Teachers Helping Teachers

The Proceedings of 2011 Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

Lao-American College
National University of Laos
Nonesaath Secondary School
Vientiane, Laos
February and March

Hue University, College of Foreign Languages
Hue, Vietnam
June 10 – 12

American International University of Bangladesh
Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association
Dhaka, Bangladesh
July 2 – 3

Bishkek Humanities University
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
September 12 – 14

Edited by
Brent Jones & Richard Silver

ISBN 4-931424-34-1C3482 1000

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

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Introduction

Once again it is with a great sense of pride and achievement that we present this volume of papers that showcases the diverse work of teachers and researchers from the community of Teachers Helping Teachers. This testament to another twelve months of industry by them must also acknowledge the tragic events of March 11th 2011, which had such a profound impact on those in Japan and around the world. While we were given a frightening example of nature's destructive power, at the same time messages of concern and support from all parts of the globe reminded us of the common humanity that binds us together. We hope that the work of Teachers Helping Teachers and this volume in particular will help to strengthen those bonds.

We have maintained the dual peer review process that was introduced for last year's proceedings because it increases opportunities for authors to reflect on their writing with the help of anonymous critics. In turn this leads to a higher quality of article. We have also retained the division of the proceedings into two parts: Feature articles and Forum articles to aid the reader and to allow for a wide range of submissions that will appeal to the greatest number of people.

We would like to thank all the contributors and reviewers who contributed to this publication and hope that readers find it both thought-provoking and a useful aid for reflection on their teaching.

Warmest Regards,

Brent Jones and Richard Silver
Editors, THT 2011 Proceedings

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Message from the Coordinator

The volume that you have in your hands is, in many ways a reflection of the JALT THT-SIG. Not only does it depend on the volunteer efforts of a range of people, from Brent Jones and Richard Silver, the two THT-SIG members who guided this volume from start to completion to the various contributors who took the time and effort to write up the submissions, it also represents the range of activities of the THT membership. Furthermore, it has multiple purposes, both in giving an idea of the varied interests of those THT volunteers, as well as providing a document that we hope we can also leave with the locations we work with to help them with the challenges they face.

It is also, in a sense, a reflection of the founder of THT, the late Bill Balsamo. Bill was often the quietest person in the room, and while I thought that I knew Bill from various JALT events, it wasn't until I participated in a THT seminar that I realized he was like an iceberg, and what you saw was only the 10% that appeared above the surface. Getting to know Bill through THT helped open my eyes to the possibilities in all of us, the hidden talents that are not seen, but can be manifest when given an opportunity. I hope that this volume can not only help, as Bill did, people to see some of that 90% that may be hidden from first glance, but like Bill, be a way to create more opportunities for meaningful cooperation.

Joe Tomei
THT-SIG coordinator

Programs

Program Schedule – THT in Laos (February and March, 2011)

Here is a short list of our activities in Laos in 2011.

- Nonesaath Secondary School, Cecilia Silva, Mark Holst, Mizuka Tsukamoto, Ellen Head, Gerald Couzens, Patrick McCoy, Yuko Nagasawa, and Shigeko Ishikawa, worked with over twenty teacher trainees and teachers from surrounding secondary schools. Seminar topics were negotiated with Lao teachers based on perceived and expressed needs and volunteers worked one on one with Lao English Teachers and trainees. Many volunteers chose to home stay with local teachers.

- Nonesaath Secondary School, Lori Parish held a special one week workshop on the, Lexical Approach, for Lao English teachers from Nonesaath and surrounding secondary schools.

- National University of Laos, Robert Cooper and Mark Holst held seminars for Master of TESOL students on testing and evaluation and research methodology.

- National University of Laos, Margaret Wells and Peter Wells held seminars on the process of teaching writing for teachers from the Faculty of Letters National University of Laos.

- Lao American College, Yuko Nagasawa and Shigeko Ishikawa presented workshops on shadowing.

- Neerada Primary School, Yuko Nagasawa and Shigeko Ishikawa presented workshops on Japanese culture in English.

Vietnam Seminar at Hue University (June 10 – 12, 2011)

Friday, June 10, 2010		
09:15 – 09:45	**Opening Ceremony**	
Time	**Presenter**	**Topic**
10:15 – 11:10	**Karen Cosgrove-Smith**	*Understanding inter-rater and intra-rater reliability in direct writing assessment*
	Rebecca Arthur	*Practical ways to increase speaking practice opportunities using the textbook*
	Christopher Fulton	*Learning activities in the classroom and your textbook*
	Jenny Morgan	*Writing portfolios and process writing*
	Joseph Tomei	*Ever and never, any and none: Teaching NPIs*
14:00 – 15:00	**Cherie Brown**	*Learning to work in a group*
	Peter J. Wanner	*Task based learning: Old or new concept*
	Jenny Morgan	*Pyramids & Carousels: Varying oral poster presentations*
	Karen Cosgrove-Smith	*Dictogloss and running dictation: Two activities to encourage interaction, teamwork and fluency*
	Joseph Tomei	*The efficient deployment of tasks in teaching large size classes*
15:10 – 16:10	**Peter J. Wanner**	*Teaching grammar: Does it work?*
	Cherie Brown	*A two-phase academic writing programme for lower-level tertiary learners of English*
	Christopher Fulton	*Social networking and education*
	Rebecca Arthur	*Teaching conversation strategies*
	Joseph Tomei	*Some principles in English essay composition*

Vietnam Seminar at Hue University (June 10 – 12, 2011) – continued

Saturday, June 11, 2010		
Time	**Presenter**	**Topic**
09:00 – 10:00	**Peter J. Wanner**	*Teaching grammar: Does it work?*
	Cherie Brown	*A two-phase academic writing programme for lower-level tertiary learners of English*
	Jenny Morgan	*Pyramids & Carousels: Varying oral poster presentations*
	Joseph Tomei	*Ever and never, any and none: Teaching NPIs*
	Karen Cosgrove-Smith	*Collaboration for Critical Thinking: How to teach a Project-Based Curriculum*
10:15 – 11:15	**Peter J. Wanner**	*Task based learning: Old or new concept*
	Rebecca Arthur	*Getting outside the textbook with the practice box*
	Joseph Tomei	*The efficient deployment of tasks in teaching large size classes*
	Cherie Brown	*Evaluating teacher performance: Towards a more teacher-friendly approach*
	Christopher Fulton	*Learning activities in the classroom and your textbook*
14:00 – 15:00	**Dr Peter Wanner**	*Global technical leader development project*
	Christopher Fulton	*Testing and assessment: Issues and activities*
	Jenny Morgan	*Games, activities or tasks in the EFL classroom*
	Rebecca Arthur	*Practical ways to increase speaking practice opportunities using the textbook*
	Karen Cosgrove-Smith	*Dictogloss and running dictation: Two activities to encourage interaction, teamwork and fluency*
15:20 – 16:20	**(All Delegates) Looking at one chapter: Ideas from the presenters**	
Closing Ceremony		

Program Schedule – THT in Bangladesh (July 22 - 25, 2011)

Here is a short overview of the THT 2011 Bangladesh event.

7th Annual BELTA-Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) Programme

Theme: Innovative Approaches in English Language Teaching

Date: July 22 - 23, 2011

Venue: Auditorium, East West University, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Date: July 25, 2011

Venue: Rajshshi University

Intended Participants: English Language Teachers from secondary schools, colleges, universities

THT Facilitators

- Dr Patrick Dougherty, Faculty of Education, Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE
- Dr Steve Cornwell, Department of International & English Interdisciplinary Studies, Osaka Jogakuin College, Japan
- Dr Helen Emery, Dept of Language & Linguistics, University of Essex, UK
- Prof Steve Wolfe, Faculty of Intercultural Communication, Ryukoku University, Japan
- Anne McLellan Howard, English Language Education, Miyazaki International College, Japan
- Michael Stout, English Education Development Centre, Toyo Gakuen University, Japan

Program Schedule – THT in Kyrgyzstan (September 12 – 14, 2011)

Monday, September 12, 2010		
09:00 – 9:45	*Opening Ceremony - Welcome to THT & Introduction to the Presenters*	
Time	**Presenter**	**Topic**
10:00 – 11:00	**Warren Decker**	*Natural English through Authentic Materials*
	Marian Wang	*Using the News to Understand Different Perspectives*
11:15 – 12:15	**Atsuko Takase**	*Tadoku no hitsuyousei to koukateki na sonnyu hoho*
	Roger Palmer	*Practical Discussion Activities*
13:30 – 15:30	**Steve Wolfe**	*Haiku Eyes Behind the Lens*
	Brent Jones	*Creative and Critical Thinking Workshop*

Tuesday, September 13, 2010		
Time	**Presenter**	**Topic**
09:00 – 10:30	**Plenary Talk – Atsuko Takase** *Extensive Reading: Best way to improve reading fluency*	
10:45 – 12:15	**Brent Jones**	*Content-Based Instruction (CBI) for Language Teachers*
	Marian Wang	*Music to Stimulate Interest in Learning English*
13:00 – 14:30	**Roger Palmer**	*Teaching Writing through the Genres*
	Brent Jones	*Service Learning for Language Teachers*
14:45 – 16:15	**Steve Wolfe**	*Haiku Workshop: Haiku as Cultural Mirror*
	Warren Decker	*Group-Building in the Classroom*

Wednesday, September 14, 2010		
09:00 – 10:30	**Warren Decker**	*Teaching Non-Violence*
	Steve Wolfe	*Haiku Workshop: Capturing those WOW moments*
10:45 – 12:15	**Marian Wang**	*Peer Teaching*
	Atsuko Takase	*Extensive Listening for Listening Fluency Instruction*
13:00 – 14:30	**Plenary Talk – Roger Palmer** *Content-Based Language Learning*	
14:45 – 16:15	*Panel Discussion: Brent Jones, Roger Palmer, Atsuko Takase, Warren Decker, Marian Wang, Steve Wolfe*	
16:30 – 17:00	*Closing Ceremony and Certificate Awarding*	

Feature Articles

Creative Writing Activities

Cecilia Silva
Tohoku University

Abstract
The main objective of this paper is to help students to produce an original composition and considers creative writing as an activity supported by several other skills: reading, listening, speaking; and resources: vocabulary, grammar, formal and content schemata. Firstly, this article reports on three aspects: the meaning of "writing as design", the relevance of writing to second language teaching and learning, and the concept of creative writing. Following this, a sequence of activities based on a literary text –a short story- will be suggested with the purpose of helping students to understand the content and the atmosphere of the story. That sequence of tasks is divided into three stages of exploitation: framing (stimulate learners' imagination without complete and direct information), focusing (help students to fully understand the story), and diverging (guide students to go beyond the limits of the story). The goal of such sequence of activities is helping learners to gain confidence with using language subtleties and words in a more creative way and thus produce original texts.

Introduction

This article is part of a project (1) concerning the use of literature in foreign language classes. In the activities described in this paper, a literary text is used as the base for creative writing. The main idea of the present work is that writing is not an individual and isolated task but a skill that requires classroom interaction and support from other skills; writing and creative writing are the results of a great deal of previous activities that provide a context, refresh grammar, and create an intriguing tone. Namely, a sequence of activities should be designed so that learners get ideas about what to write, how to write and how to convey it.

Writing involves organizing ideas, building coherent texts, and adopting a style according to the topic, the reader, and the type of text. When we write we face cognitive obstacles (what to write), communicative obstacles (for whom), linguistic obstacles (grammar and vocabulary), and obstacles related to organization (how to organize the ideas). Creative writing adds another difficulty: how to convey a certain mood, from the imagination of the writer to that of the reader or listener. We herein propose the following theoretical perspective for working with creative writing in a class of English as a foreign language: writing is an interactive process that allows for an active interchange of ideas in class; learners and their imaginations are in the center of the process and therefore imagination should be fostered by means of several tasks including reading, vocabulary, grammar, listening, and oral communication that support the writing skills, provide content, and help to construct a singular and intriguing atmosphere.

This work contains the following parts:
1. Creative writing: the metaphor writing design, the relevance of writing activities in second language learning, and the concept of creative writing.
2. Classroom activities: sequence of story-based tasks and students' creative writing.

Writing as Design

Writing is a highly complex skill that requires formal instruction and is defined by Gagné, Yekovich & Yekovich (1993, p. 314) as "the rendering of ideas in the printed symbols of a given language". As regards writing, Richard Kern (2000, pp. 171-190) proposes the metaphor "writing as design" for making meaning, and suggests

thinking of meaning resources such as writing systems, vocabulary, grammar, genre, styles, stories, and others which learners can choose and use for building a text. The New London Group (2000, pp. 9-37) proposes the metaphor meaning design to describe the forms of meaning. "Design" refers either to the product, the configuration of structures, or to the process, the act of creation. For the New London Group (2000, pp. 20) "every act of designing (for example, reading, writing, speaking, listening, seeing) is a productive process of recycling old materials in fresh ways – establishing new relationships among stock elements".

Writing involves the use of meaning resources or available designs as resources for re-creating the world. Kern (2000, p.191) proposes organizing the meaning resources on a continuum, with linguistic resources (language itself which comprises writing systems, vocabulary, grammar, and cohesion and coherence conventions) at one end, and schematic resources (such as rhetorical organization patterns, genres, styles, schemata, and stories) at the other (Figure 1).

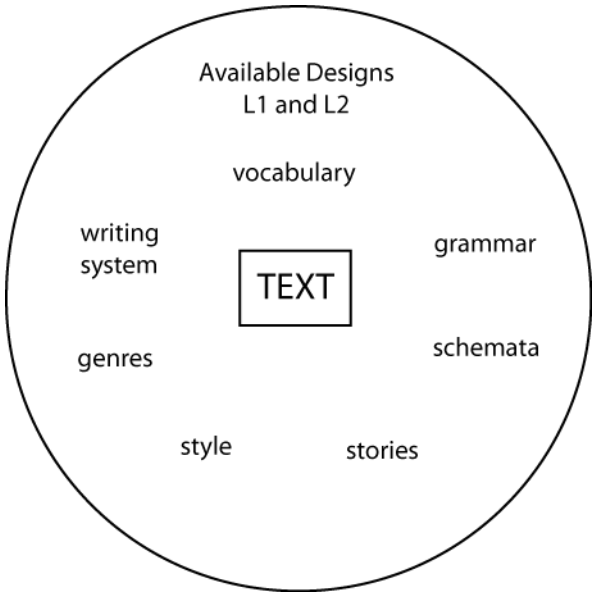

Figure 1. Available Resources for Writing (Adapted from Kern, 2000).

On the left of Figure 1, writing systems refer to the system of characters, and their specific rules, used by each language. Vocabulary involves a multidimensional knowledge of words: learners need to learn the basic meaning of words but they should also learn how those meanings might change according to the context, which indicates that the meaning of words is contingent on their actual use. Syntax refers to rules that govern syntactic relations and clause structure. Cohesion and coherence are concerned with discourse: the link among text, context and knowledge. Cohesion operates at the level of texts: syntactic and semantic dependence within the text. Coherence operates at the level of discourse: it refers to the relation between text and context and our ability to find connections between elements of the text and elements that are beyond it, i.e. its context.

On the right of Figure 1, schematic resources refer to how knowledge is organized. One of these resources refers to "schema theory". This theory maintains that people's knowledge is organized in networks of knowledge structures called "schemata". Rumelhart (1981, p. 9) defined a schema as a "kind of informal, private, unarticulated theory about the nature of events, objects or situations which we face".

There is a distinction to be made between formal schemata and content schemata. The former has to do with form: knowledge can be organized as a collection of descriptions, as a problem-solution structure, or as a comparison between two aspects. The latter has to do with knowledge about a topic, event structures (actions and roles involved in a certain activity) and also cultural notions.

Another form of organizing knowledge and information is genre. Genre refers not only to literary production (novels, short stories, poems, or plays) but also to a broad spectrum of spoken and written discourse forms, such as editorials, interviews, research articles, business letters, and jokes. Genres are social processes that operate in cultural contexts: one good example is the "curriculum vitae" or "personal resumé". While genre has to do with architectural patterns of the text, style is related to more particular choices of designing meaning. Style is not limited to the analysis of texts; it is possible to apply it to students' writing and get interesting answers –normally at the level of culture and personal experience- about the choices in their texts. Stories –narratives- are another resource for designing meaning and will be further discussed in the section which deals with working with literary texts.

Writing and Second Language Learning

The traditional view in language teaching classes that writing works to support oral activities, grammar and vocabulary is being replaced by the notion that writing in a second language is a relevant enterprise in itself (Weigle, 2005, pp. 1-13). What relevance might the design of meaning in writing have for foreign language learners? Kern (2000, pp. 177-190) suggests four benefits. First, in designing meaning through writing, learners develop their ability to think clearly about how to organize and express their ideas, thoughts and feelings. Second, the visible nature of writing is valuable in that it allows learners to try out different grammar structures and different effects of words. Third, writing provides time for learners to process meaning, thus making it less stressful than speaking. When writing, learners do not need to worry about pronunciation, immediate accuracy and memorization of utterances. Finally, writing –and particularly creative writing- allows learners to go beyond merely functional communication, to pay attention to language subtleties, and create their own imagined worlds.

Guasch Boyé (2000) suggests that both first and second language writing involve essentially similar processes, but in the case of second language learning the situation is more complex due to the addition of new resources, rules, and rhetorical conventions. As learners gain experience in reading and writing and enlarge their knowledge in the target language their repertoire of foreign language-based available designs will grow larger. Moreover, the above mentioned researcher maintains that the methodology of a writer is similar in second language and in the mother tongue: the writer transfers his experience from one language to the other. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that show that the cognitive processes of composition in a mother tongue are automatically transferred to the second language and there is no complete insight about the conditions under which such transfer takes place.

Guasch Boyé (2000) remarks on two aspects that the teachers should consider:

> (a) It is important to avoid the lack of knowledge in the second language which can block the learner's process of composition. Therefore, the teacher should propose specific activities to develop the learner's knowledge

related to the topic and linguistic resources, provide the learners with the necessary lexical resources, and allow the use of the mother tongue during the process of organization of the text.

(b) Provide for the development of the cognitive process of composition in the second language. To achieve this, the teacher should create a sequence of activities that guide students through the different stages of composition, and furnish them with content, context and linguistic and lexical resources.

Writing in the second language classroom includes a broad range of activities, from tightly controlled exercises such as dictation or controlled composition, to free-writing activities in which learners write whatever comes to their mind. One extreme (left in Figure 2) sets the emphasis on formal accuracy, while the other (right in Figure 2) sets the emphasis on content and ideas. In between lie the most common writing activities, and we can see the place of creative writing.

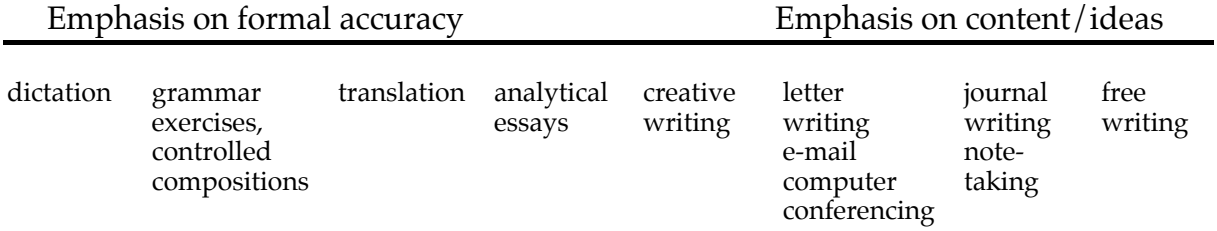

Figure 2. Continuum of writing activity types in language teaching (Kern, 2000)

Creative Writing

In creative writing imagination becomes the element that combines all the necessary resources to produce a text (see Figure 1). If we want our students to use their imagination when producing texts, we have to trigger it with creative tasks. Harmer (2004, p.41) defines creative tasks as those "that provoke students to go beyond the everyday, and which ask them to spread their linguistic wings, take some chances, and use the language they are learning to express more personal or more complex thoughts and images". Creative writing is at the same time a process with creative activities and the result of that process, an imaginative text. In both cases we are emphasizing the central idea of this work: writing starts before stamping letters on the paper; it starts with all the activities that make use of several skills and resources that the learners will use for writing. Creative writing tasks can give learners the chance to play with the language, to adopt fresh perspectives, and to explore different emotions in writing. Actually, every act of writing is in itself a creative act. Nevertheless, we can distinguish between practical writing, like a supermarket shopping list or a formal business letter, and other writing oriented to express more subjective aspects.

Creativity is the ability to connect ideas that are not normally connected; it is a process of play or interaction with reality. In the language class, creativity is the ability to represent the real world in a particular way. This creative process is not utterly free: the process starts with precise instructions and several previous elements. At early stages, especially, it is important to provide constraints to make creative tasks manageable. The challenge for teachers is to think of short, expressive, and exploratory tasks that allow students to invent situations and micro-worlds. Creative writing tasks are not isolated; they should be integrated in a sequence of

several intertwined activities that encompass different skills. This means that the teacher should build a creative scaffold for creative writing activities. For example, to have students acquire content to write about, they can read a story. After this reading activity, it is useful to carry out practice activities that lead to students' immersion in the story. It is possible to include, within immersion activities, a speaking task. Likewise, in order to make learners become aware of the significance of the lexical choices they can make in their own writing it is useful to design activities for them to explore lexical subtleties. Moreover, the teacher should design activities that lead students into playing with the text by transforming it in some way: different narrator, different setting, producing a dialogue out of a story or the other way round.

In the following part we propose a sequence of activities based on the story "The Feather Pillow" (2) by Horacio Quiroga.

Classroom Work: Story-Based Creative Writing

Stories are an essential element in the development of language learners' literacy and communicative capacity. Stories serve to organize our perceptions of the real world into meaningful structures. Stories are structured as narratives through which we tell about the world not as it is but rather as we see it, or as we would like to see it, or as we would like others to see it (Kern, 2000, p. 99). Wajnryb (2005, pp. 8-11) considers the stories within a tree-stage framework: experience, story, and narrative. Experience is a slice of life, what happens at a certain moment, the story is the human recollection of that experience, and the narrative text is the representation or narration of the story.

In the language class, the content, meaning, dynamic and sometimes unexpected unfolding of stories serve the purpose of motivation for activities. When working with stories for creative writing we design a series of activities that will lead the learners into the production of an original text. These activities are integrated in a sequence divided into three stages of exploitation: framing, focusing, and diverging (Acquaroni, 2007, pp. 80-94; Wajnryb, 2005, pp. 1-19) and aim to develop students' interpretative abilities and expand students' language awareness (Lazar, 2005, pp. 1-21). In the following points we offer an explanation of each stage, and also details and examples of the activities designed for working with a literary text. The purpose of these activities is helping learners to grasp the intriguing ambient of the story they are working with, understand its particular vocabulary, and practice grammar. The expected result is for students to take advantage of the resources acquired with those activities, use words creatively, and produce an original text.

Stage of framing (getting ready)

In this step, the learners get a first glimpse of the topic and stimulate their imagination without having acquired complete and direct information yet. This general objective contains three other purposes: to activate previous linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge of the learners, to provide the learners with information necessary for the later comprehension of the story, and to lead learners to position themselves regarding the story with which they will work.

Activities:

a. Ask students to read the first paragraph of the short story.

Alicia's entire honeymoon gave her hot and cold shivers. A blonde, angelic, and timid young girl, the childish fancies she had dreamed about being a bride had been chilled by her husband's rough character. She loved him very much, nonetheless, although sometimes she gave a light shudder when, as they returned home through the streets together at night, she cast a furtive glance at the impressive stature of her Jordan, who had been silent for an hour. He, for his part, loved her profoundly but never let it be seen.

b. Show students a few slides with parts of the tragic biography of Horacio Quiroga, and explain the characteristics of the story (3) to them.
c. Prepare questions related to the first paragraph of the story and to the meaning of several words taken from the story.
d. The students are given several elements of the story. They may be given the first paragraph, part of the author's biography, or just key words from the story. Brainstorm students' predictions: "What kind of story do you think you are going to work with?"

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.
Activities. In this part students read the story without the end and carry out exercises in several fields:

(a) Grammar: sentence structure.

Combine A and B so as to make sentences.

A	B
Alicia and Jordan	was blonde and shy
Jordan	was worried
Alicia	loved Alicia
Jordan	got married in April
The physician	was tall

(b) Grammar: verb tense

Supply the simple past tense of the verbs in brackets:
Alicia's entire honeymoon (give)……. her hot and cold shivers.
She (love) …….. him very much.
Jordan (be) …… silent.

(c) Vocabulary: work with adjectives about the characteristics of the characters (Figure 3); an acrostic, students choose a word from the story and write other words using its letters (Figure 4); and a word-drawing activity, students choose a word and make a drawing with it (Figure 5).

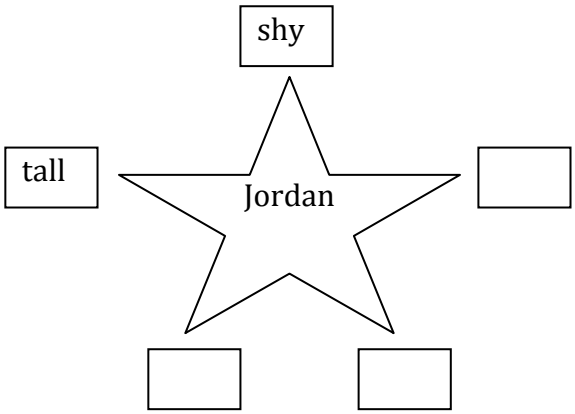

Figure 3. Characteristics of the characters

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t	E	ars
	S	
	S	

Figure 4. Acrostic with a word taken from the story

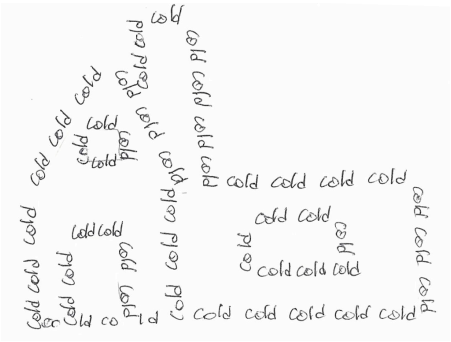

Figure 5. Word-drawing activity

(d) Comprehension of the content: students answer questions related to the story.
(e) Listening activity.

Stage of diverging (moving on)
Once the students have fully understood the text, they can go on to activities that reinforce, broaden, and consolidate their new insight and search for different situational frames or contexts. In this stage, the relevant element is the learners' imagination and the activities should take them out of the limits of the story. In this part, students can carry out the following activities:

(a) Students imagine and write a short dialogue between Alicia and Jordan, the two main characters of the story.

(b) Brainstorming: in groups, students can think of questions to ask the author of the story and write them on the board.
(c) Students have to imagine that they are in a press conference with the author of the story: in groups, each student took turns to be the author and reply to the previously prepared questions using his/her imagination.
(d) In groups, students think of a title for the story, make a synthesis of the story in a few sentences with illustrations, and write the end of the story. Each group presents its work to the class and then all the students read the real end of the story and answer the question "What do you think Jordan will do?"

Actually, the main creative tasks are the ones in the stage of diverging. In order to accomplish the classroom work in this stage, learners have to go beyond the text and use their own ideas. Moreover, to do those activities learners have had to walk a long road during which they became familiar with the content and the mood of the story. The literature based tasks that are proposed in this paper aimed to refresh grammar, enlarge vocabulary, and help learners to fully understand the content of the short story. Therefore, the fundamental purpose of the suggested sequence of activities should be to guide learners to write more creative and original texts by using not only everyday words but also, and particularly, words with mysterious or intriguing tones so as to convey a certain effect.

Conclusion

This article has examined the concept of writing as a process of design in which the writer uses resources and available designs for creating meaning. In this work, writing is described as a dynamic process that starts before learners write letters on the page; it starts when they get ideas for the content and for conveying such content and its atmosphere. The relevance of the work is that students have to use available resources not only to combine words into sentences, but also to convey a certain mood by means of language subtleties: "The more students can be made aware of their acts of writing as particular solutions to a communicative situation, seeing writing not merely as 'language practice' but as a personally meaningful activity, the more interest they will take in writing" (Kern, 2000, p.218).

Biographical Statement

Cecilia Silva teaches Spanish at Tohoku University. She is interested in the use of literature as resource in the class of foreign language. Besides, she is currently involved in projects related to production of teaching materials.

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Footnotes

(1) This article is part of the project "Handbook of literature-based activities for Spanish beginners" and was duly adapted to an English class.

(2) The Feather Pillow by Horacio Quiroga in Project Gutenberg Consortia Center's http://www.britannica.com/bps/additionalcontent/17/13971/The-Feather-Pillow.

(3) The feather pillow ("El almohadón de plumas", 1907) has a particular style: the story and all its details present a constant rhythm of tension and a mysterious atmosphere, until the utterly unexpected end. The author, Horacio Quiroga (Uruguay, 1878-1937), has been compared to Edgar Allan Poe.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and communication strategies (CSs): Theory and practice

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Abstract
This paper will look closely at the concept of communication strategies (CSs) and their relationship to the communicative language classroom. CSs help L2 learners to overcome communication problems and breakdowns while communicating with their interlocutors and can contribute greatly to the communicative language classroom. One of the main goals of communicative language teaching (CLT) is to help teach students to actively use the language they are learning and to be able to keep communication from breaking down. CSs can serve as a great reinforcement to a CLT practitioner's classroom.

Introduction

In recent years, university communicative language courses have often been including communication strategies (CSs) as part of their curriculum, but how much time is given for students to actively use these strategies? Tarone (1981) defines CSs as being "used to compensate for some lack in the linguistic system, and focus on exploring alternative ways of using what one does know for the transmission of a message, without necessarily considering situational appropriateness" (p. 287). CSs are also the key component to a student's strategic competence and "may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Strategic competence is an essential part of overall communicative competence and is important for communicative language teaching (CLT) in general (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983). Implementation of CSs into a communicative language classroom can aide student productivity while continually building on the foundations of CLT.

CLT

There are many interpretations and definitions of CLT. According to Savignon (1984), CLT means different things to the different people who practice it. Savignon and other language teachers began to look for an alternative to the audiolingual method in the 1970s and gradually moved towards CLT after research (Savignon, 1972) showed that students who had some regular amount of CLT in addition to audio-lingual teaching learned better than students who had audio-lingual teaching only. The audio-lingual method posits that students learn from repetition and habit formation, but it includes very little, if any, chances for real communication. CLT has been a popular research area since the 1970s, but understanding is still limited among teachers (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999, p. 494).

Brown (2007) gives his definition of CLT as "an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task based activities, and communication for the real world, meaningful purposes" (Brown, p. 378).

Brown (2007) also offers four interconnected characteristics of CLT:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of CC (communicative competence) and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complimentary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

(p. 241)

Savignon (2002) writes that "CLT refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning" and that "the central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is communicative competence" (p. 1). One of the main goals of CLT is to develop a stronger communicative competence among L2 learners. Strategic competence (an important part of communicative competence) is defined by Canale and Swain (1980) as "The ability to use strategies to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules or performance limitations" and by Bachman (1984) as "the ability to assess a communicative context and plan and execute production responses to accomplish intended purposes" (Brown, p. 390).

Communicative competence is comprised of four parts which were identified by Canale and Swain (1980). They are: sociocultural, strategic, discourse, and grammatical competence. Savignon (1983, 2002) explains that all four of the competences are equally essential and must work together in order to build a stronger communicative competence. Building a stronger strategic competence is also important for L2 learners. Savignon (1998) describes strategic competence as the ability of knowing how to make the most of the language that you already have, especially when it is "deficient." Savignon (2002) also suggests "the effective use of coping strategies (communication strategies) is important for communicative competence in all contexts and distinguishes highly effective communicators from those who are less so" (Savignon, p. 10).

In regard to CLT, fluency is not stressed as much as successful communication. Willems (1987) believes that teachers need to train students to just communicate in the L2, not to be perfect in it. In a CLT classroom, students strive to get their meaning across and in order to perform this task CSs are a useful way to overcome communication difficulties. CSs supply students with the tools necessary to fill L2 gaps while they are communicating with partners, either native speakers or non-native speakers and allow them to continue speaking. Cohen (1990) says that "a major trait of successful speakers is that they use strategies to keep the conversation going" (p 56).

Further Definitions of CSs and Overall Goals

As with CLT, definitions of CSs are also varied. Researchers today still debate the definition of CSs along with their teachability and usefulness. Below are a few brief definitions of CSs:

> "Conscious communication strategies are used by an individual to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thought" (Tarone, 1977, p. 195).
>
> "To solve own performance problems' and allow the other aspects of problematic L2 production to be dealt with in terms of other, arguably more robust, theoretical frameworks" (Ellis, 2008, p. 504).
>
> "Communication strategies compensate for deficits the speaker may have" (Cohen, 1990, p. 56).

From these brief definitions and expectations of communication strategies, it can be seen that there is general agreement that CSs will give students the power to overcome gaps in their L2 knowledge and allow them to keep conversations going. Students often meet gaps during in class conversations and do not have the tools to get around them. CSs help students to reassess the situation and to strategically overcome temporary difficulties. Communication strategies (sometimes referred to as "conversation strategies" or "coping strategies") are ways for L2 learners to become more confident in their L2 communication and can be implemented in any CLT classroom. "Speakers use communication strategies to resolve difficulties that they encounter in expressing intended meaning; these may be either reduction strategies or compensatory strategies" (Boxer & Cohen, p. 176). According to Ellis (2008), the term 'Communication Strategy' was coined by Selinker in 1972, "but it wasn't until the 1980s that interest in CSs really took off" (Ellis, p. 502).

Teachability of CSs in the Communicative Language Classroom: An Ongoing Debate

While researching the usage of CSs by students, it is important to realize that CSs are developmental. Students learn them gradually over time and need a lot of time to practice using them during conversations in class. It takes time to learn how to successfully use such CSs as summarizing and paraphrasing. Willems (1987) devised a chart that outlined his theory of the developmental sequencing process. Willems' chart or as he calls it "Typology of communication strategies" begins with reduction strategies and ends with achievement strategies which are then broken down into paralinguistic strategies, interlingual strategies, and intralingual strategies. The beginning strategy learner first learns reduction strategies which are broken into formal and functional strategies. Formal strategies are strategies such as avoiding difficult language structures that the speaker does not have the full ability to use. Functional strategies can help the learner to change the topic to something easier if they are having trouble talking about it and also help with meaning replacement and meaning abandonment. The stronger the learner's language ability becomes the more difficult the strategies become. Eventually students can use strategies that they normally use in their L1 such as paraphrasing, describing, asking for assistance, checking questions for understanding, interrupting, and many more advanced strategies. When it comes to teaching these CSs though, how effective is it?

According to Dornyei (1995), there has been controversy over the teachability of CSs from the 80s into the 90s. The debate and controversy surrounding CSs and their teachability continue still today. Dornyei points out that there are problems with the idea of spending time in class teaching CSs whe students already use CSs in their L1 and should be able to transfer those CSs over to an L2 if needed. He writes that "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). Importantly, Dornyei mentions that most of the arguments concerning the teachabilty of CSs are based on "indirect" or "inconclusive" evidence.

Since it is generally believed that students have the capability of transferring CSs from their L1 knowledge over to their L2 knowledge, it is important to encourage them to do so. According to Willems (1987) a teacher should teach L2 students to use the skills that they already possess naturally in their L1. Although with younger learners this may be a problem since their L1 is still developing and they may not be able to transfer over to a second language grammar structure that they do not yet command in their native language. Willems stresses the importance in building a strategic competence in order to help L2 learners "get by" while communicating. He writes also that "A side effect of introducing a certain amount of CSs will be that weaker learners will derive some motivation for learning the L2 as they will develop a feeling of at least being able to do something with the language" (Willems, p. 352). By introducing CSs into your classroom weaker learners will be given helpful tools that can give them a chance to speak more in an L2 classroom setting.

Whether or not researchers believe they are teachable, CSs are not being focused on enough in L2 classes. Willems (1987) writes about "street learners" who acquire an L2 in a native speaker environment and how they become "extremely skillful strategy users" compared to students who learn an L2 in a classroom environment only. Students in immersion settings learn by way of mimicking what they hear from natives and what they may be hearing are a lot of CSs, thus strengthening their fluency and strategic competence. "If, therefore, traditional classroom learning does not produce skillful L2 strategy users and 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" (Willems, p. 354).

Dornyei (1995) brings up an important and interesting point in his study on the teachability of CSs. He writes that "Some people can communicate effectively in an L2 with only 100 words. How do they do it? They use their hands, they imitate the sound or movement of things, they mix languages, they create new words, they describe or circumlocute something they don't know the word for……in short, they use communication strategies" (Dornyei, p. 56). Donyei in his paper, goes on to write that "complete agreement" has still not been reached by researchers when it comes to defining CSs.

Dornyei's study was based on the idea that "L2 learners might benefit from instruction on how to cope with performance problems" (Dornyei, p. 55). It also focused on the teacher's role in the communicative classroom and the teachabilty of CSs. For the study 109 students (72 girls and 37 boys) participated from 5 different secondary schools in Hungary. The study consisted of a 6 week strategy training program. The CSs training was implemented 3 times a week for about 20-40 minutes. Of the 8 classes, 4 of them did not get strategy training, but instead had normal EFL classes. His results concluded that "The CSs treatment was successful in improving the quality of the definitions the students generated as confirmed by the difference between the treatment and the no-treatment conditions" (Dornyei, p. 73). He argued the reasons for and against teaching CSs and in the long run found that students do benefit from learning them. He also found that students could develop and improve their strategy use through focused instruction.

After finishing a study on the instructional effects of communication strategies, Iwai and Gobel (2003) determined that "It is not too late to determine the pros and cons of the CSs teachability issue and come up with a feasible strategy for strategies" (Iwai & Gobel, p. 173). The authors performed 2 studies involving 48 Japanese university students at two proficiency levels. Implicit instruction on CSs was given to the two experimental classes while the two controlled classes were not given implicit strategy instruction. Both classes were communicative based classes. The authors looked at students' learning progressions of CSs and at the teachabilty of CSs. They also looked at the differences between the classes and found that "The results of the two studies provide no concrete solutions regarding the teachabilty of CSs" (Iwai & Gobel, p. 172). They add though that despite the lack of "concrete solutions," the studies shine light on other areas of CSs involving pedagogical issues. Their study argued that it is "premature to determine the pros and cons" concerning the teachabilty of CSs.

Sato (2005) also performed a study on the instructional effects and dynamics of teaching CSs. It was a year long study which makes it an important study in regards to researching the developmental sequence of learning CSs. It is significant because many studies on CSs are based on short periods or a semester at most. The study looked at the teachability of CSs and how Japanese students learned to use CSs from a sociocultural perspective. In his study Sato revealed the dynamics of learning and teaching CSs to his students. He assessed his students' usage of CSs by looking at multiple data sources, including a survey, diaries, video-taped conversations with self assessments, video-taped debates, progress reports, and interviews. He researched the details of how students learned CSs and how in turn they influenced their L2 learning. On the matter of teachabilty, he found that students mainly used CSs that they were familiar with over the first semester, but over time as they learned new CSs, students thought they were useful as well. He writes that "However, only a few learners could use them right after the explicit teaching" (Sato, 2005, p. 4). The fact that "only a few" learners could use them immediately is further proof that learning CSs is developmental and that it takes time to practice and to actually use them successfully. At the early stage of his research Sato reported that the students "had difficulty" in keeping their four minute conversations going though and could not "afford" trying to use the newly learned CSs. Students in the class revealed that many of them had begun to use new strategies in class because their classmates were doing so. They were influenced by the usage of others. His study found that "explicit teaching of CSs was useful to raise learners' awareness but not sufficient for them to be able to use those CSs in their conversations" (Sato, 2005, p. 5). What is needed to reinforce strategy usage are more opportunities to speak in the L2 and encouragement to try and use CSs. When the study began he writes that students "were nervous, memorized what they wrote, and used only familiar CSs" (p. 3) such as using short or stock phrases. When the year was ending he found that students began to challenge difficult topics and used L2 based CSs such as paraphrasing and summarizing. Students also had begun using negotiation skills.

How do CSs Facilitate Interaction and Overall Communication in the Communicative Language Classroom?

In a study done by Nakatani (2005), the author researched the effects of awareness-raising among students while using CSs. The study promoted self-monitoring and proved that an "increased general awareness" of CSs usage can improve oral proficiency test scores for students. The study was based on a 12 week EFL course

where 62 female learners were placed into two different groups. One group became the strategy training group and focused on CSs usage while the other group received only a regular communication course with no extra CSs focus. "For the strategy training group, explicit strategy instruction was introduced to help the learners become aware of their own learning processes" (Nakatani, 2005, p. 79). Nakatani included specific CSs in order to enhance students' skills communication management. Nakatani devised a system to assess CSs where the focus was on "how strategies were used for the purpose of communication and on how this use represented the extent of discourse in the oral proficiency test" (Nakatani, 2005, p. 81). The findings of the research showed that the students in the strategy training group significantly improved their oral test scores when compared to the students from the non-strategy focused class.

Another study done by Nakatani (2006) looked at the developing of an oral communication strategy inventory. The author defined a strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) as " an instrument for assessing the frequency of good strategy use by learners" and also went on to write that the SILL "is regarded as an effective tool for diagnostic purposes to find the weaknesses and strengths of an individual learner's strategy use" (Nakatani, 2006, p. 152). The researcher looked closely at high oral proficiency groups and also at lower oral proficiency groups and found that the high oral proficiency speakers used more CSs. Nakatani also found that "The higher level learners also reported using strategies for maintaining conversational flow and controlling affective factors" (Nakatani, 2006, p. 162). In regards to high oral proficiency speakers and controlling affective factors, negotiation is important to prevent communication breakdowns.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) write that "Negotiation of meaning is accomplished through a variety of modifications that naturally arise in interaction, such as requests for clarification or confirmation, repetition with a questioning intonation, etc" (p. 150). According to Lee (2000), "Negotiation consists of interactions during which speakers come to terms, reach an agreement, make arrangements, resolve a problem, or settle an issue by conferring or discussing; the purpose of language use is to accomplish some task rather than to practice particular language forms" (Lee, p. 9). Lee recommends that L2 teachers "pause to consider the teaching and learning of negotiation devices such as clarification checks, indications of lack comprehension, and so on" (Lee, p. 66). In other words, negotiation of meaning is best accomplished by using CSs.

Conclusion

In summary, CSs became a research topic in the 1970s and continue to interest researchers still today. Based on the writings of researchers from around the world, it is fair to say that many agree that CSs are useful for students and worth being taught in the communicative language classroom. While some researchers may not agree on exactly how useful they are, they still acknowledge the benefits that come with learning CSs. Research has shown the benefits of CSs and how they help students cope with missing L2 knowledge as well as with their negotiation skills. Although the benefits have been proven, there is still an ongoing debate regarding the teachability of CSs in a classroom setting. Students use CSs in their L1, but can they transfer them over to an L2 without being encouraged to do so by a teacher? Is it a waste of time to teach students to use CSs? Many researchers disagree. Using CSs can lead to more negotiation among L2 learners during communication and help them to extend their conversation times. CSs are developmental and it takes

time for students to build a strong strategic competence. Students, if taught CSs explicitly, can overtime with practice, successfully use them to build their confidence in communicating in an L2.

Bibliographic Statement

Joseph Wood is a full-time lecturer at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies where he also earned his M.A. in English Education. He is a native of California and loves traveling. His research interests include communication strategy training, teaching American culture, and communicative language teaching. The research for this paper began as Mr. Wood was a graduate student and appeared in a small in-house publication at his university. It has since been updated, revised, and included in this journal with the hopes of promoting CSs in communicative language classrooms everywhere. He has been a THT member since 2010.

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English Through Popular Songs:
Reinforcing High-frequency Vocabulary and Enhancing All Four Skills

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Abstract
This paper describes a university EFL course, designed and implemented for the first time in the fall of 2011, which utilizes popular songs to reinforce high-frequency vocabulary and enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The course is based on the idea that popular songs in English, widely available in Japan, contain a large percentage of high-frequency vocabulary and are a rich source of natural, authentic, colloquial English, often unavailable in conventional textbooks. Drawing upon research that suggests significant interconnectivity between music and language and indicates that music and language are processed by the same brain systems, the course utilizes a variety of vocabulary building and four skills activities based on popular song lyrics. The following course description includes background information, goals and features of the course, pedagogical approach, songs and vocabulary profiles, presentations, vocabulary issues, and student feedback.

Introduction

As far back as Ancient Greece, human beings have been intuitively aware of the connection between music and language. The word *music* itself comes from the Greek word, *musicas*, which means "an intimate union of melody, verse, and dance", (Dickinson, 1909, in Stansell, 2005). In pre-industrial societies, there is no distinction between "performance" music and "participatory" music, as music is still regarded as "one of the most fundamental activities of mankind" (Storr, 1992). Studies of early childhood language acquisition have also highlighted the connection between music and language (Loewy, 1995; Mora, 2000). More recently, growing evidence from the field of brain research has added momentum to the argument for the use of music as a pedagogical tool. In particular, brain imaging studies conducted by Georgetown University Medical Center are suggesting that music and language are processed by the same brain systems (Duboc, 2002; McPhearson, 2003; Muller & Basho, 2004; Sluming, *et al.*, 2002). Studies of brain plasticity are also suggesting that the brain retains what is important and interesting and discards the rest (Kelly, 2011, Murphy, 2011). It makes sense, therefore, to consider the use of music as a pedagogical tool in the language classroom. This paper suggests one way to incorporate music into the language classroom, namely, teaching high-frequency vocabulary through popular songs.

Why high-frequency vocabulary? According to Wilkins (1972), "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed. Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). Thus, research abounds with theories about the best ways to teach L2 vocabulary. That said, it should be noted that, while the Oxford English Dictionary contains approximately 250,000 word families, only a small percentage of these are actually necessary for day-to-day communication (Brown & Culligan, 2008). An average native speaker uses about 2,000 words in everyday conversation (McCarthy, O'Dell, et al., 2001), while reading recognition of 5,000 high-frequency words facilitates comprehension of 95% of general English texts (Nation, 2001). Research in Japan, indicates that EFL students enter university with significant gaps in their high-frequency vocabulary (Brown & Culligan, 2008) which may compromise both their receptive and productive language skills.

This paper describes a university course, designed by the author, which utilizes popular songs to teach and reinforce high-frequency vocabulary, and enhance all four language skills. Based on the idea that popular songs in English contain a large percentage of high-frequency vocabulary and are a rich source of natural, authentic, colloquial English, often unavailable in conventional textbooks (Lieb, 2011), the course utilizes a variety of vocabulary building activities based on popular song lyrics. In addition, because of the extra-linguistic support it provides, music has enormous potential to enhance memorization, especially of new words and expressions (Medina, 2002). The following course description gives background information, outlines goals and features of the course, maps out the pedagogical approach, includes songs and vocabulary profiles, describes presentations, and discusses vocabulary issues and student feedback.

The Course: English Through Popular Songs

Background

This course was designed for Japanese university EFL students who have completed three semesters of mandatory intensive English. Since students have completed this intensive English program by the time they are midway through their second year, and they have no further required English courses until graduation, many students are anxious to continue their English study so as to maintain their skills at least until graduation. The university, therefore, offers a variety of elective English courses from which students can choose. *English Through Popular Songs* is one such course, and it was designed and implemented for the first time in fall, 2011. Thirty students, ranging from 2nd to 4th year students, signed up for the course. Since there were no course prerequisites beyond finishing the intensive English program, the class comprised a variety of ability levels.

Goals & Features

The main goals of this course were:

(1) To activate and reinforce high-frequency vocabulary.
(2) To enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

In order to achieve these goals, the course incorporated the following features:

(1) Listening activities based on song lyrics
(2) Reading and writing activities based on song lyrics and artist background information as well as researching and writing presentation speeches
3) Speaking and presentation practice through individual and group music presentations, as well as through group discussions
4) Weekly vocabulary quizzes and activities to enhance and reinforce high-frequency vocabulary

Song Selection & Pedagogical Approach

Songs for classroom study were selected based on a variety of criteria. In some cases, songs from a textbook were used. In other cases, songs were selected by the teacher based on their popularity in Japan and their lexical density. Finally, towards the end of the semester, students chose the songs. For each song students were given the song lyrics with gaps, and were asked to speculate as to the meaning of the song. They then completed a listening activity, based primarily on high-frequency vocabulary. Next, students examined the vocabulary and expressions in the song and searched for lexical items based on definitions they were given in class. (A list of sample words and expressions from each song is included in Appendix 1.) This was

followed by a discussion of the song lyrics, including theme and message, and students engaged in class and group discussions about their reactions to the song. They also read artist background information and wrote and answered questions based on this information. Homework assignments often involved students choosing five new words or expressions from the song and writing them in sentences. These sentences were discussed and shared in each class. It was during these discussions that pragmatic and collocational issues became evident, as students grappled with the correct usage of the words and expressions. (This is discussed further below.) To ensure multiple exposures to the song lyrics and words in context, students engaged in concentrated listening to each song at least twice, and repeated casual listening during group discussions, at the end of class, and at the beginning of the next class. Finally, students' vocabulary knowledge was evaluated by means of weekly vocabulary quizzes.

Songs and Vocabulary Profiles

Table 1 lists the songs that were utilized in this course, along with their vocabulary profiles. Vocabulary profiles were completed using the online *Vocabprofiler*, adapted by Tom Cobb, based on Laufer and Nation's Lexical Frequency Profiler. Words are categorized according to frequency levels including the first and second thousand levels, the Academic Word List (AWL), and the remainder as 'off list' words.

Table 1. Vocabulary Profiles

Songs	1,000 Word Level	2,000 Word Level	AWL	Offlist
Just a Kiss - Lady Antebellum	89.9%	5.90%	0%	4.1%
Only Time - Enya	99.1%	0%	0%	0.81%
Top of the World - The Carpenters	96.39%	1.03%	.52%	2.06%
Stand by Me - Ben E. King	92.81%	1.2%	0%	5.99%
Your Song - Elton John	94.44%	3.7%	0%	1.85%
I Don't Want to Miss a Thing - Aerosmith	91.97%	3.28%	0%	4.74%
Hero - Mariah Carey	88.6%	4.3%	2.34%	4.69%
Thriller - Michael Jackson	76.97%	6.61%	0%	16.42%
I Want it That Way - Backstreet Boys	89.81%	2.78%	0%	7.41%
Change the World - Eric Clapton	95.52%	4.48%	0%	0%
Love Story - Taylor Swift	90.73%	3.09%	0%	6.16%
In My Life - The Beatles	95.39%	0.66%	0%	3.95%
The Twelve Days of Christmas	73%	5.4%	0%	21.6%
Do They Know it's Christmas - Band Aid	85.85%	10.85%	0%	3.3%
We are The World - USA for Africa	97.93%	1.55%	0%	0.52%

Presentations

A key component of the course was individual and group presentations, the purpose of which was threefold. The first goal was to enhance and reinforce speech and presentations skills, as all students had taken a required speech and presentation class in the first semester of their second year. The second goal was to encourage self-directed learning, and allow students ownership over their vocabulary and song lyric study. Finally, since all students had taken three semesters of academic writing classes, the presentations allowed them to practice and refine their writing skills by typing and organizing their presentation speeches and sample sentences.

Individual presentations

At the mid-point of the semester, students gave individual presentations. Each student was required to choose a song with English lyrics. They were asked to explain the message and theme of the song, summarize the lyrics, and give their personal reactions to the song. In addition, they were asked to choose five new words or expressions from the song and provide definitions and sample sentences. These definitions and sample sentences were submitted in advance with the goal of anticipating and correcting errors. Students also provided artist background information. Each student was charged with distributing the song lyrics to everyone and playing the song for the class (via You Tube, CD, MP3 Players, etc.).

As presentations must also be given with the audience in mind, audience participation was an integral component of all the presentations. In addition to giving those presenting their full attention, the students in the audience were required to keep track of all vocabulary and expressions presented, and this corpus of vocabulary formed the basis of their next vocabulary quiz. In addition, audience members completed feedback forms in which they offered comments on the presenters' presentation skills (eye contact, gestures, voice, etc.), language (clear, easy to understand, etc.), content and organization (introduction, body, conclusion, etc.), and vocabulary explanation (clear, easy to understand, useful, etc.). These audience feedback sheets comprised part of students' overall grade, and are included in Appendix 2.

Group Presentations

For their final assessment, students were divided into groups of four or five, and were asked to prepare a group presentation based on a song with English lyrics. Each group prepared a powerpoint presentation including information about the song and artist, group reaction to the song, and explanation of the lyrics. As in the individual presentations, each group had to select and teach five new words or expressions from the lyrics. In addition, each group prepared a listening activity based on the lyrics, and went over the answers with the class. They were also asked to prepare a *Word Cloud* using the website *Wordle* (www.wordle.net). The purpose of the *Word Cloud* was to identify the frequency of use of the words in the song and to show the lexical density of the lyrics. Two sample word clouds are included in Appendix 3, showing clear differentiation in lexical density between *Only Time* by Enya, and *Hero* by Mariah Carey.

As in the individual presentations, students in the audience were required to engage in active listening. In addition to completing the listening activity and taking note of the new vocabulary and expressions, all students completed a feedback form for each group (Appendix 2). This involved making comments on each student's

performance and evaluating the listening activities, which were then incorporated into students' overall class grades.

Vocabulary Issues

Over the course of the semester, it became evident that while students appeared to be familiar with many high-frequency words, they did not always understand their idiomatic usage and had difficulties with pragmatic issues and collocational usage. This was evident in their homework assignments, and in their presentations. For example, *Stand by Me* by Ben E. King, contains the expression, *shed a tear*. In a homework assignment, a student used it as follows:

I shed a tear when my grandfather died.

In this case, the student was not familiar with the pragmatic usage of the expression, which is generally, but not always, used in the negative sense, as in *I didn't shed a tear when the criminal went to jail*.

Another example is the nuances contained in the words *crumble* and *tumble* as illustrated in the following student sentences.

The vase fell on the floor and crumbled.

My pen tumbled on my desk.

In the case of *crumbled*, the student seemed to understand that to crumble means to *break into small pieces* (Merriam Webster's Online Learner's Dictionary, 2012), but the nuance is that it is a relatively *quiet* breaking up, as in a cookie or bread crumbling to pieces, or even pieces of a wall or building breaking up. In the above example, to say "*The vase smashed*" would seem more appropriate, as its onomatopoeic nuance suggests a loud sound. These subtleties are very difficult for second language learners to grasp. In the case of the word *tumble*, the nuance is often *to fall forward while turning over*. This nuance was lost and the student failed to communicate the full impact of the word.

A more suitable student sentence that catches the actual motion of tumbling was:

My camera fell out of my hand and tumbled off the bridge into the river.

The expression *close at hand* from Michael Jackson's *Thriller* was particularly problematic for many students. After it was defined as *near in time or place*, a student wrote:

I'm very busy because Christmas is close at hand.

While the sentence is grammatically correct, there are also pragmatic issues. It would have been more commonplace to say something like *I keep my dictionary close at hand when I read an English book*.

Finally, the idiomatic expression, *a shot in the dark*, from Lady Antebellum's *Just a Kiss*, was perplexing for many students. While they understood the definition, once again, usage was problematic. Merriam Webster's Learner's Dictionary (2012)

defines it as an attempt that is not likely to succeed, but one student used it as follows.

The test was a shot in the dark for me to pass.

These pragmatic and collocational issues could possibly be addressed by employing English-English learner dictionaries, but these are not always sufficient when it comes to grasping subtle nuances in meaning. Another possibility, which was introduced to students before their final presentations, is to use online concordances, a variety of which is available. A search of the Compleat Lexical Tutor Concordancer produced the following results for each of the above expressions.

I shed a tear or two as Movietone news told of the death of our dearly loved chief...

The wallpaper in the back bedroom is literally crumbling off...

Barrels tumbled down the mountainsides...

Calenda was not the sort who walked around without one of his "boys" close at hand.

This wine is a shot in the dark.

It should also be noted that while language is constantly evolving, and usage varies widely, teachers are constantly faced with decisions regarding what is "acceptable" and what is "unacceptable" usage. Where individual teachers stand in the descriptivist (What is language like?) versus prescriptivist (What should language be like?) debate (Finegan, 2005) will determine how they approach the above issues.

Other Vocabulary Issues

While the majority of songs selected contained predominantly high-frequency, 1,000 level words, those that did not were seasonal songs which contained thematic or specialized vocabulary. For example, *Thriller*, by Michael Jackson, contains many "offlist" words such as *scream, lurking, terror, paralyzed, masquerade, demons, thriller, ghoul.* The *Twelve Days of Christmas* is also replete with "offlist" words such as *partridge, turtle doves, french hens, maids, swans,* etc. While not the main focus of this course, such words offer students cultural insights into seasonal celebrations, as well as a challenge that goes beyond high-frequency vocabulary study. This was acknowledged by some students on their end-of-semester questionnaires.

Additionally, some songs contain words and expressions which could best be described as literary, lyrical, or metaphoric. Some would argue that although such language may not be useful for day-to-day communication, the beauty of a language is to be found in its literature and poetry (Harmer, 2012). This could also be applied to song lyrics. For instance, *Love Story* by Taylor Swift contains references to *Romeo, Juliet, The Scarlett Letter,* and the line,

You will be the prince and I will be the princess.

Similarly, *I Don't Want to Miss a Thing* by Aerosmith contains the lines:

I could spend my life in this sweet surrender.
I could stay lost in this moment forever.

When I dream of you, the sweetest dream will never do.

Student Reactions and Feedback

During the final class, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire about their experience. They were assured that their responses would be anonymous and would have no impact on their final grade. Out of the 30 students who signed up for the class, 24 students took the questionnaire. Table 2 summarizes their responses.

Table 2. Student Reactions

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This class helped me to improve my English vocabulary.	0	0	17	7
2. I enjoyed this class.	0	1	5	18
3. This class was too difficult.	10	13	0	1
4. This class was too easy.	8	16	0	0
5. I was able to understand most of what the teacher explained.	0	1	15	8
6. I liked the textbook	1	4	18	1
7. The presentations were worthwhile	1	1	13	9

Students were also asked what they liked best about the class, what they found most difficult, and if there was anything they would like to change about the class. The following is a summary of some of their comments.

All students reported that their English vocabulary improved as a result of this class, and the vast majority said they enjoyed the class. This speaks to the power of music as a motivational tool, and a novel alternative to "traditional" pedagogical approaches (Lieb, 2008). One student commented, *"I could understand how the words are used in English."* Another said that he liked *". . . the concept of the class."* A third student said, *"I could learn really natural and casual English. That was very useful."* Another, referencing the power of music to enhance memorization, wrote, *"We could learn idioms with songs, so the expressions would remain in our minds."* Students seemed to appreciate being able to select their own songs, both for class study, and for presentations, as well as the cultural component of seasonal songs, as evidenced in the comment, *"I liked how we could choose some songs to learn in a class, and how we could learn some 'seasonal' songs like 'Thriller' and 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'."*

None of the students felt that the class was too difficult or too easy. That suggests it contained something for everyone and was pitched appropriately. This was difficult to achieve given the fact that it was a mixed-level class, with a combination of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students. Some students, however, found the listening activities somewhat challenging. One student commented that these activities were difficult, *". . . but we could try more than once, so it's ok."* Another comment about the listening activities was *"This activity is meaningful and important thing is trying, I think."* Another difficulty some students experienced was when giving their reaction to a song. One student wrote that his greatest difficulty was *". . . to express my opinion to the audience."* Finally, a student remarked that it was difficult to *". . . make interesting example sentences."*

While most students seemed to understand teacher explanations, a few students appeared to be somewhat dissatisfied with the textbook. This could be due to the fact that the textbook contained some classic songs from the 80's, 70's, and even 60's, rather than more current songs. The textbook also contained some Japanese. One student said, *"The text should be written all in English."* However, the textbook was only one source of music for this course, and in addition to student-selected songs for presentations and class study, more current songs were incorporated into the course to supplement the songs in the textbook. It should also be pointed out that the textbook contained songs that have been famous and popular in Japan for many years. While a majority of students felt that the presentations were worthwhile, memorizing the vocabulary from the individual presentations was challenging. One student said, *"It was hard to memorize vocabulary from all midterm presentations."* As regards the group presentations, some mentioned preparation difficulties. A student commented, *"We didn't have enough time to prepare it because the winter break started and some group members went to their hometown."* For this reason, information about the group presentations will be provided earlier in the semester. Although students were given the option to include a performance in their group presentations, only two groups out of six took advantage of this option. One of these groups may have included the student who said, *"I want to have the chance to sing a song."* In a country where karaoke is very popular, it might be beneficial to incorporate a karaoke component into the class.

Conclusion

This paper described an elective course designed for 2nd-4th year Japanese university EFL students seeking to maintain and reinforce their English skills after the completion of three semesters of required English courses. *English Through Popular Songs*, implemented for the first time in fall, 2011, sought to enhance all four skills, with a particular focus on the activation and maintenance of high-frequency vocabulary. Insights gained from the course included the value of vocabulary profiling to identify high-frequency words in song lyrics; the usefulness of word clouds to highlight high-frequency words and lexical density; and the potential of concordances and English-only dictionaries to address collocational and pragmatic issues. These insights will be used to inform song selection in forthcoming implementations of the course. Another goal is to encourage more student-generated analysis and strategies to reinforce vocabulary and expressions acquired. Additionally, more time will be allotted for group presentation preparation, and opportunities to sing will be incorporated. Ultimately, it is hoped that the infusion of music into L2 vocabulary teaching will inspire both teachers and students to constantly seek out new and innovative ways to enhance teaching and learning (Lieb, 2011).

Biographical Statement

Maggie Lieb received her Bachelor of Education degree at the National University of Ireland, and her M.A. in Reading and Language Arts at California State University. She has taught students of all ages in Ireland, The U.S.A., and Japan, and is currently an associate professor at Meiji University, Tokyo. She has presented at the Teachers Helping Teachers seminars in Vietnam, Laos, and The Philippines, and her research interests include intercultural communication, educational ethics, and musico-linguistic pedagogy.

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Appendix 1: Sample Words & Expressions from the Songs

***Just a Kiss* - Lady Antebellum**
* I'm **caught up in this moment**, caught up in your smile.
* I've never **opened up** to anyone.
* And I don't want **to mess** this thing **up**.
* Just a **shot in the dark** that you just might
* . . . be **the one** I've been waiting for my whole life.

***Top of the World* - The Carpenters**
* Such a feeling's **coming over me**.
* There is only one wish **on my mind**,
* When this day is **through** . . .
* . . . ever since you've **been around**

***Stand by Me* - Ben E. King**
* If the sky that we look upon should **tumble** and fall
* . . . and the mountains should **crumble** to the sea...
* I won't **shed a tear**.
* Whenever you're **in trouble**...
* **Just as long as** you stand by me.

***Your Song* - Elton John**
* It's a little bit **funny**...
* I don't have much money but **boy** if I did...
* It's **the best I can do**.
* . . . they've got me quite **cross**
* I hope you don't **mind** . . .

***I Don't Want to Miss a Thing* - Aerosmith**
* The sweetest dream **will never do**.
* . . . a moment I **treasure**
* . . . for all **the rest of** time.

***Hero* - Mariah Carey**
* **Cast** your fears **aside**.
* The sorrow … will **melt away**.
* A hero **lies** in you.
* . . . when you **face** the world alone.
* **Lord knows**, dreams are hard to follow..
* **Hold on**.

***Thriller* - Michael Jackson**
* You see a sight that almost **stops your heart**.
* You hear the door **slam**.
* You're **outta time**.
* 'Cause I can **thrill** you more . . .
* The midnight hour is **close at hand**.
* Creatures crawl **in search of** blood . . .

***I Want it That Way* - Backstreet Boys**
* But we are two **worlds apart** . . .

* **Ain't nothin' but** a heartache
* Now I can see that we're **falling apart**
* . . . **deep down** inside of me

***Change the World* - Eric Clapton**
* . . . That this love I have inside, is **everything it seems**
* It's **only in my dreams**
* I would be the **sunlight in your universe**
* You will think my love was really **something good**
* And our love will **rule** . . .

***Love Story* - Taylor Swift**
* I close my eyes and the **flashback** starts . . .
* I see you **make your way** through the crowd
* We keep quiet 'cause **we're dead** if they knew.
* When I met you on the **outskirts** of town . . .
* But you were **everything to me**

***In My Life* - The Beatles**
* There are places I'll remember **all my life**
* Some forever not **for better**
* All these places had their **moments**
* There is no one **compares with you**

***Do they Know it's Christmas?* - Band Aid**
* We **let in light** and we **banish shade**
* In our **world of plenty**, we should spread a **smile of joy**
* . . . And it's a world of **dread and fear**
* . . . where the only water flowing is a **bitter sting of tears**
* **Here's to you** raise a glass for everyone

***We are the World* - USA for Africa**
* There comes a time when we **heed a certain call**
* . . . when the world must **come together as one**
* It's time to **lend a hand**
* We are the ones who **make a brighter day**

Appendix 2 - Audience Feedback Forms for Presentations

Individual Music Presentation

Speaker's Name:_____ Date:_____

Song & Artist: _____

Your Name: _____

Presentation Skills (Eye contact, gestures, voice, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Language (Easy to understand? Correct usage?)	1	2	3	4
Content & Organization (Introduction, Body, Conclusion, Length)	1	2	3	4
Vocabulary Explanation (Clear? Easy to understand? Useful?)	1	2	3	4

Comments:_____
_____
_____

Group Music Presentation

Group Leader's Name:_____ Date:_____

Song & Artist: _____

Your Name: _____

Name: _____
Comment: _____

Name: _____
Comment: _____

Name: _____
Comment: _____

Name: _____
Comment: _____

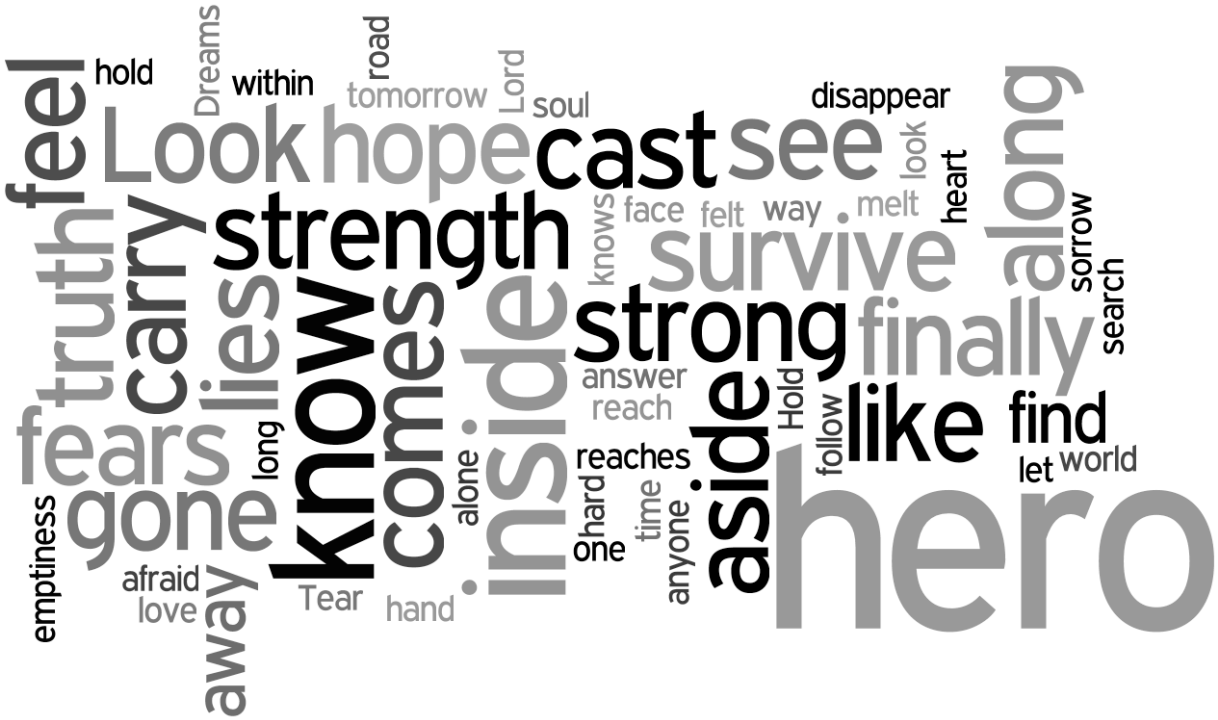
Name: _____
Comment: _____

Listening activity? _____
Overall comment: _____

Appendix 3 - Sample Word Clouds (Showing clear differences in lexical density)

Only Time - Enya
http://www.wordle.net/

Hero - Mariah Carey
http://www.wordle.net/



The Big Challenge: Teaching Large Multi-Level Classes

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to discuss the ways in which an instructor can create a productive learning environment in a large multilevel classroom setting in countries where there are limited resources for teaching. First, the conditions of a large multilevel class are defined. Next, the benefits and challenges of large multilevel classes are discussed. This is followed by a section that suggests strategies for coping in this environment. The first area related to coping addressed is routines, followed by activities for student motivation and activation, and suggestions for teaching writing. After that there are suggestions for teaching large multilevel classes with limited resources.

Introduction

Teaching large English language classes to non-native learners presents many challenges throughout the world. These challenges can be impacted by the fact that more often than not, the classes are multilevel as well. Moreover, in countries where Teacher Helping Teachers (THT) give seminars (Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, Bangladesh, etc.) often there is also the added problem of inadequate resources or no supplies of any kind. Despite these challenges, meaningful learning can and does take place. This paper will discuss the ways in which an instructor can create a productive learning environment in a large multilevel classroom setting. These suggestions come from Baker & Westrup (2000), Hess (2001), Renaud, Tannebaum, & Standal (2007) and the author's personal experience teaching large multilevel classes.

To begin with, it will be useful to define what is considered to be "a large multilevel" class. Hess (2001) defines a large class as thirty or more in her book. Ur (1996) suggests that 40-50 students constitute a large class. However, Baker and Westrup (2002) provide a useful definition by stating that: "a large class can be any number of students, if the teacher feels there are too many students for them all to make progress." Some of these classes have been roughly created according to ability, or by age group, however, many are not. And, in some cases there are teachers who have to manage anywhere from 80-100 students in a single class. However, these situations usually result in situations where the students will vary significantly in their language and literacy skills.

Benefits and Challenges

There are some benefits to teaching large multilevel classes that ought to be acknowledged. To begin with, there are always enough students for interaction. Ur (1996) points out that the teacher is not able to attend to every individual student, thus, the students must develop strategies for helping themselves and their classmates through peer-teaching and collaboration which fosters an atmosphere of cooperation. Therefore, the teacher is not the only instructor/advanced students can explain and demonstrate tasks to lower level students. Thus, having a large class in which to use advanced students as examples/tutors can be seen as a benefit. Furthermore, professional development occurs naturally for the instructors who are forced to come to terms with how to best facilitate a large multilevel class by inventing and developing new ways of organizing material. And it compels the teacher to find better ways of setting up routine activities.

Perhaps, it is honest to suggest that there are more challenges than benefits to teaching large multilevel classes. For example, many teachers feel out of control in such an environment. In addition, many teachers also feel trapped in the problems of management; keeping students on task and speaking in English. Then there is the difficulty of providing for individual learning styles. It can also be difficult to motivate and activate quiet students in a large group setting. There can be occasions where teachers can be frustrated by the huge amount of written work. As mentioned earlier, there is also the problem of teaching with limited resources in many of the THT host countries. However, these challenges are not insurmountable; there are several strategies for coping with such issues.

Strategies for coping

There are a number of strategies for coping with large, multilevel classes. Some of these are general strategies that instructors can incorporate into their teaching routines. Other strategies inform syllabus writing or planning/materials development in that they will help motivate and activate language use in the classroom. And since the author has taught some writing classes with 40-60 students, some suggestions for coping with large writing classes are included.

Routines

One of the basic strategies for coping with large multilevel classes involves setting up routines. This can include things like creating a seating chart and strategies for taking attendance, writing the day's activities on the board, posting deadlines in a visible place, or starting the day with a warm up activity among other considerations. Some other considerations include having established groups in advance for group work and establishing quiet signals to show students when to start and stop activities.

Perhaps, the first and most important coping strategy involves knowing student names. There are several reasons for this and the most basic is to create human relations and to promote a comfortable atmosphere where everyone knows each other and feels comfortable sharing and experimenting in front of one another. Also knowing names can be helpful in the administrative sense by keeping attendance and keeping track of grades. Knowing names is also useful for class management in that you can single out students who are not using English or not on task by name. There are a variety of methods for learning student names including the use of seating charts, name placards, ice breaking activities (like "Find someone who…"), student introductions, and name games (like "I am and I love…" or "Names and adjectives").

There are a variety of warm-up activities to get students focused on English at the beginning of a class that can be incorporated into a routine. Some warm up activities include: songs, games (hangman, telephone, bingo, etc.), quizzes, and discussion questions. Reviewing material is also a common warm up activity. Recycling and reinforcement is important in large multilevel classes and doing this at the beginning of class can reinforce concepts learned in previous lessons. Some examples include: expansion activities, answers to questions, making review posters, review of learned vocabulary (for example: person/place/thing).

Student Motivation and Activation

Another effective strategy for coping involves motivating students to learn and activating usage of English in the classroom. There are several effective strategies for

student motivation and activation. However, Hess (2001) points out that there are a few important things to remember: it is not necessary to hear everything said or read everything written, students should talk about real issues of importance to them, and there should be activities with many choices of expression. Some suggested topics and themes that might be of interest to students include: People I Admire/Special Places/Dreams I Have/How I Feel Now/Friendship/Favorite Things/Shopping/Travel/Eating Out/Careers/Movies.

There are a number of strategies in classroom instruction and curriculum planning that can enhance lessons for large multilevel groups and promote motivation. One area is using a variety of classroom activities. This can be effective for motivation and activation, for example, by mixing activities like lectures, small group work and pair work. Pace is another important consideration when addressing student motivation and activation. It is useful to make provisions for students who finish early and create activities for students who require extra time. Also, it is important to consider individualization, which allows for personalization, choice, and open endedness that can inspire motivation and lead to activation. Ur (1996) describes individualization as a situation in which learners are given freedom to choose what they learn and adopt or select tasks and materials, which suit them as individuals. (p.233) This means creating opportunities for students to work on projects of interest to them as well as chances to exercise language at their own level of competence. Some examples of these activities include portfolio projects, diaries, and poster reports.

It is also effective to have students collaborate and do group work or incorporate project based learning as a means of motivation and activation. Some grouping suggestions from Hess (2001) for activities are: dialogue practice/vocabulary drills/grammar review in pairs, problem solving in small groups, discussions triads, introductions or social interactions with four students or whole class-surveys. Another suggestion is to have students work in groups to produce one piece of writing for each group or complete grammar exercises together. In addition to these activities, there are a number of group projects students can undertake like making original comics in English, collaborating on brochures or newspapers, peer review and collaborative writing and group presentations and/or poster presentations.

Suggestions for Teaching Writing

There are a number of approaches that can make teaching writing to large multilevel groups easier and more effective. Writing can be taught together with other skills, but if the course is a writing course, it is usually most effective when employing the writing cycle. The first stage in the writing cycle is the pre-writing stage to decide upon a topic. This involves techniques like brainstorming, clustering, and lists. After the topic has been decided the next steps are writing a thesis followed by an outline. Once these have been decided the students write a first draft. Peer editing is an essential part of the writing cycle and students can edit each other's first drafts. One approach can require students to have one self edit and two peer edits before teacher evaluates the final draft: this would suggest that the first and second drafts would have peer edits for content and technical aspects of writing with one final self edit before handing in the final draft for evaluation. In the event that a large portion of the students are low level it can be useful to give students examples of common writing errors in regards to style, usage, spelling, or grammar then edit for those examples. For example, if the students are having trouble with subject and verb agreement, a mini-lesson with examples before editing will help students identify

errors in their individual writing and that of their classmates. The writing cycle can include a portfolio of student drafts to bring to writing conferences in order to get meaningful feedback, but the peer editing should also provide meaningful feedback.

Teaching with Limited Resources

As mentioned earlier, many of the teachers who attend THT seminars have the added burden of a lack of resources. This could mean no textbooks, no access to photocopiers, little access to books, or no electricity. Renard, et al. (2007) suggest an alternative to writing notes on the board is for students to copy as the teacher dictates the information using dictogloss. He does not suggest that this activity be used instead of writing notes on the board exclusively, but rather as a supplemental activity to use on occasion. This is a method where students listen to a passage twice read at normal speed, taking notes during the second reading. Then students work with a partner to try and reassemble the text. Once the pair thinks that they have the correct reconstruction they write the section on the board and the whole class work together to recreate the original as much as possible. Then the teacher makes the final corrections. In order to save time during class, teachers can write texts or questions on large sheets of paper before class rather than writing on the board. If the class is especially big, then two or three copies can be made. Teachers can also ask students to bring an item from home to use as a talking or writing point for the class. Another suggestion is using pictures from magazines or drawn to illustrate vocabulary or create interest in reading, speaking, or writing activities. Use what the students say themselves as the input. This can be done by having student change direct speech into indirect speech, having the a student ask a question and then have another report orally or in writing what the student said, or students can make statements on topics provided by the teacher and the rest of the class writes it down as student-centered dictation.

Conclusion

Of course every teacher would like to have a class of less than 10 students in a state of the art classroom with all the latest access to technology. However, that is a far cry from what many teachers who attend THT seminars throughout the world. But this does not mean that they cannot effectively teach large multilevel groups. And it is the individual teacher's role that is effective in determining the rate of language acquisition and learning in the classroom. If the teacher is open to reorganizing the classroom and allowing more activities, then the student will be in a better position to learn. The coping strategies that focus on routines, motivation and activation, and teaching writing offer some possibilities for incorporating new ideas in the classroom. The final section related to teaching with limited resources suggests ways to do more with less. There are always ways to make learning more fun, easier for the teacher and students, so it is important to keep looking for better more effective ways of instruction.

Biographical Statement

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Toward Learner Autonomy

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Introduction

The term "learner autonomy" has attracted lots of attention in educational psychology and in the L2 field for the past three decades. Initiated by Holec (1981), the relevance of learner autonomy in foreign language learning has been highlighted in numerous books and articles. Dornyei (2001) elucidates the popularity of the concept among researchers by arguing that it could be due to the resistance of educational organizations to the kinds of changes the scholars would have liked to see implemented, and "research has therefore turned to analyzing how to prepare learners to succeed in spite of the education they receive" (p. 103). Further, he infers that it could also be due to some evidence that autonomous learners may gain greater proficiency in learning a target language. However, Apple (2011) claims, "there is still an overall lack of generalizable empirical evidence that autonomy leads to increased foreign language proficiency" (p. 194). In many ways, the key to understanding autonomy in language learning is that in an ideal framework, it should emanate from within (Benson, 2007). In order for this to occur, students generally need a good deal of prodding and incentives to help encourage them. Little (1999) argues in favor of developing learners' metalinguistic awareness and deploying the metalinguistic function in the foreign language classroom. He further postulates that the development of learners' autonomy depends on "pedagogical procedures that exploit learners' relevant action knowledge" because based on their actual knowledge learners are able "to engage in exploratory talk, and through exploratory talk they accept responsibility for their learning" (p.8). During roughly the past thirty years, psychologists and linguists have attempted to formulate general theories on the core features of learner autonomy in second/foreign language learning. Some have argued that learning is entirely the product of experience and that our environments affect us all in the same way. Wilkins (1972, p.188) stipulates, "…it is only the environment that teachers can manipulate in teaching." Ushioda (2003) purports that, "…only under conditions which provide autonomy, allow room for negotiation, and make the learning process challenging and personally meaningful, can learners be brought to endorse educational principles and values" (p.99). More recently, Ushioda (2009) suggests that the focus should be shifted on "person-in-context," rather than on context as an independent variable to "capture the mutually constructive relationship between persons and the contexts in which they act, a relationship that is complex, dynamic and non-linear" (p. 218). In his definition of autonomy, Holec (1981) suggests that it should be viewed as the ability of a student to take charge of his/her own learning. This paper will, however, present the broader definition of learner autonomy by Richards and Schmidt (2002) since it highlights the key factors of what learner autonomy should encompass within the global arena of language learning. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), learner autonomy in language teaching is "a principle that learners should be encouraged to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it" (p. 297). Hence, what pedagogical ingredients should reflect autonomy-supporting teaching? Dornyei (2001) proposes increased learner autonomy in organizing the learning process and a change in the teacher's role as the key constituents to enhancing learner autonomy in a language programme. This paper presents short summaries of recent studies on learner autonomy within specific contexts, followed up by the discussion of the broader issue of how this

particular aspect of language teaching pedagogy, i.e., fostering autonomy has been investigated.

Focal Studies

This section of the essay will present short summaries of recent studies pertaining to the field of learner autonomy in a language learning educational environments within a variety of contexts. The first summary will focus on a study by Lo (2010) in the Taiwanese context. Lo (2010) attempted to address challenges for students and teachers involved in developing a reflective portfolio to promote autonomous learning in the Taiwanese university context. Bonn (2011) sees a reflective portfolio as " a space in which students reflect on their learning, and how the included student work is a mirrored reflection of such learning" (p. 35). A large number of students completed their individual portfolio projects. Qualitative research methods deploying a pre-course questionnaire, post-course self-evaluation, and the instructor's field notes were used as the data collection tools. The findings show that the portfolio allowed students to "engage in multi-domain learning and to practice autonomous learning" (Lo, 2010, p. 77). Moreover, the results reveal that through the learning process of developing critical thinking skills, learners were able to capture the impetus for autonomous learning. The author suggests that understanding the challenges for both Taiwanese teachers and students involved in a process of developing a reflective portfolio can provide efficient pedagogical mechanics that can be contextualized for a specific local setting. This study has contributed to the broad research on learner autonomy, in particular, highlighting some of the potential benefits of using portfolios to foster autonomous learning in an Asian context (Bonn, 2011; Smith, 2011).

The global spread of Internet computer technology has gradually found its niche in institutionalized and non-institutionalized language learning. Benson (2007) argues in favour of opportunities for learner autonomy provided by computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and the importance of "attention to autonomy in the development and use of CALL technologies" (p. 26). A recent contribution to the literature in this area is a study by Castellano, Mynard and Rubesch (2011), which highlights an ongoing action research project based in a self-access learning center (SALC) at a small private university in Japan. The aim of this study was to investigate the ways in which SALC users currently use technology outside of the class and how they might perceive using technology-based learning tools (TLLT) in the future for self-access language study and practice. The sample for this study included twenty-nine university students. The researchers collected data using two instruments: a questionnaire with both close-response and more open-response items, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The findings of the analyzed data reveal SALC users' interest in TLLT, but, a low *usage* interest at the same time, which the authors explain could be due to a combination of lack of awareness, lack of learner support, and uninformed purchasing decisions. Castellano and colleagues (2011) conclude that the effective use of TLLT requires careful attention to the students served by a particular self-access center. Their conclusion supports earlier findings by Cotterall (1995) where the author claims that "providing a large number of attractive self-study resources does not automatically turn dependent learners into autonomous ones" (p. 226).

Tracing the studies in the thread of innovative forms of communication in the 21st century, it would be relevant to mention blogging since it has firmly instilled its presence in a virtual space and time. In recent years more and more educational

programmes have been implementing weblogs or blogs in their curriculum with the aim of fostering learner autonomy and promoting the acquisition of critical thinking skills. Bhattacharaya and Chauhan (2010) define blogging as "a kind of spontaneous online journal, a sort of hybrid diary/bio/community/bulletin board, a dynamic place that is connected by time and topic, or a personal diary of events and thoughts" (p. 377). The study by Bhattacharaya and Chauhan (2010) aimed to explore the interrelationship between learner autonomy and Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL) at a university in India. The learners were asked to submit reflective reports at the end of the project, and some of them participated in a follow-up structured interview. Qualitative analyses of the reflective reports show that blogging raised students' awareness of developing interaction within the virtual space. Furthermore, the findings reveal that BALL could foster autonomy by developing students' language and cognitive skills and help them make informed choices about their decisions. Additional findings of the study report that blogging has enabled learners to become more autonomous in the process of acquiring essential skills to create and edit their own blogs.

Another study relevant to the issue of learner autonomy implementation had been conducted within the Ukrainian educational context. Bullock (2011) conducted a small-scale exploratory study to address teacher attitudes, beliefs and behaviour pertaining to learner self-assessment during the implementation of a revision of assessment procedures for teenagers aged 14-16 years. Data collection instruments consisted of quantitative and qualitative methods to ascertain what teachers understood by self-assessment and the ways they had implemented it. The findings reveal that teachers' overall attitudes to self-assessment were positive, however, its implementation was a core problem: in particular, formulating and integrating learners' personal aims have been found to be the most problematic issue for teachers. In regards to learners' attitudes to autonomous learning it was reported by teachers that students were not taking it seriously and preferred conventional forms of assessment to the self-assessment one. However, these findings were based on teachers' assumptions and *not* supported by the research procedures. Bullock (2011) concludes her study by placing a great emphasis on the salience of understanding of the core reasons teachers do what they do, since this is crucial to manage changes to any educational programme effectively. This study has presented evidence-based findings by pinpointing two salient components of learner autonomy research, i.e., the context, teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Since it has been a widely adopted view among the researchers and practitioners that learner autonomy is a 'western' concept, and that Asian students find it difficult to accept autonomous learning, Bullock's (2010) study provides a multifocal lens through which researchers and practitioners can look more closely at learner autonomy.

The Participants

The above-mentioned studies incorporated ratings by the teachers to a greater or lesser extent, as well as the participants' own self-report inventories and verbal reports during the interviews. So far, the studies described have taken as their participants groups of university students and a group of teenagers aged 14-16 years (Bullock, 2011) focusing on aspects of learners' attitudes towards autonomous learning and on teachers' beliefs. This part of the paper highlights the criteria for participants' selection, i.e., the sample size and who has been included and/or excluded from the studies, deployed by the researchers.

Hence, what criteria did the researchers use in selecting their participants? Interesting recurring phenomena across the studies by Castellano and colleagues (2011) and Bhattacharaya and colleagues (2010) is the participants' availability. Both studies used the sample size of participants ranging from 29 to 35 participants. However, no clarification has been reported as to which independent/dependent or extraneous variables were deployed once the sample size had been determined. Castellano's (2011) study included twenty-nine participants: 20 females and 9 males, ranging from university freshmen to seniors. It is not, however, clear which group reported negative factors associated with technology usage: unable to use technology-5 students, lack of awareness-3 students, unwillingness to use technology-3 students. Going back to Bhattacharaya's (2010) study, it is clear that all the participants were in their second year of MA (ELT) studies, however, the researchers themselves reported that "students had different linguistic proficiencies and needed constant support" (p. 377). Moreover, the gender variable was not singled out in the study, which conceivably could have yielded different results and findings, since the success of the course completion required not only linguistic proficiency but also skills and competence in using technology. It is not clear whether female students had more/less skills in technology usage or linguistic competence, thus implying that the study could have benefitted from a contrastive analysis deploying gender-related factors. The studies by Lo (2010) and Bullock (2011) included participants of different age and gender in the former, failing, however, to mention the gender factor in the latter. No linguistic competence differentiation between students was taken into account in either of the said studies. Moreover, Bullock's (2011) reports that students' attitudes toward implementing self-assessment were based on teachers' verbal reports and assumptions, e.g.,"students do not take it seriously because it is age- and culture-inappropriate" (p. 121) have arguably affected the results of the study findings. Another participant-related issue in Bullock's (2011) study regards teachers' beliefs. The researcher included 10 participants by clearly stating that 5 of them had taught 5 semesters using self-assessment, and the other 5 had only used it for one semester. However, after analyzing and reporting the results and findings of the study, Bullock (2011) fails to distinguish the differences and/or similarities that teachers had expressed through the Attitude Questionnaire and interviews. It can be concluded that it is paramount for professional and novice practitioners and researchers to approach participant-related issue more carefully so that the yielded results are more meaningful and provide for clearer interpretation and application to other educational settings and contexts.

Teachers' Role

The teachers' pivotal role in the implementation of innovative pedagogical tools and mechanics in a classroom can arguably be referred to as the most important construct. Hence, it is imperative that all practicing teachers realize that students' "constant encouragement is necessary"(Po-ying, 2007, p. 239). Heron (1989) argues that an efficient teacher should take on the role of an efficient facilitator. He advocates three modes of facilitation: *the hierarchical mode*, where a teacher should direct the learning process, exercise power over it, and do things for the group; *the co-operative mode*, where a teacher shares power over the learning process and manages the different dimensions *with* the group; and *the autonomous mode*, the stage where a teacher respects the total autonomy of the group (pp. 16-17). Heron (1989) emphasizes that each group of learners, depending on their learning objectives, will require a different balance among the three modes. It is therefore relevant to examine teachers' roles in fostering learner autonomy across the four studies

described in this paper. Lo (2010) reports that even after a semester-long explicit instruction and training aimed at developing students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills, they still showed significant variation in regards to the skills essential to reflect, assess, and plan their learning. The author claims that it was crucial for her to "alternate roles between decision-maker and facilitator" (p. 89). It can be inferred from this reported statement that even with this teacher's hard commitment to her students and work duties, a change to a program does not happen automatically, but is a gradual process where a teacher's indispensable role should be at the forefront of its implementation. A similar finding is reported in the Castellano's (2011) study where students requested more orientation training and workshops where they could learn how to use technology meaningfully for language learning process. This study did show that without a teacher's enhanced involvement in students' training and explicit instruction on how to use TBLL tools, any SALC center might prove to be useless. O'Dowd (2007) postulates that teachers should be aware of "how to make suitable choices of online tools in order to suit their aims and their students' particular contexts" (p. 151).

A rather different approach to fostering learner autonomy is reported in the study by Bhattacharaya and colleagues (2010). A teacher's role in this study was more of an observer, giving the priority to peer teaching, peer evaluation, and coordination within the groups. However, the reported data showed that only 52 per cent of the students did enjoy this kind of learning. The authors concluded their study based on their assumption that "autonomy cultivated through blogging would make students revisit their blogs and improve upon them" (p. 384). However, the findings of the study show that 22 out of 35 students involved in the study said that they could overcome the challenges efficiently. While it appears to be an impressive number, it is not clear how the rest of the 13 students managed to cope with the challenges. It is also not clear whether these challenges were related to technological or linguistic competence. As the Kemp (2010) study findings reveal, whatever the specific context, "giving individual learners control over *part* of the course" would seem to be more effective in fostering autonomous learning (p. 395).

Bullock's (2011) study raises the awareness of teachers' practical limitations. She found that all teachers agreed that students could benefit from self-assessment when supported. However, from the data, there was little evidence that teachers actually supported their students in setting learning goals. Further, the teachers reported that they lacked skills in implementing self-assessment and needed further support and training. Moreover, they reported having problems with classroom management, a need to some sort of guidance, lack of skills, and a paperwork that was time-consuming. Additionally, the teachers assumed that students were not taking self-assessment seriously in view of age and cultural issues. Again, this was based not on the research but on teachers' perceptions. The results of this study indicate that the success for facilitating or obstructing any new approach to teaching, learning, and assessment depends on the teacher's beliefs and attitudes.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper analyzed four recent studies that have contributed to the growing body of research on learner autonomy. These studies were specifically selected with the aim of presenting a variety of settings and contexts where the research on learner autonomy has been undertaken. This paper has presented evidence-based arguments to emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in fostering learner autonomy in a variety of educational contexts. Further, it has raised

the importance of deploying relevant research tools and methods to ensure the validity and reliabilty of the results and findings of a study. By analyzing the results and findings of the four core studies in this paper, the author has shown that the success of implementing learner autonomy depends not only on the participants and their learning objectives, but also on teachers' beliefs, attitudes and efforts. Littlewood (1999) rightly acknowledges that the language classroom can provide a favourable environment for developing the capacity for autonomy, i.e. the language classroom can give the students "experience of exercising proactive autonomy in the public domain"(p. 88). Consequently, if teachers could create and sustain the motivating yet challenging learning environment, equip learners with appropriate support and strategies essential for becoming autonomous in language learning, and be more sensitive to the needs of individual learners, only then, perhaps, would it be realistic to alter educational traditions deeply rooted within a specific context.

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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Forum: Perspectives and Reviews

Bridging Context to Practice: The Laos THT Experience

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Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language at private universities in Japan has a lot of advantages. There are a plenty of resources for teaching, great facilities, and opportunities for professional development available. Some teachers in Japan are aware of this reality and feel a great sense of responsibility to share ideas based on current research in second language pedagogy with teachers who don't have such opportunities in other areas of the world. THT (Teachers Helping Teachers) is an ideal organization for like-minded teachers to make use of the time, finances, and most importantly, passion to reach those teachers who can benefit from shared knowledge and experience.

Not only does participating in THT projects give you a sense of satisfaction but also an eye-opening experience and opportunity to grow as a professional. Teachers in the programs are often faced with dilemmas, challenges, and the realization of how difficult it is to make a difference in local teachers' professional practice. The experience makes volunteer teachers reflect upon their teaching, feel a sense of community, and appreciate their circumstances. The following is a reflection that provides insights into the experience that the authors had and would like to share for those who are interested in possibly joining a THT program in the future.

Background

After teaching EFL for several years in Japanese universities and being an active member at various professional development events in Japan, we felt that we were ready for a new challenge. When we read an article written by one of the THT members who participated in the Vietnam program, we knew our next challenge should take place in the form of volunteer teaching in a context outside Japan. We felt that not only would it test our teaching skills to adapt to a new environment, but also it would provide us with unique experiences and perspectives that could be beneficial to our colleagues and students who don't have the time or resources to travel overseas. Based on our availability, we decided to join the Philippines THT program in 2010. The program was designed so that all the members in the group gave two to three workshops over the course of two days to approximately 30-40 teachers in a session. Although it allowed us to reach a wide range of audiences and share practical teaching ideas and relevant research with them, the lecture style of workshops limited personal contact with individual teachers. Post-survey results from the event revealed some of their preferences and interests, but we weren't able to get a clear picture of the teaching context and the challenges that Filipino teachers face on a day-to-day basis. We felt that it was important to continue to participate in THT programs to deepen our understanding about teaching situations in other parts of Asia in order to serve local teachers better.

With our previous experience in the Philippines, we set about for Laos with the hope and expectation of providing more effective assistance to developing English language teaching and learning. Even though the two programs were rather different, from our experience in the Philippines, we understood that not all teaching methodologies and techniques would be useful or effective in the context of many of the teachers' schools and classrooms. What we found effective for our students and in our classrooms often did not transpose itself easily into the variety of classrooms

and learners in the Philippines. For many of the teachers in the Philippines, we quickly learned that technology and resources were scarce and often unreliable. Teachers were the main resource in most schools. With this in mind, we traveled to Laos to learn about the Lao teaching context and share our insights about improving language teaching and learning.

Our journey into Lao English education involved two parts, both of which were rich learning experiences not only for the Lao teachers, but also for us. The first part began at the 9th Annual LaoTESOL Conference at the National University of Laos from February 2 to February 3, 2012. There we were joined by seven other THT Japan-based university English teachers including the on-site coordinator, Chris Ruddenklau. Following the conference, we continued to engage with Lao English teachers at Nonesaath Secondary School over the course of two days, February 5 and 6. The following is a report on those experiences and our thoughts and reflections regarding the conference, classroom observations, Lao teachers, and teacher training.

The 9th Annual LaoTESOL Conference, National University of Laos, Vientiane
The conference began with a traditional dance performance by students from the Faculty of Letters and was followed up by group and solo singing performances. These performances provided an excellent introduction to Lao culture and to the conference overall. The conference theme was "Effective Use of Teaching Materials in Classrooms", and this theme was reflected in the variety of plenary speakers' presentations ranging from topics on vocabulary strategies to effective materials to meaningful and engaging ways of teaching.

Over seven parallel sessions and 42 slots during the course of the two-day conference, THT members provided nearly half of the presentations. These included a wide variety of classroom-based activities drawn from experienced teachers such as dictogloss for large groups, using realia flash cards, jigsaw reading, and strategies for practicing English pronunciation. Additionally, research-based ideas about teaching expertise, brain science in the language classroom, and communicative teaching were discussed. Between these sessions were several coffee breaks and a long lunch period that provided time to mingle with the Lao teachers or address questions regarding presentations. On the evening of the first day, we were invited to a conference dinner along with many of the Lao teacher participants. This event offered food, drinks, opportunities to learn traditional Lao dance, and more chances to get to know local Lao English teachers. During the conference, we began to understand a little more about the Laos teaching context. Resources were scarce, textbooks were government issued, tests were high stakes, and teachers often felt pressure to teach straight from the textbooks. The last plenary from Leon Devine, the academic director of Vientiane College, implored participants to be brave enough to use what they learned in the conference in their own classrooms. As several teachers from Nonesaath were in attendance, we were curious to see if and how these teachers would carry this message back to their school and classrooms.

Nonesaath Secondary School
Nonesaath Secondary School is located about 19 km away from Vientiane. There are 1,500 students enrolled in both lower and upper secondary school levels. The classrooms are equipped with the most basic resources, including an old blackboard, chalk, an eraser, and tables and benches for all students. There are 10 English teachers at the school, and they all are provided with a textbook, which is created and mandated by the Lao Ministry of Education. The textbooks appeared to be

written and edited by non-native speakers of English, and the unit topics were somewhat irrelevant and difficult to teach in the Lao context. For example, some topics that seemed inappropriate included units on understanding traffic rules and shopping for food in local markets in English. One teacher said that she would skip units that she just couldn't understand herself. In most classes, students don't have textbooks. Therefore, the teachers write the content from the book on the blackboard, and students copy it from the blackboard. This, we noted, took a considerable amount of class time.

Some classes are one hour, and others are 90 minutes long. Several classrooms are divided by thin metal walls, which echo noise from neighboring classrooms and can make it difficult to hear the teacher at times. In most classrooms, there were nearly 50 students in a small space making it extremely difficult to move students around in order to facilitate pair or group work. In the afternoon, it would get extremely hot, which was exacerbated by the number of students, swarms of mosquitoes, and the lack of working fans. Despite these challenges, generally teachers are enthusiastic about teaching, and students are mostly well behaved and seem to enjoy learning English.

Nonesaath School Visit: Day 1

The school has had THT volunteer teachers since 2009, so the local teachers seemed to know what to expect from us during the visit. On the first day, we met with the English teachers, and they took us to a total of four classes for observation at the secondary school. All classes were conducted similarly in mostly Lao. Typically classes would begin and end with students standing and in unison greeting and thanking teachers in English. Next, the teachers would write the day's date, with the assistance of students. After that, the teacher would move on to the main focus of the lesson that usually involved a long period of time in which the teacher wrote the vocabulary words or a dialogue from the textbook on the board. After all students copied the information in their notebooks, the teacher would read it aloud, explain the meaning, and have students repeat after them over and over again. In one class, the teacher implemented several activities where students practiced the dialogue in pairs, filled in the blanks, and did a role-play based on the dialogue. Occasionally, we were called to read the dialogue in front of the class in order to provide a model for pronunciation. This seemed to be a major obstacle for all of the teachers. Without recorded audio, many of the teachers struggled to provide a model pronunciation of vocabulary words and dialogue. Several teachers approached us prior to the lesson to ask us about the stress and intonation of words.

After class, teachers were eager to receive feedback about their classes, so we sat down with them individually and shared our thoughts. They expressed interest to learn about ways to improve their teaching. We were told at the end of the day that we should prepare a presentation on the following day about teaching techniques that they could use for class.

Nonesaath School Visit: Day 2

The next day, we started our morning by visiting an upper level secondary class. The high school students showed great interest in us, and after studying the conversation dialogue they used the class time to ask us questions with the help of the teacher. We introduced ourselves and gave our impression about Laos and the school. The teacher later told us what an exciting experience it was for her and the students to have foreign guests. She also asked us to model the dialogue and

expressed her appreciation for our help especially because of the lack of audio and few opportunities for both teachers and students to listen to accurate English pronunciation.

Workshop

Seven teachers from Nonesaath attended the workshop about teaching techniques. We began the workshop by expressing our appreciation to them for opening their classroom doors. Then, we gave a positive overall impression of the two-day-observation, for example, good relationships that English teachers share among themselves and with students, their eagerness to learn teaching skills and methodology, and the clear instructions all teachers gave in class where the majority of students knew exactly what they needed to do during the class period. After several observations and exchanging impressions of the teaching methods, we isolated three areas of improvement: vocabulary activities, creating student-centered classrooms, and personalizing materials and activities. Along with these areas, we provided specific techniques and activities that teachers could integrate into their teaching methodology.

Vocabulary

The first concept we emphasized was vocabulary building. All classes we observed had one way of teaching vocabulary: read, repeat, and translate. Research supports applying a mixture of different learning strategies to enhance vocabulary building such as memory strategies and compensation strategies (Oxford, 1990). We shared such a strategy by introducing vocabulary notebooks. This was chosen spefically for a few reasons. First, we noticed that although students didn't have textbooks, they all had notebooks and pencils. Pedagogically, vocabulary notebooks allow students to accumulate vocabulary, but also understand the part of speech and how the word can be used in context. Vocabulary notebooks have been found to be an effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition as well as providing a consolidation of effective independent learning strategies (Fowle, 2002; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Walters & Bozkurt, 2009). We also emphasized the necessity to focus on higher frequency vocabulary words. In some classes we observed, teachers covered more than 20 vocabulary items that included low frequency and uncommon words that even native speakers are unfamiliar with, such as "tone bands" and "rumble strips". According to Nation, these types of words make up less than 10 percent of running words in a text (2008). Therefore, we encourage teachers to focus on the words that were used more frequently in the texts the students studied. At first, teachers seemed uneasy about skipping words in the textbook. However, they readily admitted to the fact that it was unrealistic to cover all the material in an academic year and seemed to accept that elements of the text would be left out regardless. Lastly, we talked about ways to let students guess the meaning of words first before translating and the need to check students' comprehension regularly, such as giving quizzes and memory tests to help reinforce vocabulary learning.

Student-centered

The second point we focused on was creating student-centered classrooms. All classes observed were teacher-centered where teachers stand in front of the class and give instructions and lectures. Although teacher talk is often an appropriate method, it provides very little time for student talk and practice, particularly with large class sizes. In an overview of group work methods, Long & Porter estimated that devoting half of a classroom period to group work can increase individual practice five times over traditional whole class methods (1985). We emphasized that not only

would this make lessons more dynamic and active, it would also promote learner responsibility and autonomy. One of the concerns we discovered among the English teachers at Nonesaath was the lack of space and inability to easily and quickly move students into groups. Therefore, we focused on student-centered activities that can easily be implemented in crowded classrooms where desks and chairs are difficult to move around. Examples such as "telephone", information gap conversations, and role-plays were demonstrated. In addition, we suggested breaking the confines of the classroom itself, and moving students outside into open areas where more variety of student-centered activities could be performed. Although many of the teachers could see the wisdom in this final suggestion, it seemed to be perhaps a bit too far outside their comfort zone.

Personalization
Finally, we talked about the importance of personalization. All teachers followed the textbooks thoroughly and didn't leave any room for students to think, relate, or be creative with the language. Even though the resources are limited at the school compared to our teaching environment in Japan, we emphasized ways to make the material more relevant for students. For example, a method of activating students' schemata was introduced through brainstorming. While all teachers presented vocabulary by simply listing them and making students repeat after them, we explained how brainstorming could interest students, help teachers learn what vocabulary students already know, and prepare students to learn words they don't know about the topic. As we demonstrated brainstorming, teachers became involved and started giving us words that they would like to add to the list in both English and Lao. We also showed ways to make the material more relevant to their students at the school, by simply exchanging words in dialogues and using students' names and information instead of relying only on characters in the textbook. Again, teachers first seemed uneasy and stressed the importance of following the books given by the government. However, as we demonstrated activities, they could see how much more motivating and dynamic materials can be with a slight shift in approach and proper execution.

Overall, the teachers seemed content with our workshop and expressed their appreciation. They took notes of ideas, exchanged their opinions and reactions with each other, and asked us a few more questions about how to implement the ideas into teaching other skills, such as reading.

Reaction
Even though our contribution during the two-day visit to the Nonesaath Secondary School may not have been revolutionary, we feel that everyone involved gained a lot from the experience. While we are spoiled with a variety of teaching resources, technology, and comfortable classroom environments in Japan, we realized that effective teaching and learning can take place simply with passionate teachers and keen students.

It was frustrating at times to simply sit in classrooms and do nothing but to play the role of a cassette player by occasionally providing model pronunciations. However, we knew that it was important as a visitor to first observe what teachers normally do in classrooms in order to understand the teaching context. Waters (2005) states that teacher educators need to be ethnographers of teachers and their teaching situations and consider all the factors that surround teachers in a specific context with

suggestions matching their contexts and philosophy of education. For example, factors to be considered include knowledge of the school, classroom space, curriculum and policy, colleagues, supervisors, and students. Therefore, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to first understand more about the specific teaching context through on site observations in order to offer effective and specific suggestions. Rather than taking over classes to demonstrate our teaching skills and methods, we instead focused on observing how teachers teach within their given context and spent time talking with them following the lessons.

At first we couldn't understand why teachers were teaching the way they did, following the textbook strictly and playing a single role as the knowledge authority by spoon-feeding information to students. Through talking with the teachers, we realized that for many of them this was a similar style to how they were taught English and the only teaching pedagogy that they know from their experience as students. According to Borg (2005), teacher cognition consists of what teachers know, believe, and think, and it is strongly influenced by factors such as their experiences as learners themselves (Borg, 1997). As we heavily depended on methodology that we were most familiar with when we first started teaching and still do, Lao teachers were teaching English the way they knew best based on their previous experiences as learners. Experiences that teachers had as learners affect their images about teaching and themselves and can have an impact on teachers throughout their career (Tsui, 2003). We believed that instead of forcing them to learn and practice "what we know best" immediately, it was important to learn what they consider best for their situation and how it affects their teaching in classroom. As we observed how comfortably teachers practiced rather traditional teaching methodology, we were able to understand why both teachers and students study English the way they do.

Learning about the Lao teacher context and teacher cognition was an important initial step we took before giving our workshop to introduce teaching ideas. Some research suggests that without acknowledging teacher cognitions, teacher training may be less effective to influence teacher's way of thinking (Kettle and Sellars, 1996). By understanding their unique context and cognitions, we were able to prepare a more effective workshop that was able to address specific areas of improvement and more accurately meet their needs. Furthermore, we could share ideas that still maintained elements that were familiar to the local teachers.

We both knew that it would definitely take more than a couple of days to build trust, understand teacher cognitions, the specific context they are in, introduce effective teaching methods, explain research background, train them, and see them adopt and implement new techniques into their classrooms. Waters (2005) explains the nature of the teacher learning process and how complicated it is for teachers to be first exposed to and then eventually adopt new teaching methods. Teachers do not only learn new techniques but also develop new attitudes and concepts. The last thing we wanted was for local teachers to feel threatened with criticism and drastic changes to their classroom practice. However, we feel confident that there was a real connection with the local teachers and that they appreciated our input regardless of whether they employ our ideas in their classrooms or not. We all felt that we benefited from each other through the experience, and the next time we visit, we hope to continue to develop relationships and further expand the training program to include assistance with implementing new techniques.

Most importantly, the experience of English teachers from the United States, Japan, and Laos being together in the same room discussing how to improve teaching gave all of us a sense of unity. Regardless of teaching context, background, philosophy, and teacher cognition, we are all colleagues who shared the strong belief that we want to be better professionals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, participating in the LaoTESOL conference and the THT teacher training provided us with valuable experiences. Presenting at the conference enabled us to meet and talk to dedicated teachers from all over Laos and introduce teaching ideas and research to a wide range of audiences. However, we approached the conference with little understanding of the Lao teaching context. We demonstrated ideas, concepts, and techniques that are successful in our contexts with hope that they could easily be adapted to the local teacher's classrooms. It was in visiting Nonesaath Secondary School that gave us an insightful view into the circumstances Lao English teachers practice their every day teaching. Like a doctor evaluating a patient's symptoms and then prescribing a course of action, we were able more fully to understand the challenges Lao teachers face. In response, we shared practical teaching techniques and ideas that could effectively be adapted into the classrooms of Nonesaath. As we were leaving the school, we passed by a classroom where one of the teachers was using the brainstorming technique to introduce new vocabulary immediately following our workshop. We were amazed with how flexible and brave the teacher was to use a technique she had just learned. It made us realize the need to return and stay longer at the school to assist and guide the teachers as they experiment with new ideas. In the future, we believe it would be useful and effective to create a system in which THT volunteers could track individual teachers at Nonesaath over the course of months and years. This way, volunteers could be provided with background information prior to observing individual teachers and could document evidence of whether or not the teachers are adopting or adapting shared techniques and identify specific areas where teachers need more support.

Not only did the experience help build relationships with Lao teachers, but also with THT members from Japan who helped provide a strong sense of teaching community as well. It didn't take so long until we built a personal connection and respect for each other as English teachers. All the members have a common interest in volunteer teaching, and we are teachers who want to share experiences and knowledge not only with students in classrooms but also with other colleagues. We hope to continue to participate in THT because we strongly believe it is our responsibility to serve and grow as professionals. We feel it is important to share knowledge and experience with teachers who have less opportunity for continued education and professional development. We also learned the importance of understanding the context and challenges that teachers experience in order to effectively support their teaching goals and objectives.

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Inside Burma: Inflatable Globes and Working Towards New Imagined Worlds

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Moving from Military to Democratic Mobilisation

Burma is a country where "(t)he regime spends nearly 25% of the budget on defence and just 1.3% on health" (Burma Campaign UK, n.d.). The provision of healthcare by the state has all but collapsed for the vast majority of the people: they cannot afford to pay even the most basic medical costs. In the case of hospitalisation, the hospital may be able to provide a bed, but family members and friends will be responsible for paying for everything else such as food, bedding, bandages, and … nursing care. The school system is also under tremendous pressure. Children are provided with neither textbooks nor basic stationary, and many children drop out because their families cannot even afford those simple necessities. Teachers' salaries are miserable, so they often end up moonlighting by doing private lessons and other jobs so that they can survive. Most teachers working in the education system have no formal teacher training.

More generally speaking, according to Burma Campaign UK, human rights violations in Burma include the widespread use of forced labour and child soldiers. Labour unions are still banned. One in 10 babies dies before they get to the age of five. The military has also used rape as a weapon of war against ethnic women and children, and more than one million people (in a country of 59 million) have been forcibly displaced from their homes in mass relocations of the population (ibid.). In 2007 Burmese society reached another of its many critical breaking points when Buddhist monks took to the streets in their thousands to protest the poverty of ordinary Burmese people. Held in reverential esteem by their fellow citizens, the monks were brutally stopped by the military. A year later in 2008 the government's response to the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis revealed its utter failure in duty of care to its citizens. This was the moment when the work of existing civil society actors inside Burma gained international recognition, and much greater investments from outside started to be made to support their programmes. The mobilisation of democratic forces towards change started quietly gathering pace.

Under a military dictatorship until 2010 and since ruled by a nominal civilian government, Burma is a society where political change seems to be now happening at an astonishing rate. The leader of the democratic opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, was released from house arrest on 13th November 2010, and this time she has not been re-arrested. Also in 2010, MPs from opposition parties were elected to parliament. With parliamentary by-elections scheduled for April 2012, it is believed that Aung San Suu Kyi, together with other members of the democratic opposition, will be elected to parliament – a moment that will further legitimise the opposition and may conceivably pave the way to its taking power in full parliamentary elections in 2015. As the opposition works towards the elections in April this year, restrictions on press freedom, once total, have been somewhat relaxed, and there is – at least for the time being – the glimmer of a brighter future.

In the summer of 2010, during a weeklong visit to Burma, I had the opportunity to talk with a remarkable woman, Su Su, who runs a grassroots educational NGO called Pyinnya Pangyan. The NGO provides basic education resources for primary and secondary school children, as well as teacher training for non-government-run school teachers working under extraordinarily challenging conditions in Burma. We

met in the NGO's offices near the centre of Yangon. I had heard about the NGO from my wife, a Burmese citizen, and I wanted to find out about the teacher education that Su Su and her colleagues are doing despite the extraordinary restrictions that they face – limited freedom of movement, surveillance, administrative obstruction, and legal uncertainties around the whole functioning of the NGO. During our 90-minute interview, Su Su shared many stories of her life and work. At the end of our meeting I asked Su Su what I could bring next time that would most help her. "Globes, inflatable globes," replied Su Su. She showed me a plastic inflatable model of the Earth, observing: "Children find it difficult to imagine and understand what the rest of the world is like." In this article I would like to share some of Su Su's life story and explain how she and her co-workers are trying to address in a sustainable way the many different educational challenges facing Burma.

Su Su's Story

Su Su started out as a lecturer of English in the Department of English Language and Literature at Yangon University. Pre-1988 the department had an excellent reputation and was a popular choice for students. During this period of her life Su Su taught English language and linguistics and also started working for the Bureau of Education on the development of supplementary English language education materials for children within state schools. This work took Su Su further into teacher training for elementary and secondary school teachers, and, imagining she would have an academic career as a language specialist and teacher educator, Su Su worked for 13 years at the university. Then the events of 1988 took place, which saw a popular uprising against the military government. Two years later in 1990, the National League for Democracy (led by Aung San Suu Kyi) won 82% of the seats in parliamentary elections (Burma Campaign UK, n.d.).

"In 1988, there was this big change in the country," Su Su told me, "and I was very much interested in, trying to change to, I mean, to be involved in something where we would be able to change the education system in this country to suit the needs of the people and to suit much better - to be more meaningful and realistic in turns of objectives and needs and so…in 1988, we formed what we called an educators' union, and we decided to write to the Ministry of Education for the education system to better cater to the needs of people to make education more realistic."

The military however refused to accept the will of the people and to transfer power. It also took action against grassroots initiatives like the one Su Su was involved in. "The military cracked down on all these… there were quite a number of unions that were formed at that time. Everything with the military rule…. everything came to a stop."

After a while, Su Su started working for UNICEF, eventually coming to lead their educational projects in Burma: "As a UNICEF staff I thought I would be able to contribute to better changes in terms of the education system here, but now in hindsight it really didn't happen so much. For me personally I had a lot of opportunity to study more, to understand. Professionally I could develop. I had a lot of opportunity for professional development and in that respect I gained a lot from being a UN staff member. But in terms of how I could contribute or my contributions towards change, I don't think were very successful. The UN system is another big bureaucracy where I think there is more rhetoric in what it does than what it really achieves in doing."

A Grassroots Educational NGO

Six years ago or so Su Su founded her NGO, Pyinnya Pangyan, with a couple of other people. The name means Garden of Education or Garden of Learning. The NGO aims to provide grassroots assistance to children who otherwise wouldn't have access to education. Poverty in Burma leaves many parents unable to afford to pay for school materials, uniforms and other costs at state schools. Because of the fundamental failure of the state in providing cost-free, basic compulsory education to all children, monastic schools, run through Buddhist monasteries, have stepped in to fill the gap. The monastic schools are trying to help children who otherwise don't have access to any formal education at all. Pyinnya Pangyan also supports and has initiated free schools, as well as providing learning materials (often made from recyclable materials) and teacher training to free-school teachers and teachers in monastic schools. (Free schools are literally free in that children do not have to pay for anything: they are open to all in the community.)

"There are now some spaces," Su Su explained. By spaces, she was referring to openings in civil society for NGOs to work. She was also, I realized, talking about legal spaces and finding ways for new schools to be recognised under existing educational law. For Su Su spaces meant, too, identifying local government officials who would support rather than block the NGO's activities in different communities. "Because I believe in this, I thought that if we could be creative enough, we could find some mechanisms where we may be able to provide better access to education for children who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to school under using the private sector umbrella. So that's how we started." Indirectly the idea of spaces involved the physical structures for free schools that Pyinnya Pangyan was succeeding in finding through the monasteries.

Su Su told me the story of how the NGO had two years previously received some funding from the French Embassy for classroom-level aid. With the funds, the NGO bought a piece of paddy land where for one year the villagers worked on the land to raise funds for the school. In the following year the villagers rented out the land because they didn't have enough volunteers, and from the rent they were able to provide the salary for one teacher. This kind of arrangement was part of the NGO's grassroots work. About 150 children attend this primary school.

Over the last few years Su Su has gradually grown more confident that Pyinnya Pangyan is having some kind of direct effect on creating change for the better. "… Gradually now after five years we are quite confident that there is quite a lot of space for people like us to work in the social sector although still the government has a lot restrictions for groups to register as non-governmental organizations or, you

know, for community-based organizations. It's now possible especially at the grassroots level, at the township level, or below the township level for people to organize and to, you know, engage in work that would you know … or for people to be able to find ways and means to overcome some of their own problem."

Towards Collective Educational Change

As I listened to Su Su's story, I realized that she was intent on trying to create a new understanding of education between the different actors that her NGO was dealing with. Her work is driven by the idea that education should be transformatory and empowering for learners as well as teachers, and that the future sustainable development of Burma depends on an education that helps people develop their critical understanding of the world and their role in creating society together. The NGO was very focused on activity-based learning for teacher education and for children in the classroom. It uses recycled materials and trains teachers to produce such materials for their own learners by making, for example, storybooks with pictures from recycled magazines or numeracy games from rubber cut-offs from a shoe factory. Teachers are also taught to involve learners actively in their education and to consider the potential role of reflection in parallel to such activity. For me, there were highly interesting connections here to those ideologies of learner autonomy in education where learners are seen as social actors with rights, not just participants in formal education.

"… In a situation where the government no longer allows monasteries to offer education beyond the primary level, they have created in some places what they call learning circles ... they are organizing groups of children to be able to study together. They would hire a private teacher or they would … try to find someone who would provide some voluntary teaching … part-time or whatever."

However, Su Su explained how much of the educational approach in Burma was teacher-centred and focused on rote memorization of texts. She saw this as related to a loss of direction. By this, she meant that Buddhist principles of critical thinking, awareness and reflection had been lost: "… the essence of this learning became a bit distracted where people focused more on remembering ... and reproducing the text rather than actually applying the basic principles in a way." Instead, Su Su commented, people had mistaken memorizing text as learning. She was quite adamant that Buddhist practice required young people to question, reflect, speak up, and not blindly accept the way and words of others.

The Reflective Principle at Work

The reflective principle was at the centre of Su Su's thinking, and she felt that it could be at the centre of an educational approach that might combine the new with the traditional – not just for learners, but also for teachers. This re-covering of the traditional, and re-interpretation of a centuries-old principle, towards a more modern approach to education informed Su Su's beliefs and practices as a teacher educator. This is what she is "trying to find out" to use her own words.

"We're trying to design our training, teacher training programs, to incorporate that part of the (Buddhist) tradition [= the reflective principle]… not teaching to link these traditional concepts more with more, what you call, this type of learner-centred, teaching-learning theories …Why I believe that we should try to pursue education in this way is that it something much more home-grown. I think it's something that can be more acceptable to people and something that would be much

more sustainable …this is very much a common area where it is principles and tradition that come together… I find that when I engaged in this type of discussion with especially young monks, not just young monks but, you know, even some of the senior head monks, they come to accept it and then are quite excited about it."

Towards a Different Imagined World

Su Su story is situated within the complex realities of Burmese society. The way her story represented the development of her NGO work and teacher education practices rarely failed to situate her work in relation to many others actors - the government, the military, the United Nations, local education officials, children, unions, teachers, families, villagers, young monks, older monks, head monks, monasteries, government-run schools, free schools, other civil society actors, international NGOs, donors, among others. For Su Su education is the key to development, but she is also keenly focused on developing education towards a modern approach that empowers children, teachers, teacher educators and communities. At first it may seem strange that such a transformatory approach should be based on Buddhist principles if we see Buddhism simply as a centuries-old religion. But in so far as Buddhism is about transforming yourself through meditative practice and enlightened action, it can be used as a powerful mediating tool for change. If we also consider the role that monks have played in protesting poverty, monasteries have taken in providing education, and the influence and relationship that monks and monasteries have within local communities as a result, in the absence of the state, Buddhism is potentially a powerful driver of change in Burma. Su Su's efforts to reinterpret Buddhist principles of being and acting in the material world are based on her many years of working in education and realising how difficult it is to achieve grassroots sustainable change. Her own claims of success are humble, but the potential for grassroots change is huge.

Now in March 2012 Pyinnya Pangyan is continuing its work. Su Su is currently campaigning for the National League for Democracy (NLD) and standing for election to parliament in the coming by-elections in April 2012. But, most importantly, more and more children and adults in Burma are beginning to understand what a different world may look like.

Footnotes

There are many online sources for learning more about Burma, including:
(1) The Irrawaddy (http://www.irrawaddy.org/) was founded in 1993 by Burmese journalists living in exile in Thailand. It is an independent news media group providing news, information, and analysis on Burma and south-east Asia.

(2) The Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) (http://www.dvb.no/) is a non-profit Burmese media organization committed to responsible journalism for the people of Burma.

(3) Mizzima (http://www.mizzima.com/) was started in 1998 by three Burmese exiles in India. It provides news, information and analysis for people inside and outside Burma.

(4) Burma Campaign UK (http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/) works for human rights, democracy and development in Burma and is one of the leading Burma campaign organisations in the world.

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Service Learning Report - Philippines Study Tour 2011

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Introduction

This report is intended as an introduction to and reflection on a study tour that was organized for students at Konan University, Hirao School of Management (CUBE). The Philippines Study Tour (PST) was conducted from February 17 to February 27, 2011, and coincided with our Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) seminar at College of St. Anthony. As with the first PST (conducted in February of 2010), this year's study tour was organized around a service-learning framework (Appendix 1) developed by Catherine Berger Kaye (2010). The seven students who participated earned two fieldwork credits toward their undergraduate degree at CUBE for completing the pre-departure preparation (20+ hours), fieldwork in the Philippines (40+ hours), and follow up (20+ hours) phases of the project. As the organizer and advisor for this study tour, I had several learning outcomes in mind. Some of these were shared explicitly with participants, while others were kept intentionally in the background. The main language-learning objectives were as follows.

Upon completion of this study tour, participants will demonstrate the ability to:
- read and comprehend information about volunteer organizations
- write coherently in a variety of genre, e.g. overviews, reports, thank-you letters
- speak confidently about social issues such as poverty and discrimination
- understand native and non-native varieties of spoken English

In addition to their language studies, participants are studying about economics and management. Thus, I wanted to focus students' attention on these areas of study as well. In our pre-departure orientation, I explained that we would be looking at two concepts: cost-benefit analysis and purchasing power parity (PPP). The issue of cost-benefit analysis came up during our pre-departure preparations when students spent a great deal of time preparing an elaborate, decorative pre-departure booklet. I explained that this booklet was only for our use, and that our time could have been better spent on other types of preparation. Since we were scheduled to meet with representatives from three different organizations, I asked them to investigate from a cost-benefit perspective. As for PPP, I assigned students to decide on a basket of goods for price comparison and investigate average wages for different jobs.

The first PST was conducted in late February 2010, and my intention this year was to expand on our earlier work, learn more about the organizations and issues we are dealing with, and strengthen the relationships that were established on that trip. This report is divided into six main sections, specifically (1) pre-departure, (2) interactions with THT delegates, (3) meetings with University of the Philippines AIESEC (Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales") members, (4) working with indigenous children in the village of Banilad, (5) visits to two shelters caring for street children, and (6) follow up activities. My reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as suggestions for improvement are included throughout the report and summarized in the conclusion.

Pre-departure Preparations

Our pre-departure meetings were planned for late January and mid-February. Some of the participants were working at part-time jobs during this period so it was difficult to gather all members in the same place at the same time. I was also busy with other work, so my attention was divided. Nevertheless, students were eventually able to compile a pre-departure booklet with schedules, profiles, maps and other important information that we copied for all delegates the night before our departure.

The starting point for this year's PST was to read last year's report and pre-departure booklet. Students then were involved in the following activities: (1) researching and gathering more detailed information on each of the organizations we would be dealing with (BUKID, Teachers Helping Teachers, House of Refuge, and Virlanie), (2) editing and compiling this information with other useful/important information for the pre-departure booklet, and (3) preparing lesson plans, activities and materials to be used when interacting with indigenous children in the village of Banilad as well as street children in the two shelters we were scheduled to visit.

In the end, all participants were able to fulfill the twenty-hour pre-departure requirement and several individuals far exceeded this minimum. My hope was that our second-year participant (who also joined PST in 2010) would work closely with the others as a type of mentor. This did not materialize because of the schedule conflict mentioned above, but he was able to share some of his ideas and opinions in preparation of the pre-departure booklet and classroom activities. The pre-departure phase of the project would be strengthened by increasing the number of direct contact hours, increasing the number of meetings to gather all students, and by organizing meetings with individuals and groups in Japan (e.g. NGOs working in the Philippines or Kansai-area AIESEC members and trainees).

Teachers Helping Teachers (THT)
THT is one of the many special interest groups (SIGs) under the umbrella of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). THT is involved mainly in organizing and conducting teacher training seminars and workshops in countries where teachers have limited or no access or resources to participate in professional development endeavors. This grassroots organization started in 2005 in Bangladesh and has now conducted over twenty such seminars and workshops, and regularly sends delegates (based mostly in Japan) to Bangladesh, Vietnam, Laos, Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines. It is also through THT that I became aware of BUKID foundation and their educational programs to help Mangyan children in the village of Banilad on Mindoro Island.

Our Philippines Study Tour coincided with this year's THT event titled 4th Wave Teachers Helping Teachers Seminar/Workshop. Although I originally had some apprehensions about mixing THT and study tour activities, this turned out to have several benefits. First, students were able to see first hand some of my own volunteer activities. Second, the teachers from Japan warmly offered encouragement and help to the PST students. Finally, students were able to work alongside experienced teachers when they led lessons and activities for the children. Several students mentioned interaction with THT participants in their reports and presentations.

Interaction with two of the THT delegates was especially fruitful. First, Bill Mboutsiadis from Toronto, Canada is a former AIESEC member who had several

stories to share about his own internship and other AIESEC experiences. He encouraged our CUBE students to find out more about AIESEC and consider signing up for an extended internship. He stressed that his involvement with AIESEC changed his life and opened many doors. The other delegate that offered advice and counsel to our students was Megumi Kawate, who has written textbooks and conducts workshops on TOEFL iBT test preparation. She talked extensively with our students about test-taking strategies and affective dimensions of the test, as well as life in general.

Looking back, I can few demerits to organizing this study tour to coincide with a THT event. There are many benefits to reap from this type of exchange, as long as there are opportunities for the groups (teachers and students) to have some of their own activities independent of the other.

AIESEC

According to their website (http://www.aiesec.org/), AIESEC is the largest student-run organization in the world, with over 50,000 members in 107 countries and territories. Their mission is summarized as follows:

Focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, AIESEC offers young people the opportunity to be global citizens, to change the world, and to get experience and skills that matter today.

Our connection with the University of the Philippines (UP) local committee (e.g. chapter) of AIESEC (http://www.aiesec.org/philippines) was made through April Alcazar, who is on the Board of Directors of BUKID Foundation, is a graduate of UP, and is a former president of AIESEC at UP. More information on AIESEC and their activities can be found elsewhere in this report, but the vision and mission of AIESEC are closely aligned with what I hope we are doing at Konan University and the Hirao School of Management.

During PST 2010, participants visited UP and met with AIESEC officers and general members. This year, we were able to expand on this activity with a one-day workshop that was held in conjunction with the Teachers Helping Teachers seminar (mentioned above). In this workshop, the President and other officers of the UP chapter of AIESEC outlined their activities, explained their various duties, and shared stories of their involvement. The UP students also led some team-building activities. Later in the day, April Alcazar gave a multimedia presentation that included previous PST projects as well as some background of her own involvement in AIESEC, including an extended internship in Germany. We also got the idea for making a multimedia presentation (mentioned later) from this presentation by Ms. Alcazar.

The AIESEC workshop also included presentations by two Japanese students that were in the Philippines for two-month internships. One student, Junya Ueda, was a fourth-year student at Waseda University studying business. The other student, Chihiro Shimada, was between her first and second year in the Policy Studies program at Kwansei Gakuin University. We spent quite a bit of time with these students, both in Manila and on the island of Mindoro. Our CUBE students were able to meet and talk with these internees about their projects in the Philippines, namely going over the financial statements for Bukid Foundation and developing proposals for how to assist Bukid and the Mangyan children in Banilad.

This component of the study tour was largely successful in that our students could interact with business and management students almost the same age as themselves, and see the degree of professionalism these students develop through their AIESEC involvement. Additionally, some of the students may actually go on to pursue an AIESEC internship, or at least get involved in AIESEC activities in the Kansai region.

As a side note, the UP chapter of AIESEC was hosting a reunion for several hundred alumni (both domestic and foreign) during our stay and invited the internees and our CUBE students to attend. This provided our students with the opportunity to met and talk with many more Filipinos as well as other people from around the world. This was also a great opportunity to see how young Filipino people socialize.

Bukid Foundation
Bukid is short for Buhay at Kinabukasan Development Foundation, Inc., and means development for life and future. Bukid is a small NGO whose main activities include (1) educational support for the Alangan Mangyan village of Banilad on Mindoro Island, and (2) organizing and conducting the Philippines Study Tour for students from overseas. The main purpose of the Philippines Study Tour is to work together with Bukid Foundation on educational activities for the Mangyan children. At the same time, participants have the opportunity to immerse themselves in community life in Banilad, gain volunteer work experience, and observe first hand how an NGO is managed and operated.

The Bukid website (http://bukidfoundatione.jimdo.com/) lists the following mission statement and programs:

> *The purpose of Bukid Foundation is to aim at the independence of Mangyan children living in Banilad by financing their education.*
>
> *1. Education Program*
> *This is the main program sponsored by Bukid Foundation. Under this program, Bukid Foundation provides free primary school education, grants of high school and college tuitions as well as vocational and technical training for Mangyan people to prepare for the future. Most of these costs are covered by donations from Foster Parents.*
>
> *2. Nutrition Program*
> *This program teaches Mangyan adults and children the importance of eating vegetables and taking nutritious diets. This program also provides lunch meals at school for school children.*
>
> *3. Personal Hygiene Program*
> *This is an essential program to understand the basics about hygienic practices such as washing and cleaning. Mangyan people are expected to protect themselves from diseases caused by poor hygienic conditions and to learn minimum knowledge which is necessary to live a healthy life.*

This part of the study provided the biggest culture shock for students. Staying in the village, which has no electricity or modern conveniences, had a visible effect on our students from Japan. Several comments from our students impressed upon me the value of the experience. For example, more than one student commented on how

warm and friendly the children were despite having so little in the way of material wealth. Other students were shocked at how small and obviously undernourished the children were. The educational challenges were also commented on. Our students experienced first hand the difficulties of classroom teaching, including gaining and keeping pupils' attention.

Other valuable experiences were bathing in the river and the friendship ritual in which village elders sacrificed a live chicken as a sign of continued friendship.

As mentioned earlier in the report, our students were able to work alongside THT delegates in the classroom. The one down side to this was that in some cases our students relied too much on the THT delegates and did not take enough responsibility for the success of their own lessons. One remedy might be to more clearly schedule activities and identify exactly who will be leading and who will act in a support role.

Shelters Caring for Street Children

The general topic of poverty and specific issue of street children are both introduced in Global Challenges, a required English course for all students in the Management Course at Hirao School of Management. For this reason, I requested Bukid in 2010 to contact groups and/or shelters working with street children to arrange for a visit by our students. This is how we learned about House of Refuge (HoR), which is described in more detail elsewhere in this report. HoR is a government-sanctioned shelter that provides a family atmosphere and nurturing environment for former street children. Another NGO we learned about from the Bukid internee Taku Shiozawa in 2010 was Virlanie (also described elsewhere), which has a similar mission but on a much larger scale.

Expanding on last year's visits, we scheduled two full days at each shelter this year. In this way, our students were able to learn more about the daily operations at both NGOs, and get to know individual staff members and some of the former street children living in the shelters.

House of Refuge

The visits to House of Refuge were scheduled for early in our visit. We spent our first morning (Friday, February 18) in Manila listening to a presentation about HoR activities by Glady Bunao and other social workers at HoR. The THT volunteers and PST participants then paired up to work with some of the smaller children on some arts and crafts activities. These activities centered on the topic of dreams and hope for the future. Although I was busy working with the children at our table, I was able to observe our students in action and was impressed at how immersed they became in the activities as well as how quickly they bonded with both the children and the THT volunteers. These early connections with the THT volunteers also paved the way for smoother communication and cooperation throughout the study tour. Eventually, the different teams came together to present their artwork and explain about the groups' hopes and dreams.

Students followed up this first visit with another full day of activities on Saturday while I was busy with the Teachers Helping Teachers conference, being held on the other side of Metro Manila in San Jose del Monte. Later that evening, the students eagerly showed me their photos and shared their stories of the day. From what I have heard from the students and read in their reports, this day included several

more activities, eating lunch with the children, preparing a presentation on Japan, and some recreation in the form of games and dancing. Another highlight of this day was meeting and talking with the social workers and house parents about the daily operations of a shelter for street children.

Virlanie
Our visits to Virlanie were scheduled for the following week, after our trip to Calapan. We spent our first full day back in Manila (Friday, February 25) at Virlanie, first at headquarters talking with their staff and then at the Gabay Buhay Home, which is a halfway house for young teens. We started this visit with a tour of the shelter and an overview of their operations, including the staffing and schedules. We spent the rest of the morning talking to the staff and children, and our students shared one of the activities they had prepared. After lunch, the PST participants led several activities outside under the covered entrance. In our short time there, we were able to observe several things that again shocked our students. First, some of the children had physical deformities or developmental problems. One girl in particular clung to one of our female delegates and wouldn't leave her side. Another girl had behavioral problems and began acting out to get attention. In our debriefing session, several students mentioned the almost insurmountable challenges involved in operating a shelter of this kind.

Sadly, our visit to a home for younger children scheduled for the following day was cancelled. Our driver got stuck in traffic and wasn't able to pick us up in time to get us to Virlanie. Although this was a discouragement, students were able to experience first-hand the logistic challenges of living and working in a developing country. We called that morning to apologize and eventually wrote a letter to say thank you, apologize again, and share some of the pictures from our visit to Gabay Buhay Home.

Follow-up Activities
Our main follow-up activities are outlined below under the headings of Debriefing Sessions, Follow-up Correspondence, Reports, and Presentations.

Debriefing Sessions
Our first follow-up activity was a series of debriefing sessions held on March 1st, two days after returning to Japan. In these sessions, students were prompted to reflect on their experiences and share specific impressions and opinions on each of our activities. One of my main messages to students throughout our visit was that we do NOT learn from our experiences, but instead learn from reflecting on our experiences. We were able to flesh out some of the impressions and bewilderment experienced by the participants.

Follow-up Correspondence
Another follow up activity was to write thank you letters to each of the groups or individuals who helped us during our trip. This correspondence provided another level of reflection and more practice with writing English. We divided these and other tasks among the participants, and everyone was also charged with the task of reviewing the work of someone else. Again, the challenges of getting everyone together in the same place at the same time proved to be a problem, but we were eventually able to complete this important step.

Reports
I tried to provide as much freedom as possible in regards to the individual follow up reports. Again, I pointed students towards the 2010 PST project report and asked students to dig deeper and expand on what was accomplished before. We had only a rough word count requirement (8,000 characters or 3,000 words), but I stressed that quality was more important in my eyes than quantity. I did not require that the reports be written in English, but encouraged them to challenge themselves in whatever language they decided to write. Again, I required students to have their reports peer edited by at least one of the other delegates.

Presentations
Looking again at the framework for service learning projects (Appendix), the culminating experience is demonstration of learning. I provided two main opportunities for students to demonstrate what they learned from their various activities in the Philippines. The first was to prepare and deliver presentations both at CUBE and for the larger community. As in 2010, I asked students to prepare a presentation for Pecha Kucha Night (PKN). Eventually, we decided that one presentation was not enough and split into two groups. The format for PKN is presentation of twenty slides, at twenty seconds each slide, for a total of six minutes and forty seconds. As the advisor, this format provided me an opportunity to see what parts of the study tour they focused on, i.e. what they felt was most important. Although no concrete plans are in place, the students are prepared to present at least one more time in public, hopefully at main campus of Konan and/or a Nishinomiya International Association (NIA) event.

The other opportunity to demonstrate what the delegates learned was to plan and prepare a multimedia presentation that included still images with voiceovers, video and other digital artifacts. I asked them to storyboard this, but I was not able to review the storyboard before they began production. The presentation is posted online (http://gallery.me.com/bjones_jp#100071/) and will be sent to our main host BUKID foundation for their promotional activities. We also plan to use this video to promote the Philippines Study Tour here at CUBE and raise awareness of the plight of the Mangyan on Mindoro Island and the street children in Manila.

Conclusion
By far, the most rewarding part of conducting this type of study tour for me is having the opportunity to get to know individual students better. Being together on the road for ten days gave me a chance to find out more about this group of students as individuals as well as representative Japanese young adults. I hope participants follow up on these experiences and continue investigating the issues of poverty and the plight of the children in Banilad and the shelters of Manila. Hopefully one or more participants will follow up on the study tour by getting involved in AIESEC and/or signing up for an extended internship in the Philippines or somewhere else.

As mentioned throughout my report, there are areas for improvement. I will stress to future groups the importance of time management during the preparation stage, and schedule more time for everyone to gather before and after the fieldwork part of the project. Students also need to take more initiative in preparing and conducting the activities for children, and not rely on the teachers so much. For future study tours, I will require students to leave their electronic devices behind. There were several times during the study when I felt students were missing a big part of the

overseas experience because their attention was locked into the iPhones (listening to Japanese music and looking at photos/videos of friends in Japan). In some ways, the students never left Japan. I have already discussed this problem with organizers in the Philippines. We are considering ways to get our Japanese students away from each other, possibly by pairing them up with Filipino students for the duration of the study tour.

Despite the shortcomings, I strongly feel that these study tours offer students an expanded horizon and many opportunities for personal growth. I am already looking forward to PST 2012.

Biographical Statement

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Appendix - The Five Stages of Service Learning

Inventory and Investigation

Using interviewing and other means of social analysis, students:

- catalog the interests, skills, and talents of their peers and partners
- identify a need
- analyze the underlying problem
- establish a baseline of the need
- begin to accumulate partners

Preparation and Planning

With guidance from their teacher, students:

- draw upon previously acquired skills and knowledge
- acquire new information through varied, engaging means and methods
- collaborate with community partners
- develop a plan that encourages responsibility
- recognize the integration of service and learning
- become ready to provide meaningful service
- articulate roles and responsibilities of all involved
- define realistic parameters for implementation

Action

Through direct service, indirect service, research, advocacy, or a combination of these approaches, students take action that:

- has value, purpose, and meaning
- uses previously learned and newly acquired academic skills and knowledge
- offers unique learning experiences
- has real consequences
- offers a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes, and to succeed

Reflection
During systematic reflection, the teacher or students guide the process using various modalities, such as role play, discussion, and journal writing. Participating students:
• describe what happened
• examine the difference made
• discuss thoughts and feelings
• place experience in a larger context
• consider project improvements
• generate ideas
• identify questions
• encourage comments from partners and recipients
• receive feedback

Demonstration
Students showcase what and how they have learned, along with demonstrating skills, insights, and outcomes of service provided to an outside group. Students may:
• report to peers, faculty, parents, and/or community members
• write articles or letters to local newspapers regarding issues of public concern
• create a publication or Web site that helps others learn from students' experiences
• make presentations and performances
• create displays of public art with murals or photography

Dictogloss: A Multi-Skill Task for Accuracy in Writing Through Cooperative Learning

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Abstract
This article describes Dictogloss as a collaborative listening and writing task that promotes oral interaction, communicative competence, and written output through the exploration and understanding of both content and organisational structure of text and its language features. It begins with an explanation of the Dictogloss task and provides an overview of its purpose and objectives. It outlines the research that supports the choice of Dictogloss in the L2 classroom. It then offers a step-by-step teacher-friendly guide to "doing" Dictogloss. Finally, it states the benefits to learners and teachers of Dictogloss, and poses several questions for teacher reflection.

Keywords: dictogloss, cooperative learning, active learning, text reconstruction

Introduction

Encouraging my Japanese students over the past three years to share knowledge and pool individual linguistic strengths in the name of task completion has proven a tall order, especially regarding the output of writing. However, I have found that Dictogloss, a dictation-based task, first presented by Ruth Wajnryb in 1990, has triumphed as one of the most effective, fun and non-threatening ways to have learners cooperate in exploring meaning making through language and linguistics at the same time. Dictogloss, in which listening is the input, that is the material, speaking is the communication tool, and writing is both the input and the output, or the product, is a collaborative task that promotes communicative competence through the use of all four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) while primarily shining a light on grammar. Dictogloss also encourages an understanding of both content and organisational structure of a text and its language features. In this paper, I discuss what Dictogloss is, refer the reader to literature on the topic, provide the full procedure for how to enact the task of Dictogloss, and suggest the benefits to foreign language learners and teachers alike.

My purpose in writing this paper is to encourage more teachers to use Dictogloss, and to excite educators to explore variations on or modifications of the standard Dictogloss approach. As an advocate of Dictogloss, in this paper I have taken a more practical perspective hoping to engage the reader in the procedure itself rather than discussing the limited research that surrounds it. Despite reasonable support for Dictogloss over the past 20 years (Wajnryb, 1990; Swain, 1998; Tedick, 2001; Jacobs & Small, 2003; Vasiljevic, 2010; Newman, 2012), much of what is written refers to the procedure itself and its links to listening comprehension (Jacobs & Small, 2003; Vasiljevic, 2010). What I believe is missing from the field's body of knowledge are empirical studies similar to Nabei's (1996) use of Critical Language Related Episodes (CLRE) to examine the interactions of learners during the Dictogloss task, and Kowal & Swain's 1997 post-task testing of learners' language retention. Such a limitation may be the impetus for further research, but for now I offer my observations and reflections on what I believe to be a valuable teaching method for the study of grammar and written text in partnership with the generation of cooperative learning.

Following my user-friendly step-by-step guide, I hope the reader will trial Dictogloss in their classrooms and, furthermore, adapt this paper into a presentation on Dictogloss for the purposes of collegial professional development so that more teachers may learn of its value. This paper has been inspired by the success of Dictogloss in my own classroom, and also by the many follow-up requests for more information, and positive reactions at workshops I have given at the College of Foreign Languages, Hue, Vietnam (2011), and at LaoTESOL 2012, both events associated with the Japan Association for Language Teaching, Special Interest Group, Teachers Helping Teachers (THT).

What is Dictogloss?

Dictogloss was introduced in 1990 by Ruth Wajnryb as an alternative method to study grammar. It combines dictation, paraphrase and interpretation (Newman, 2012), and engages multiple skills (Nabei, 1996; Jacobs & Small, 2003; Cardoso, 2009). The concept is simple: learners listen to a passage, note down key words and then work together to create a reconstructed version of the text. In a dictogloss task, learners listen, write and speak, relying on their knowledge of semantic, syntactic and discourse systems of the target language to complete the task with the focus remaining on grammatical competence (Vasiljevic, 2010). Adaptations of Dictogloss now exist, but essentially Wajnryb (1990) outlines four phases:

> *1. Preparation (Warm-up): the topic is introduced and key vocabulary is addressed.*
>
> *2. Dictation: the teacher reads a passage at normal speed, twice or three times. The first time learners listen. The second time, learners note down anything they can catch. If there is a third reading, which I advocate, learners expand their notes.*
>
> *3. Reconstruction: Learners work together in small groups to reconstruct a version of the text from their shared notes. The reconstruction may focus on replication or similarity of meaning, depending on the teacher's objective.*
>
> *4. Analysis and correction: Learners analyse and compare their text with the reconstructions of other groups. The class may discuss the differences in the texts, then compare their texts with the original and note or make necessary corrections (Wajnryb, 1990). Out of this procedure, the learners or the teacher may identify key grammar points or organisational points for discussion and practice. In my own classroom, I have explored and expanded the potential of Dictogloss by providing extension research, writing and speaking tasks, both individual and group.*

It is the interaction, collaboration and empowerment that results from Dictogloss that makes it different from pure dictation. Wajnryb (1990) observed that the collaborative reconstruction of the text furthered both the negotiation of meaning and form and had students reflecting on their output: "Through active learner involvement students come to confront their own strengths and weaknesses in English language use. In so doing, they find out what they do not know, then they find out what they need to know" (Wajnryb, 1990, p. 10). More recently, Vasiljevic (2010) noted that, "the task provides students with a sense of achievement and personal accountability and encourages them to think about the process of language learning and how to approach it more effectively (p. 48)."

To determine the importance of grammar study and, therefore, assess the usefulness of Dictogloss as a language learning task, we must first reflect on whether we, as educators and communicators, consider writing a skill or a tool. I have asked this question of teachers in conference workshops at the University of Foreign Languages in Hue, Vietnam (2011) and LaoTESOL (2012). Naturally, responses were mixed, typically with some participants noting that "writing is a tool that enables us to share our message" while others insisted that "writing is a skill that must be developed for the purposes of competent communication" (Unknown, 2011). One conference delegate noted that in order to write one must be able to read", and suggested that the two skills remained inseparable; he went on to say, however, that "one could read without needing to develop the skill of writing" (Unknown, 2011). What do you think: Is writing a skill or a tool? Perhaps there is room for both perspectives depending on the purpose of the writing with Dictogloss being one procedure for developing that skill or sharpening that tool.

Dictogloss Procedure

This section is a "how to" guide for conducting Dictogloss for a class of L2 learners or for a group of teachers undergoing professional development. First, the teacher or presenter must choose a passage to read. For the purposes of a conference workshop or professional development day, it may be novel to use a passage about the local area or a teaching theme, or otherwise relevant to use an extract from a textbook that is known to most of the delegates, if possible. In the usual classroom situation, the text could be taken directly from the class course book equally for diagnostic or review purposes depending on whether the teacher wishes to introduce new material or revise and recycle previously-taught material. The length of the passage is usually determined by logistical matters such as how much time can be devoted to the thoughtful completion of the activity in accordance with the class ability to complete the task in a timely manner. Furthermore, the speed and complexity of the input, that is the passage, will have a significant effect on the learners' ability to process the text. Indeed any passage is suitable as long as it is comprehensible to the students when read at normal speed. As a general rule, the texts should be at or below the students' current proficiency level, although they may include new vocabulary. Typically, a passage will be two-minutes long read at natural speed (see Appendix A for a sample text).

In a conference situation where the audience is small enough and the space is adequate, involve everyone in the task in the role of students. If the group is rather large, it may be more effective to set up two or three groups as a demonstration. In this case, I would read the text and the participating groups would follow my instructions while the rest of the delegates observe and later participate in feedback and reflection on what they saw.

The Four Stages

Stage 1: Warm up / Preparation

The whole procedure can take up to one hour. As with most lessons, it is necessary to set the context. Learners discuss the topic of the text and are prepared for some of the vocabulary. Teach key words to help lower level learners or if vocabulary is difficult or new. You may show the students a picture, and ask them to talk about what they know of the topic, do role play, whatever you think will activate their knowledge about this topic. You may wish to brainstorm words on the board as this will provide support when they are searching for words later. Pre-teach difficult or

key vocabulary (See Appendix A for the passage used at the University of Foreign Languages in Hue, Vietnam, 2011).

Stage 2: Three Readings

It is important that learners are clear about what they can and cannot do, and what will ultimately be expected of them in terms of writing production. In this phase, learners hear the text and take fragmentary notes. The text is normally read twice or three times at natural speed making short pauses between the sentences. The first time, learners do not take any notes. The second time, they note down key words to help them remember the content. The third time is conducted in the same manner as the second. It is important to forewarn leaners that they will reconstruct the text, aiming for either meaning or replication. If you feel your learners need more support, you could have them draw up a table prior to the first reading, see Table 1.

Table 1: Dictogloss Notes

Keywords to listen for	Facts	Other information

First Reading

- Teacher: "Put your pencils down. I am going to read a text three times. This is the first time. It is NOT dictation, so you do not need to write. I will read at a normal speaking speed. You will not be able to remember everything, so don't worry."

- "Concentrate, listen, and understand. Remember, NO writing."

- "At the end of this FIRST reading, you will have five minutes to write down what you remember, but for now NO PENCILS, only listening."

At the end of the first reading, partners or groups write any words or phrases they can recall for five minutes on one large shared piece of paper rather than their own paper. This promotes interaction and sharing of ideas. Ss discuss, remember, negotiate discrepancies, decide key facts to listen for, for example, dates, places, numbers, or time order. There is no need to tell students WHAT to listen for unless you wish to.

Second reading

- Teacher: "I am going to read the text again. This is the second reading. This time, you may note down keywords and important information AS YOU LISTEN. Write on your own paper."

- "I will not speak slowly or repeat anything, so you will NOT have time to copy every word. Try to listen and understand."

- "At the end of this (second) reading, you will have five minutes to talk to your partner / group, and try to write sentences using your notes. You can compare notes with other students, negotiate what is correct and edit

your notes. At this stage, your goal is to have the same MEANING as my passage even if your words are different."

Third Reading
- Teacher: "I am going to read the text for the third and last time. This is your last chance to listen, and take notes. At the end of this reading, I am going to ask you to work with your partner / group to write a paragraph using all the words and sentences you have and anything else you can remember. EVERYONE must write a copy of the paragraph. We will check to see what each group has written." (Students need to know that they will have to DO something, or they won't try hard.)

- "I will not speak slowly or repeat anything, so you will NOT have time to copy every word. It is most important that your text MEANS the same as mine. However, this time, your goal is to try to write exactly the same words as in my passage."

At the end of this (third) reading, pairs or groups think, talk, and write for 20-30 minutes or longer if you think they require extra time.

Stage 3: Reconstruction
In this reading, learners reconstruct the text on the basis of the fragments recorded in stage 2 and 3. This is the most collaborative stage in which students work together to reconstruct the text with correct grammar and content, pooling their information and discussing the best options. Their goal should be to reproduce a text as close as possible to the original. You could join groups together or rearrange groups since all students should have a copy of the paragraph. They negotiate the language and finalise a reconstruction of the text. Your objective in doing a Dictogloss will determine how strict you wish to be on the evaluating the final output. For example, I am more interested in the learners being able to show that they comprehended their passage than provide an exact replication of the words. Furthermore, I would be happy for higher level learners to substitute or enhance the text through use of synonyms or alternative language structures thus showing their ability to synthesise what they heard and understood rather than just reproduce the passage down verbatim. The results will reflect how well you chose the text and how competent your students are at this level.

- "Now, work together in your group to write a paragraph as close as possible to the original text."
Here is it incumbent upon the teacher to make clear to learners whether exact replication of the original text is required, or whether paraphrasing is acceptable, placing more emphasis on meaning.

Stage 4: Analysis and correction
Finally, learners analyse and correct their texts. One way of guiding learners in the self-evaluation of the accuracy of their work is to provide a checklist of the individual sentences in the passage (see Appendix B for a sample checklist based on the text in Appendix A).
Tedick (2001) noted that in the analysis, learners focused on more than just the grammatical aspects; they also discussed orthographic and semantic issues. The analysis should be done with the help of the teacher by comparing different group versions and finally referring to the original. There are various ways of doing this,

such as changing groupings, using a data projector, an older style overhead projector, or writing text in large print and sticking the papers on the wall. If you have an overhead projector (OHP) or data projector, groups could share their writing one by one with the class and discuss what they have produced. Differences or recurring errors regarding language use, organisation and content could be listed on the whiteboard / blackboard or computer for subsequent discussion regarding form and meaning. This information could form the basis of homework or your next lesson. As an extension, students could do further research on the topic, write their own piece in a similar fashion, that is in the same verb tense, for example, share it, peer edit, peer assess, then hand it in to you for feedback.

The Benefits of Dictogloss

In this section, some terms may not be familiar to the reader (see Appendix C for a Glossary of Terms). For learners, Dictogloss offers them a way to demonstrate their comprehension of the content of text, organisational structure, and language features. It is a form of discovery learning that provides practice in interpersonal skills and communicative competency, and highlights individual linguistic strengths through a shared learning environment:

- It allows L2 learners to process and activate language in a collaborative writing task.
- It promotes writing to learn (meaning making), rather than learning to write (skill).
- It encourages learners to reflect on form.
- It encourages learners to think critically and take risks in their language use.
- It results in synchronous interaction which means that more students speak more often.

Furthermore, Dictogloss allows the teacher to:

- Observe learners in real-time.
- Evaluate real-time thinking skills rather than just a product out of context.
- Diagnose linguistic needs for remediation, or extension.
- Recycle and review texts.
- Gain an insight into learners' needs for the purposes of lesson planning.
- Use Dictogloss as alternative assessment, including peer-assessment, and self-assessment.

For example, in my four skills class, I have experimented using Dictogloss as the final test. The stakes of the test were not high; the test being more for summative purposes than to determine rankings in the class. This meant that I could afford to be less stringent in grading each individual student and could report anecdotally on students' participation and achievement. Also since students had 30 minutes to complete the final writing phase, it gave me time to monitor and record my observations regarding student interactions. My own observations were reflected in the students' post-test comments. They reported that they were not as nervous as when they were tested individually, and shared their knowledge more than usual. They reflected that they thought more about the structure of the text than in a typical listening comprehension test. Compared with a typical dictation task where the teacher reads and the students' write verbatim what is said, they said that the

Dictogloss task made them think and speak in English. They also said that they tried hard to "get it right" so as not to get a lower grade than other groups. They said they liked that they knew exactly what to do in each phase, and so felt more in control. Finally, students remarked that it was the "most fun" test they had ever had even though they felt it was somewhat unorthodox.

Tedick (2001) noted that in a study done by Kowal and Swain (1997) on 8th grade French immersion learners, students tended to “stick with” the knowledge they had co-constructed collaboratively with students performing well on a post-Dictogloss test, one week later. Swain (1998) suggests that when students reflect consciously on the language they are producing, that is "focus on form", then this may be a source of language learning, and lead to greater retention; an opinion resonated by Tedick's 2001 research.

In addition to the suggestions made in this paper, teachers wishing to experiment with Dictogloss may seek ideas, inspiration and encouragement in several blogs and YouTube videos by other teachers on the internet as initial resources. I recommend the following three as a cross-section for commencing your explorations of Dictogloss:

- Jason Renshaw (2002). English Raven Blog: Renshaw values Dictogloss as a way of raising a deep awareness of grammar whilst integrating all skills. He provides templates for note-taking and reconstructing text.

- David Dodgson (2010). David Dodgson Blog: Dodgson scaffolds lessons for younger / low level learners learning about family, and gives a lesson plan.

- Ceri Jones (2010). Ceri Jones Blog: Jones explores critical thinking with high level learners studying news stories, scientific research in health, reporting verbs, modals, passive, intensive listening, and persuasive writing.

If readers have doubts about the practicalities of using Dictogloss with their learners, may I suggest that teachers step into their learners' shoes, as it were, and conduct their own workshop amongst themselves, stepping through the procedure as detailed in this paper to determine for themselves whether Dictogloss would suit their teaching / learning context. Having presented such an in-service workshop with teachers in Vietnam and Laos, I can report mostly positive feedback; the primary concern being the amount of time needed to conduct a Dictogloss session. This is one challenge of the Dictogloss task that teachers will have to weigh up against the benefits. Should teachers decide to conduct their own professional development workshop, I have included a teacher reflection / discussion handout which can be freely used or adapted (see Appendix D).

Conclusion

Dictogloss promotes active learners, learning actively (see Appendix C). Students are the resource and the teacher provides the material. Students think about language and linguistics. In most cases, students are so preoccupied reconstructing text and negotiating meaning through cooperative learning that they may overcome their reluctance to speak and interact. They naturally move between using L1 (in homogenous groups) for explanation and L2 for the purpose of task completion. In

addition, Dictogloss situates teachers as co-learners, promotes learner autonomy, group autonomy, cooperation / collaboration / discussion among learners, and fosters curricula integration (all four skills plus grammar, vocabulary, focus on meaning, and focus on message – all in the one task!).

Dictogloss also supports different learning styles, thinking skills, mixed groups, simultaneous interaction, and can be used for alternative assessment. It works for students of varying competency as knowledge is shared; students cannot do the activity without thinking about language structure and meaning. They cannot complete the task if they don't interact in English. The amount of time required can be shortened if you reduce the amount of text, so it is also good as a review activity or a group testing tool. Dictogloss presents as a dictation task with a bit more, the bit more is the element of collaboration. However, that "bit more" is "so much more" and the benefits are exponential. Finally, teachers should consider why they have chosen to use Dictogloss, how they and their learners can benefit from this task, and consider how Dictogloss can be used as a tool for observing, evaluating, and progressing language competency.

Questions for reflection:

1. How can Dictogloss benefit me as a teacher?

2. How can Dictogloss benefit my learners? (Is it the right choice for them?)

3. Why and when would Dictogloss be useful in my language classroom?

4. What is the relevance and usefulness of Dictogloss in my teaching context?

5. If relevant, how could Dictogloss be applied to different content areas?

Biographical Statement

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Appendix A - Sample Passage

Bicycles, motor scooters and motorcycles remain the most popular forms of road transport in Vietnam's cities, towns, and villages although the number of privately-owned automobiles is also on the rise, especially in the larger cities. Public bus operated by private companies is the main long distance travel means for many people. Traffic congestion is a serious problem in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as the cities' roads struggle to cope with the booming numbers of automobiles
(Source: Wikipedia)

Appendix B - Scoresheet for Final Text

All 10 points	Some 5 points	None 0 points	Text (100 points)
			Bicycles, motor scooters and motorcycles . . .
			. . . (are) remain the most popular forms of road transport . . .
			. . . in Vietnam's cities, towns, and villages . . .
			. . . (although) the number of privately-owned automobiles is also on the rise, . . .
			. . . especially in the larger cities.
			Public bus operated by private companies . . .
			. . . is the main long distance travel means for many people.
			Traffic congestion is a serious problem in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. . .
			. . . as the cities' roads struggle to cope . . .
			. . . with the booming numbers of automobiles.

Appendix C - Glossary of Terms

real-time: as the time of the action, process or task; not at a later date

real-time thinking: a cognitive skill that enables the learner to simultaneously process the task while performing it; this includes responding to stimuli, attention management, multi-tasking, and responding

process: the phases that learners go through to complete a task

product: the end result of a task

remediation: instruction designed to bring under-developed learners to an expected or desired level of competency

extension: instruction designed to challenge competent learners and guide them to a new level of competency

resource: the means by which a task is completed, in this case, the students are the resource

input: explicit or intentional teaching or materials offered to learners

diagnose: to recognize (as a disease) by signs and symptoms

material: anything a teacher uses to conduct a class

reconstruction: replication of an original material, in this case, a written text

active learning: when students pay attention, look, listen, and question

Appendix D - Teacher Reflection Sheet

Teacher Reflection Sheet	
Engagement/Motivation: *Did we feel safe?* *Did we have fun?* *Did we have control?* *Did we understand what to do?*	
Process: *What were the task objectives?* *What were the steps?*	
Practise: *What skills/forms/functions did we use?* *What language point did we learn about?*	
Product: *What did we output/achieve?* *What did we learn?*	
Conclusions: *Pros?* *Cons?*	
Personal Teacher Reflection: *When would I use this activity?* *How could I adapt it for my students' age, level, content area, language focus?*	

Teaching Writing Through the Genres (workshop)

Roger Palmer

This paper describes a workshop given at Bishkek Humanities University in Kyrgyzstan, on September 13th, 2011.

Overview

In writing classes, learners are normally expected to write about a diverse range of text types. It is easy for instructors to overlook just how challenging such a task is, especially as learners are frequently unable to identify the text types, or genres, with which they are interacting and are unfamiliar with the specific features of them. Different genres, in fact, have greatly varying language demands and require a lot of preparation to teach effectively. This workshop aims to demonstrate and classify what the different text types are; it discusses what the purpose of each written text is and who it is being addressed to; and it highlights the kinds of language features typically associated with the genres. It is intended that participants will familiarise themselves with genre-based writing, and come away with practical materials from the workshop to assist learners with their writing.

Learning Outcomes: to know the linguistic demands in texts
Skills: to identify text types and their purposes

Introduction

Genres are socially situated, and for the purposes of the workshop were introduced as different types of text, with choices about what to write influenced by the writer's social purpose in using language, in respect to their audience, and what they set out to do. There are specific features of genres that distinguish them from one another. Teachers can help their students become better writers through familiarity with the language features of different genres.

Key Concepts

The following questions were posed:
What are the different genres your learners encounter? Can you name three of them?

- After time for preparation of their own ideas, pairs compared them with the list below.

Genre	Purpose	Example
NON-FICTION		
Discussion	to present an argument	giving opinions for & against nuclear energy (environment)
Explanation	to give reasons for how something works or why something is suggested	Explaining the hypotenuse (mathematics)
Instructions / procedure	to tell the reader how to make or do something	Steps in how to set up a Facebook account (blended learning, ICT)
Persuasion	to convince someone of your point of view	An advert to show people how to get more exercise (sport, public policy)

Genre	Purpose	Example
Proposal	to recommend a future plan	How we can develop our musical skills (music)
Report	to present factual information about an animal, object, person or place	Description of a democratic state (politics, diplomacy)
Recount	to recount past events in time order sequence	Retelling how a science experiment was set up (science)
Autobiography /biography	to retell events in a (your) life	The Life of Madame Curie (history)
Diary	to describe the events of a day	The diary of Anne Frank (history)
Article	to describe or narrate a topic or theme for a publication	The Countryside is Alive (environment)
Essay	to express a viewpoint in writing in a formal context	An essay on why public services should be improved (geography)
Letter	to express a point of view (personal or impersonal)	A letter to the city council about increasing the number of bus routes in Bishkek (environment)
Review	to describe and give a reasoned opinion about a play, book or event	A review of an artist's exhibition (art)
FICTION		
Narrative	to entertain and inform	A story from another culture (literacy)
POETRY		
Poem	to describe an event, person, object or feeling in lines of verse	A poem (e.g. haiku) about winter (literacy)

Adapted from: Kay Bentley (2010). The TKT Course. Cambridge: CUP

Next, participants were asked to divide the language features found in different genres at the word level. The table below shows the task that was set. There is no correct answer for this task: it is an awareness-raising activity showing the challenges learners would typically face when presented with an unfamiliar genre.

Genres and main features	Language features: sentence level	Language features: word level
DISCUSSION Introduction of argument Arguments for & against Summary & conclusion	passive forms giving examples complex sentences (contrast) conditionals	
EXPLANATION Factual information Opening & concluding Definitions Diagrams	present tenses passive forms sequencing or time connectives complex sentences (cause & effect)	

Genres and main features	Language features: sentence level	Language features: word level
INSTRUCTIONS/PROCEDURE Chronological sequence of events	statement of what is going to be made or achieved imperative forms result of the procedure	
PERSUASION Arguments Summary with repetition	opening statement to get the reader's attention present tenses suggesting: should, must	
PROPOSAL Factual information and suggestions with justification Recommendations for the future	recommending: should, could passive forms complex sentences (reasons) conditionals	
REPORT Description of appearance, functions, habits & examples	non-chronological text: factual opening statement to define topic present tenses	
RECOUNT (personal & impersonal) Retelling events usually in chronological order	opening (where/when/what) past tenses examples closing statement	

Adapted from: Kay Bentley (2010). The TKT Course. Cambridge: CUP

Participants were invited to discuss and share their reasons for focusing on particular genre-specific language, what Halliday refers to as lexicogrammar (Byrnes, 2006). Genre-based writing introduces (and reintroduces) grammar and vocabulary as it is needed for the learning of each genre. There is no fixed body of words and structures that is planned beforehand and must be taught in a course. This takes some readjustment by teachers accustomed to a syllabus planned around the teaching of language. As each genre is introduced, so is the language necessary for making sense of it and writing it. (It was pointed out by way of example that writing a fairy tale is not the same as writing a recipe.) As students construct more language knowledge, they meet genres for a second or third time, and interact with them in more sophisticated ways.

Why Genre?
Different text types have different language features. According to Hyland (2004),

> . . . the reader's chances of interpreting the writer's purpose are increased if the writer takes the trouble to anticipate what the reader

might be expecting based on previous texts he or she has read of the same kind.

Hence we can summarize our understanding as:
Language learners need to recognize and know a range of text types; they need to understand the purpose of texts as well as their audience, the reader; and they need to become acquainted with the language features that pertain to each text.

Genre-based teaching
To paraphrase the argument put forward by Hyland (2004), if we know what learners do when they write, and the kinds of texts they need to write in their own contexts, and then we design language courses to meet those needs, we can help them more with their writing.

In daily life, at school or at work, there are a number of functions we need to perform or purposes we have in our writing. We need to accomplish assigned tasks, to tell stories, to describe how things work, and to write in ways that abide by social conventions. These all need to be described and taught, but they are too often neglected in classes that concentrate too much on mechanics taken out of social context (such as a focus on the thesis statement or topic sentence) or on the process (drafting) instead of on the audience and the purpose. Genre is the glue that binds disparate elements of content, context and language. It works alongside process writing, without rejecting the importance of it. The instructor provides vocabulary specific to the content and functional grammar, going far beyond the limitations of process writing. Describing feelings in a diary is insufficient by and of itself, for it does not facilitate social interaction, of joining the target language community (of English speakers).

Hyland (2003) describes a genre-based syllabus with stages of the teaching and learning cycle:

A genre-based teaching and learning cycle

Establishing a context

Modeling the genre

Noticing

Explicit analysis of texts

Controlled production

Independent writing

Text

These stages were illustrated in the workshop by using a genre-based writing task called Get a Job (Palmer and Todd, 2005). Following the model proposed by Hyland (2003), the context is the real-world need to find part-time or full-time employment. The schema-building poses few demands as it is a part of the world view or context of students. The only difference is that within the parameters of the task, the learners are engaged in the cognitive challenge of applying job-seeking skills while conducting the activity in the target language. According to tenets of content-based instruction (CBI) such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL), the fact that students use language meaningfully immediately rather than practising language first and only later applying it in meaningful situations if they arise, is one of it greatest benefits. There are a number of easily accessible models of the job advertisement online and in print (classified ads, etc.), as well as job application templates (cover letters and résumés) bundled with word processing software.

Central to genre-based teaching is the reestablishment of the reader-writer connection: that engaging with, analysing and deconstructing common genres that we read is essential to our construction of those genres as writers.

JOB DESCRIPTION:
UPS is hiring individuals to work as part-time Package Handlers. This is a physical, fast-paced position that involves continual lifting, lowering and sliding packages that typically weigh 25 - 35 lbs. and may weigh up to 70 lbs. Part-time employees usually work 3 ? - 4 hours each weekday (Monday through Friday) and typically do not work on weekends or selected holidays.

Package Handlers receive an hourly rate of $8.50 – $9.50.

Retrieved Nov. 1, 2011:
https://ups.managehr.com/screening/hourly/apply.aspx?l=LAALE&p=1&src=P1313

Using the job advertisement, the instructor has the students notice particular features common to the genre: that the company name is stated; that the job title is described in minimal detail first; more details are revealed about the demands of the job and the kind of person who could perform the job, and it is made to sound dynamic with the use of words such as physical and fast-paced.

By explicitly analysing the text, there are macro-level and micro-level observations to make. Expectations for part-time workers are given to show that one of the appealing aspects of the job is the time off. This disguises the fact that because it is not a full-time position, there are no full-time benefits such as mandatory holidays, pay rises, vacations, health insurance and other perks. It is not unusual for this kind of genre to accentuate the positive when trying to persuade applicants to come forward. In essence, it is a social genre with a number of macrofunctions such as persuasion (in terms of getting people to apply) and information (about the kind of job) built into it (Bruce, 2008). At a more detailed level of textual analysis, the use of subject and present tense verbs like *this is*, *employees work*, *package handlers receive*, is typical of the direct, factual, no nonsense information that can lend a feeling of trust.

Having gained an appreciation and understanding of the genre in terms of what it is, what it tries to achieve in terms of purpose, and how it goes about achieving that purpose in engaging with the audience or reader, students then look at it from the point of view of the job seeker. Having analysed job application letters in ways similar to those set out above, they then set about creating their own cover letters in a controlled production task (Palmer & Todd, 2005).

[Text]

Our gift shop at Kansai International Airport is looking for a part-time worker. The successful candidate will be punctual and polite. The job requires being able to speak a little English, but confidence is more important than ability. The pay is 1,600 yen an hour. If you are interested, please write a letter of application in English to Mr. Watanabe.

Dear Mr Watanabe,
I was very interested to read the advertisement you placed in today's newspaper and am writing to apply for the job.

[Writing task]

I am...

I think I am the right person for this job because...

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

With the help of the instructor, students would develop their ideas into independent writing of a job advertisement and/or a job application of their own choosing, before the finished product of an original text.

Summary

Participants were receptive to the ideas presented, and were eager to try out a genre-based approach with their students. As a follow-up, the presenter recommends teachers new to genre to try implementing a course based on ideas suggested in Duke et al (2012) which goes into detail on the practical classroom applications of a genre-based approach to writing.

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Submitting to the Teachers Helping Teachers Proceedings 2012

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 20th 2012**

Please note: Early submissions are strongly recommended.

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