. 8, 2007).

Biographical Statement

Alexandra Shaitan has taught English to Japanese learners for the past ten years. She holds a Master’s Degree in CITE (Curriculum, Instruction and Technology in Education) from Temple University Japan. She is recently teaching English at Chuo University. Her major research interests include task-based assessment, ESL academic writing, and content-based teaching.

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Appendix 1 - *Child on Top of a Greenhouse* by Theodore Roethke

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches,
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,
The half-grown chrysanthemums staring like accusers
Up through the streaked glass flashing with sunlight,
A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting.

Appendix 2 - Pre-Reading Task

Discussion questions for students while introducing their childhood photos.

- (a) What is the purpose of rules for children?
- (b) How might children feel about breaking rules?
- (c) Did you ever break a rule in your childhood? Were you punished for it?

Appendix 3

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963), who was born in Saginaw, Michigan, was an American poet whose lyrical verse is characterized by its startling imagery, especially of plant life. Roethke spent much of his childhood in and around a greenhouse that belonged to his father and uncle. There he developed a lifelong involvement with all manner of growing things which became the subject of his unusual imagery and of his ability to communicate to the reader the idea of the natural world as being a dynamic, often disturbing place, something more than just a setting for the actions of humanity.

Appendix 4

Divide the following list of words from the poem into groups and name each group.

horses billowing everyone crackling wind staring	shouting britches flashing feet rushing glass	chrysanthemum plunging accusers tossing sunlight clouds pointing
---	--	--

Appendix 5 - Stylistic Exercise

The following instructions are given to students:

- Underline all the verbs associated with the speaker.
- Underline behaving verbs which refer to physiological actions and reactions.
- Highlight the last line in the poem. What is your interpretation of the repetition of *everyone* in this line?
- Describe the speaker's tone.

Appendix 6

Activity 1 (a sorting task based on the notion of lexical sets)

Divide the following list of words from the poem into two groups and then name each group. Explain the reason for your decision. Rate the emotional intensity of each word in the list (see Appendix 3).

Activity 2 (a problem solving or decision-making task)

Work with your partner. Decide how to divide the poem into two parts. What do you think each part represents? What do you think happened between the first and the second part?

Activity 3 (a problem solving task)

Answer the following questions and explain your answers:

- Who do you think the speaker is and what's the situation?
- Do you think the speaker in the poem is a boy or a girl, why?
- Why at the end of the poem is everyone pointing up and shouting?
- Could you note the location of the speaker?

Activity 4 (a decision-making task)

Work in pairs to answer the questions to the following tasks:

- Which line in the poem has the most/least emotional intensity?
- What does the speaker emphasize by repeating the word "up"?
- List all the words from the poem which express the sense of excitement and exhilaration.
- Why does the author use present participles in the poem?
- Where would you draw a center line in the poem? Why?

Activity 5 (a closed/convergent task)

Work in pairs and try to reach a single correct solution.

- How many grammatical sentences are in this poem?
- Do you see any metaphors in this poem? Why are they used in the poem? What value do they have?
- Do you see any semantic parallels in the poem?
- The author of "Child on top of a greenhouse" compares chrysanthemums to accusers because the chrysanthemums have seen:

- a. *a storm coming*
- b. *glass breaking*
- c. *trees falling*
- d. *that light cannot get through the dirty windows*

Activity 6 (a follow-up exploitation/creative activity)

- a. Imagine you were a parent of the main character in this poem. What would you say to him/her? Write a short letter expressing your feelings to the main character reacting to his/her behavior?
- b. Imagine you were the main character in the poem. What would you say to your parents? How would you explain your behavior? Why were you behaving that way? Write a short letter to your parents.

Information Transfer Use in English Teaching

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Nguyen Thi Loan

Abstract

In keeping with a communicative methodology teachers strive to create activities in class promote student interaction in authentic circumstances. In this paper the author introduces the technique known as Information Transfer, by first collecting different definitions of the term and then by explaining its application to English language teaching contexts in Vietnam secondary schools.

Introduction

This paper introduces an approach to language instruction called the *Information Transfer Technique*. It starts with a description of the technique, continues by outlining the rationale for using it, and then connects it to certain classroom activities, in particular its potential to enliven reading classes.

Information Transfer Technique: A Variety of Definitions

The Oxford English Dictionary (1997) includes the following definition for the term “transfer”. To transfer (information/music, etc.) is to “copy information, music, an idea, etc from one method of recording or presenting it to another” or “to be recorded or presented in a different way.” Based on this definition, we see that presenting the same information in two or more different formats can be described as transferring.

There are several definitions concerning the Information Transfer Technique. First of all, an Information Transfer activity “is an activity involving the reproduction of information either from a diagrammatic or semi-diagrammatic form into a fully linguistic form or vice verse (Palmer, 1991, p. 79).

A different definition is: “Information Transfer technique means translating data from one form to another. We move from the Reading or Listening text to graphic stimuli, or visual like charts, graphs, diagrams, figures, maps, etc and vice verse” (Storla, 1995, p. 5). Widdowson (1978) seems to agree when he states that the Information Transfer technique is the “transformation of instances of discourses from one type into another but these instances of discourse can also be derived from a non-verbal mode of communicating” (p. 141).

Finally, Brown (2004) explains Information Transfer as follows:

The action of comprehending graphics includes the linguistics performance of oral or written interpretation, comments, questions, etc. This implies a process of Information Transfer from one skill to another: in this case, from reading verbal and/or non-verbal information to speaking/writing” (p. 210).

It can be inferred from the definitions above that the Information Transfer technique is converting the content of the verbal language form into the non-verbal language form and vice versa to make the information easy to understand and convey.

Advantages of Information Transfer Activities

Information Transfer, as stated above, is a visual kind of information that falls into a variety of forms such as tables, charts, graphs, outlines, maps, and memos. This kind of data is very

common in our daily lives and has many advantages (Palmer, 1991). The advantages are outlined below:

Authenticity

Firstly, Information Transfer is an authentic task that is often used in an English speaking environment by native speakers in the normal course of their everyday lives. Let's take the train timetables as an example. The railway clerk at the enquiries office constantly transfers his own semi-diagrammatic timetable into linguistic information for people who telephone to ask for train times. These people also probably note down that information in a semi-schematic way rather than in its fully linguistic form.

Communicative Tasks

Information Transfer activities are also communicative tasks. When customers book a flight at the travel agent, the clerk will interpret the information on the computer screen for them and use information transfer in communicating and offering help.

Repetitive Tasks

Normally, the information presented in a diagrammatic form or semi-diagrammatic form is frequently a concentrated collection of similar items of information, for example, repeatedly the train time table shows us when the train will depart from, stop at, and arrive at a limited number of places. This means that the linguistic equivalent may well be expressed by repetition of a certain structure. In this way, Information Transfer activities can be very appropriate to a controlled practice stage of a lesson.

Productive Tasks

An Information Transfer exercise, such as an information-gap task, usually provides students only with the bare bones of information – they must supply the additional information, often to a partner. Thus, if it is appropriately staged, information transfer can fit into the free production stage of a lesson. In the example below (Fig. 1) only the bare bones of information are given to the student. In order to present on the topic, music, they must add more information to make sentences. In this kind of exercise students can practice their speaking in front of the class. This is done during the productive stage of a class that began with a reading text about music.

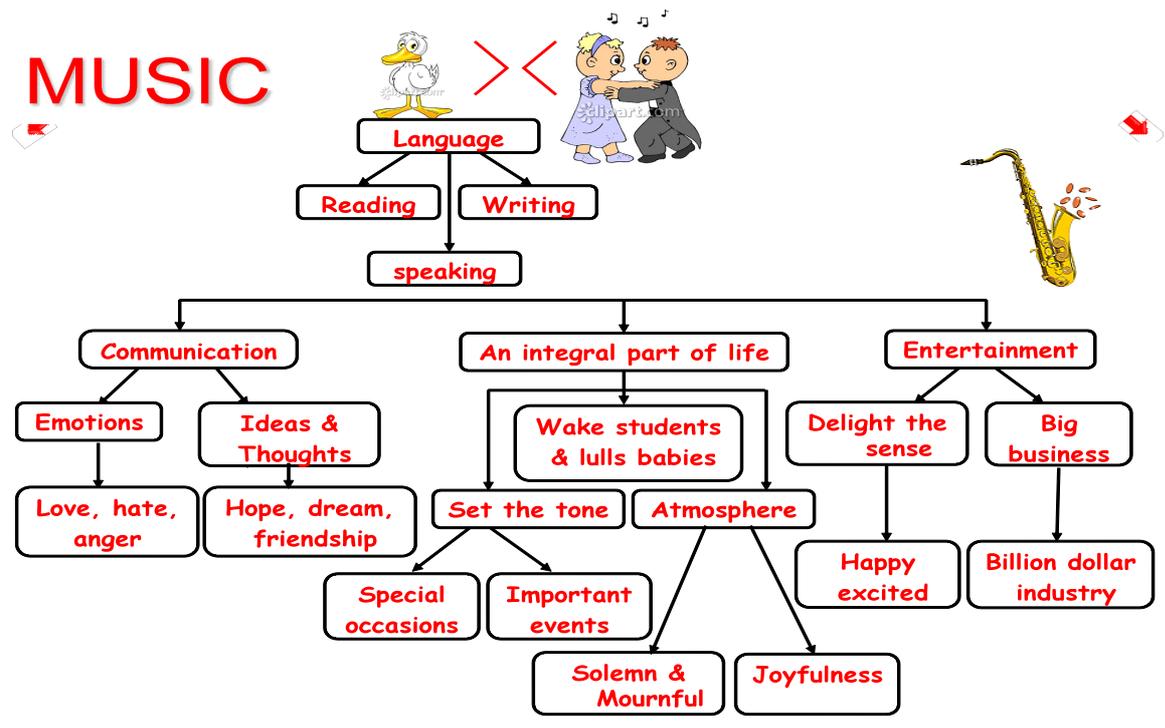


Fig. 1 Music Chart

Development of All Four Language Skills

Ideally an Information Transfer activity forms a kind of pivot around which any of the language skills may revolve (see Fig. 2).

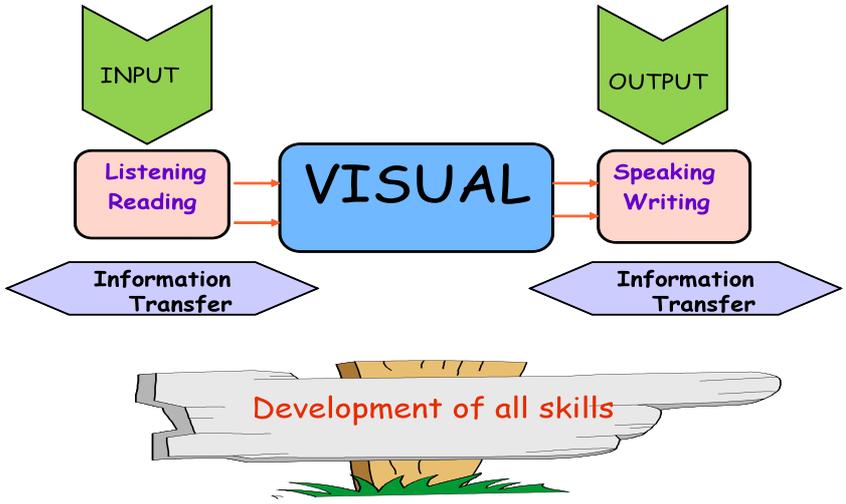


Fig. 2 Development of Language Skills

Self-Access

Information Transfer provides a framework for useful self-access activities for developing listening and reading skills because it helps students to check their performance against the “correct” visual data or objects.

Apparently, the advantage is that information transfer material is graphic (i.e., it is visual). Because this type of transfer involves only a few necessary words to get the idea across, students take on the task of recasting the information in spoken forms, and then in written forms. This practice is a great benefit to students. Doing this kind of work helps them gain confidence that they can be articulate on their own, rather than just repeating or copying the words of others.

Another benefit to information transfer is that it is open-ended. This kind of data gives the students a topic and quite a bit of information, but it is always possible for the students to add their own ideas and interpretation.

Reasons for Using Information Transfer Activities in the Teaching of Reading

The central characteristic of communicative language teaching is that it focuses attention on the abilities to understand and convey informational content. One way to practice (and test) these abilities is through Information Transfer activities.

According to Prodromou (1992), information presented in visual form as a starting-point for practicing the four skills is another hallmark of the Communicative Approach; therefore, Information Transfer activities have a major part to play in the class for the following reasons:

- Information in a visual form is comprehensive whether a student is linguistically gifted or not; visual information is a kind of universal language.
- Because the Information Transfer technique is applicable to all four skills, different learning styles are catered for.
- Charts and diagrams lend themselves to information-gap activities in which language is used for a communicative purpose.
- Information can be distributed in such a way that less confident students may receive more support in their task than more confident students.
- Students can often work together to complete a task, thus encouraging an open and sharing atmosphere among students with a range of talents and personalities.

The Case for Using the Information Transfer Technique in reading classes in Vietnam

In the context of teaching reading at Vietnamese Upper Secondary schools, there are three reasons why introducing Information Transfer activities could be advantageous: it diversifies the techniques used; it helps students read the whole; and it helps with real life communication

Diversifying the techniques for teaching reading in Vietnam

Teaching English reading skills has been considered the most important part to develop. In the research by Truong Vien (1999) on techniques for teaching reading, the common ones frequently used at many Upper Secondary schools for content studying are as follows:

- Question-answer
- Finding synonyms/antonyms
- Gap-filling
- True-False

Among the four techniques above, the question-answer technique seems to be most frequently used in classes. These four techniques can be employed after the language teacher explains vocabulary and structure. These techniques to some extent have satisfied the purposes of

teaching reading because they help students understand and master the ideas in the reading texts. However, if these techniques are repeatedly applied in any reading class, what will happen? Students may feel bored and less interested in the lesson. The Information Transfer technique with its advantages will bring a new cycle into the teaching process. Information Transfer could help make the activities fresher and more competitive at the same time encouraging students' involvement in the lessons. As a result of using the technique students may feel excited by the challenging and creative activities; therefore, the atmosphere of the class will be more attractive and effervescent. Then this may lead to a more successful reading lesson for the teacher.

Helping students understand the whole reading text

The techniques mentioned above focus on assisting students' comprehension of separate ideas or parts of the reading text. In this way, students cannot know how each idea connects with the other ideas and thus it is hard to get the overall idea of the text. Of course, those techniques cannot be absent from the reading lesson but that is not enough for the purpose of content exploitation since a reading lesson is expected to help students with the details as well as the overall ideas. One solution is that some teachers use the summary technique to fulfill the aim of content study. This solution seems not to be successful because students' writing skills are not as good as desired, while their summary skills are also very limited. By using the Information Transfer technique to transfer the main information of a reading text into charts, graphs and tables will be a useful tool for teachers and students to deal with content of the text at both the general and specific level.

Practicing real life communication

One advantage of the Information Transfer technique is that it is a communicative task. In daily life, for example, we can see most information is presented in visual and symbolic form. In an office, for instance, we also notice that from the system of organization, timetables, memos, plans, etc. are not purely in linguistic forms but they are in forms of outline, diagrams, charts or tables. As we travel, we often deal with forms such as a tourist brochure and map, immigration and application forms, accommodation and restaurant information, most of which are both in linguistic and symbolic forms that aim to catch our attention or facilitate our reading. So, if language teachers can apply this technique in class, this will be a wonderful preparation for students later. Students should be encouraged to practice and get acquainted with these types of reading text while they are still at school. In so doing, students can develop the ability to decode information from visual and diagrammatic texts at the same time with the ability to transfer information from linguistic forms into a kind of symbolic form. This is extremely necessary for students in their future daily communication.

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The editors of the THT Proceedings welcome submissions of materials concerned with all aspects of language education. Submissions of a practical nature (including lesson plans, activity ideas etc.) are particularly welcomed. Currently, the proceedings is divided into *Feature Articles* (more than 2000 words with a well-constructed theoretical base) and *Forum: Perspectives and Reviews* (less than 2000 words, largely based on opinion and/or experience). If you are unsure of the status of your submission, or want advice, please contact the editors.

Papers should be submitted as an attachment by email to both of the addresses at the bottom of this page. Word documents (Times New Roman, 12 point) are preferred.

Submissions should basically follow APA style, but authors are strongly advised to look at the most recent issue of the journal for the correct style (see www.tht-japan.org). Please note that an abstract is also required, while footnotes are strongly discouraged. Titles should be divided into a maximum of three levels.

When submitting please include (a) email contact details and a postal address (b) affiliation (c) the name and date of the THT event attended, and (d) a biographical statement (max. 100 words).

The editors will acknowledge the receipt of all submissions. Submissions are subject to a blind peer-review process by at least two anonymous reviewers after which the editors will make their decision known to the authors by email.

Deadline for submissions: **Saturday October 15th 2011**

Please note: Early submissions are strongly recommended.

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