A Letter from the Editor

Friends and Colleagues,

It's been a long time coming, but this new issue of *On CUE* will not disappoint. Full of relevant research, useful teaching activities, points of view, and reflections on events you may have missed, we think you will find 13.1 useful and informative.

We begin this issue with three feature articles. First, ***Joseph Falout*** presents his research into the effects of foreign language anxiety, both positive and negative, on students in supplementary English classes. Next, **Thomas Orr** explains the need for standards for ESP professionals and proposes some preliminary criteria. Finally, **Matthew Apple** reflects on the writing instruction background of university students in his writing classes.

In the *Opinion & Perspective* section, **John Burrell** presents his thoughts on the current state of the job market for university educators in Japan and offers some advice for those hoping to build a meaningful career here.

The *Chalkface* section provides two classroom applications. First, **Brian Nuspliger** explains his strategy for teaching pronunciation using world populations. And **Alex Gilmore** provides an exercise for developing students' strategic competence.

In the *Research Digest,* **Christopher Sullivan** gives an overview of Halliday's systemic functional grammar and examines its advantages, criticisms, and applications in light of two recent articles on the subject. Next, **Parrill Stribling** reviews the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0, statistical software for research.

This issue offers reviews of two recent conferences. First, **Martha Robertson** and **Lewis Malamed** tell us what happened at Lao TESOL's 5th annual conference in February of 2004. **David Woodfield** reports on the 2004 JALT Pan-Sig conference held at Tokyo Keizai University in May.

Rounding out this issue is **Debra L. Simms-Asai's** review of *Professional Development in Language Education Series: Vols. I, II, & III.*

More changes to *On CUE* are on the way. At JALT 2004, the CUE executive decided to make efforts to reach out to the broader university English teaching community. As a first step, we will begin providing Japanese summaries of feature articles from issue 13.2.

As always, your feedback and suggestions are encouraged. And your submissions are very much needed and appreciated.

Enjoy issue 13.1.

Mike Hood
On CUE *Editor*

Foreign Language Anxiety in Freshman Supplementary Classes

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To serve low-proficient freshmen, we at the English department of the College of Science & Technology at Nihon University instituted supplementary English classes. We intend to raise their proficiency both to help them and to protect curricular standards. These optional, non-credit classes are geared toward raising all four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing; a sound, comprehensive approach, designed with much thought on target skills—"the basics"—but little on those who need to learn them. Surely these students, who were able to pass the college English entrance exam, have already undergone plenty of this type of training. Perhaps there is something else they need. To ensure the success of the classes, we should find the reason these students require extra help.

> *Researchers agree anxiety affects attitudes, motivation, and achievement. But they still debate how anxiety is facilitating or debilitating.*

We can address learning needs better when we know more about learners' feelings, or their affective states. Ellis (1994) says the best research on affective states comes from one area—anxiety. This study measures the foreign language anxiety (FLA) of these students in the supplementary classes, and analyzes these levels with proficiency, learning, and attendance.

Background

Many learners in Japan have said to me about their second language (L2) abilities: "I have no confidence." Also when they speak English to me, their lips quiver and their foreheads break out in a sweat—sure signs of nervousness. Strangely, anxiety has not been covered as much in the L2 research here as it has in North America (Kondo & Yang, 2003).

Anxiety is the feeling of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry—it causes sweat and palpitation. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) conceive FLA as a distinct anxiety separate from general traits, specific to a limited context, i.e. the foreign language classroom. People who do not ordinarily experience anxiety may do so when learning a foreign language.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope in 1986, has proven to be an effective tool to measure FLA (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). It now influences most FLA studies. In Japan, this instrument largely influenced FLA studies that found reliability (Kondo & Yang 2003; Takada 2003; Yamashiro & Sasaki 1999a, 1999b).

FLCAS comprises three factors: (1) communication apprehension; (2) test anxiety; and (3) fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension depicts self-conscious, inhibited speakers. They fear speaking in

groups, large or small. A foreign language complicates matters by restricting listening and speaking. Test anxiety stems from a fear of failure—a performance anxiety where any mark less than perfect is viewed as failure. Fear of negative evaluation is the fear of social evaluation—being evaluated personally and professionally by peer or superior (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Recent FLCAS-based studies relate positive language learning attitudes and FLA. For Japanese students of English, FLA correlates to learning styles and beliefs; a negative correlation of FLA with proficiency; and a significant correlation between FLA and external influences, particularly parental beliefs and classroom environment (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2000).

FLA research distinguishes between facilitating and debilitating anxiety. For those facilitated, they knuckle down, pay attention, perform well; for those debilitated, they avoid the cause of their anxiety both mentally and physically—the difference between fight or flight. Mental avoidance means lack of attention, where intake cannot be performed. In this case, anxiety causes an affective filter in learning.

Researchers agree anxiety affects attitudes, motivation, and achievement. But they still debate how anxiety is facilitating or debilitating; whether it is situation-specific (the L2 classroom) or trait-specific (personality); and how it relates to other affective and cognitive dimensions of L2 learning (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2000).

Research Questions

1. Are the three factors on the FLCAS reliable when applied to learners in supplementary English classes?
2. Is FLA related to their proficiency?
3. Does FLA cause an affective filter in their learning?
4. Does FLA affect their attendance?

Participants

The students represent roughly the lower third in English proficiency of two science departments as determined by a proficiency test—a replication of a typical college entrance exam—administered by the college before first semester. Of 100 possible points, their averages were 49 points, with TOEIC averages at 300 (in comparison, the top third averaged, respectively, 78 and 347). Participants voluntarily attended one of three non-credit supplementary English courses between the first semester of 2002 and the first semester of 2003, meeting during lunch hour or during fifth period, which for many was after classes for the day.

I administered surveys during class, though some took them home for completion. From 110 surveys passed out, 82 were returned. Seven of those were eliminated—four surveys were incomplete, and three students did not take the post-test. The resulting sample is 75. Not all are Japanese; three came from Asian countries. While the number is disproportionate considering the larger student body, for the supplementary English classes it is representative.

Instrument

The FLCAS, developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986), was translated into Japanese. This 33-item survey mixed the three FLA factors, with questions positively and negatively worded, the former being reverse-coded items. Instead of adopting the original 5-point Likert scale, I applied a 6-point Likert scale to force no neutral answers. Values range from 1 = "I strongly agree" to 6 = "I strongly disagree"; the greater the number, the stronger the anxiety. FLCAS is

calculated by adding the values for each answer, so the range for 33 items is 33 to 198; for each factor, it is 11 to 66. All items were represented in both English and Japanese.

One of the measures of proficiency was the scores from the college proficiency test mentioned previously. To have another measure of proficiency, and to measure improvement, I developed a 100-point test specific to the supplementary class contents. On the first and last days of the class, students took this for the pre- and post-tests; the difference between the two measured learning.

Results

For the three FLCAS factors, Table 1 shows the 6-point Likert scale mean, standard deviation, skew, and Cronbach alpha reliability. All three factors reached reliability ($\alpha \geq .80$) in descending order: communication apprehension ($\alpha=.88$), fear of negative

Table 1. Survey results by 6-point Likert scale

	Mean	SD	Skew	α
Communication apprehension	4.02	1.21	-0.31	0.88
Test anxiety	3.98	1.21	-0.17	0.82
Fear of negative evaluation	4.06	1.22	-0.42	0.80

Table 2. Survey Results by FLCAS (factor min. = 11; max. = 66)

	Mean	SD	Skew
Communication apprehension	44.3	8.0	-0.2
Test anxiety	43.7	7.2	0.02
Fear of negative evaluation	44.6	7.4	-0.2
FLCAS	132.6	21.2	-0.1

evaluation ($\alpha=.82$), and test anxiety ($\alpha=.80$). Table 2 shows the FLCAS measurements. The Appendix gives the breakdown by item for each factor. For an interesting side note,

the three foreign students, in relation to their Japanese counterparts, received low FLCAS values (FLCAS=80, 112, and 112; compare with the rest at FLCAS mean=134).

Table 3 shows Pearson-product moment correlation coefficients. The correlation

Table 3. FLCAS factors and Pearson correlation coefficients (N=75, [†]N=67)

	Proficiency[†]	Pre-test	Post-test	Δ test	Attendance
Communication apprehension	-.096	.059	.087	-.011	.163
Test anxiety	-.202	.106	.066	-.097	.266*
Fear of negative evaluation	-.128	-.010	.020	.032	.236*
FLCAS	-.149	.054	.062	-.026	.234*

* Significant at the p < .05 level (2-tailed)

Figure 1. The independence of anxiety and learning
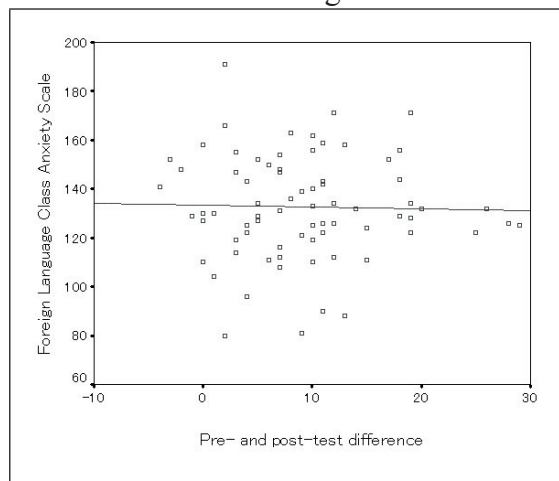
between proficiency and FLCAS was not significant, not by the college proficiency test, nor by the class pre- and post-tests (respectively, r=-.149, .054, and .062; p < .05). Nor was the correlation between learning and FLCAS significant (r=-.026; p < .05). Even distribution in Figure 1 shows learning and FLA act independently from each other.

Significance emerged between FLCAS and attendance (r=.234*; p<.05). There was about an even correlation with it in fear

Figure 2. The relationship between foreign language anxiety and attendance

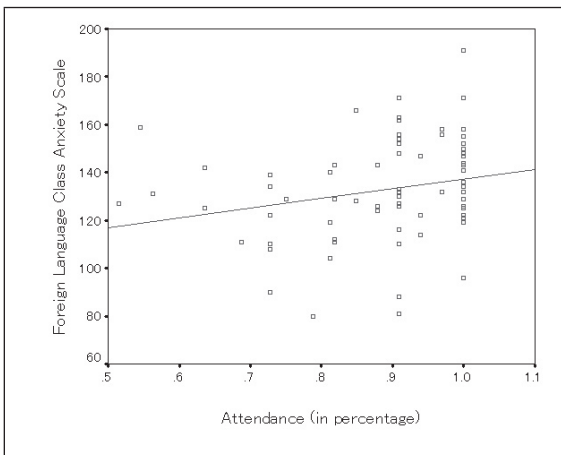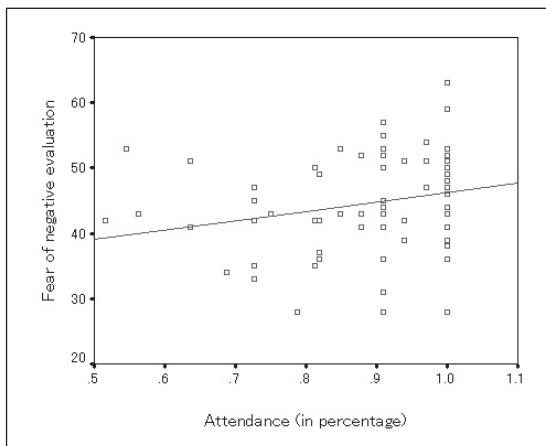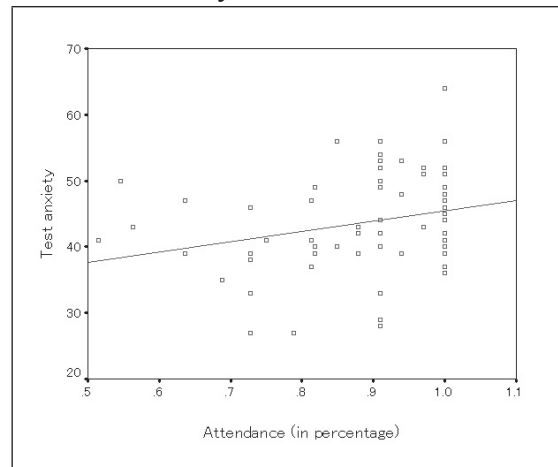Figure 3. The relationship between fear of negative evaluation and attendance

Figure 4. The relationship between test anxiety and attendance

of negative evaluation ($r=.236*$; $p<.05$), a higher correlation in test anxiety ($r=.266*$; $p<.05$), but no correlation in communication apprehension ($r=.163$; $p<.05$). Figures 2, 3, and 4 show these regression lines. Attendance also correlated with seven items, listed in Table 4.

Discussion

The students of the supplementary English classes are experiencing FLA. From its lack of correlation with the proficiency exams, the class pre-tests, and post-tests, I interpret that their low proficiency is not due to their FLA. Between these class tests, we at the English department were happy to see an average increase of 9.2%. From this learning, FLA did not act as an affective filter—their improvement was neither facilitated nor debilitated by anxiety. However, FLA facilitated learning behavior in attendance.

For non-credit classes

Table 4. Attendance correlation by item (N=75)

Item	
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	.370**
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	.355**
25. Language classes move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	.309**
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	.285*
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	.264*
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	.252*
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class	.245*

*Significant at the p<.05 (2-tailed)
**Significant at the p<.01 (2-tailed)

that met during free hours, these students attended surprisingly often—on average,

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88.7%. They seem to be coming out of fear of failure—the highest value from the survey is item 10, "I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class" (mean = 4.96), which appears in test anxiety, the factor with the highest correlation to attendance. If this behavior represents prior efforts to study, there was little return on those efforts; on the proficiency examination for English, they entered college at the lower third of their class. Little more is known of their learning beliefs—beliefs that may be driving them to one failed attempt after another. It must be frustrating.

Another study on the same students (Falout & Maruyama, 2004), though a slightly different sampling, suggests that they experienced greater demotivation than their high-proficient counterparts, and that their highest factor of demotivation was self-confidence. A total of 73% of them flatly dislike studying English, more than double the percentage for the high-proficient students. This much negative affect cannot be ignored.

Even for their L2 aptitude, students are concerned about how they look. By a slim margin, fear of negative evaluation was the highest FLA factor (mean = 4.06). From the low values in items 13 and 31 (respective means of 3.44 and 3.33), students are not embarrassed in class or afraid of being made fun of. They are upset they do not appear as competent as the others, as the high values show in items 7, 23, and 25 (respective means of 4.88, 4.43, and 4.39)—three of the seven items that correlate to attendance; they do want to keep up with the class. From the previously mentioned study, this group of students was surveyed specifically to find if their attitude toward group members—class-

FLA neither facilitated nor debilitated learning, however it positively affected attendance.

mates—was a factor of demotivation. On a 6-point Likert scale set similar to this study, the result was negligible (mean = 3.59). Neither did such concerns significantly appear in their attributions of demotivation (only 0.9%). So I do not consider attitude of group members a factor of demotivation, but fear of negative evaluation is an important factor in their FLA.

The high value in communication apprehension might not be regarded as important, at least not when measured upon college entrance—they might not have had enough experience with communication to know how they felt about it; it came as a hypothetical situation. As Murphey (2002) explains, Japanese students entering post-secondary education have so little experience using English communicatively, that when asked how they feel about communicating in English, results are misleading. He argues that for such studies to be valid, students need to have "contrast frames of reference"—they need at least a semester of communicative classroom experience, not simply a description thereof—before they can "make true choices" about it (p. 8). I believe the high FLA values for communication apprehension should not be viewed as reports from experience, but as the apprehension students imagine they would feel if performing communicatively in the L2.

Conclusion

FLCAS was reliable when applied to students of the supplementary English classes. FLA neither facilitated nor debilitated learning, however it positively affected attendance. Instead of focusing on rehashing the language, these classes need to address those

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who are learning it. To help these learners, we must further investigate their learning experiences and beliefs. We can improve how students feel, think, and learn, to aid them in the common goal—English acquisition.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Communication Apprehension

Item	Mean	SD	Skew
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	4.56	1.09	-0.83
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	3.41	1.22	0.12
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.*	3.53	1.14	0.0004
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	4.68	1.14	-1.02
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.*	3.55	1.19	-0.04
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.*	4.81	0.77	-0.22
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3.93	1.04	-0.45

Item	Mean	SD	Skew
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language classes.	3.75	1.05	-0.18
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.92	1.14	-0.24
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.*	3.36	1.07	0.17
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	4.76	1.01	-0.79

Test Anxiety

Item	Mean	SD	Skew
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.*	4.12	1.44	-0.60
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	3.68	1.09	0.04
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.*	4.03	1.25	-0.26
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	4.96	1.12	-0.93
12. In language class, I get so nervous I forget things I know.	3.95	1.04	0.03
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	4.39	0.96	-0.29
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.87	1.22	-0.38
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3.29	0.98	0.69
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	3.43	1.00	0.37
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.*	3.81	1.17	-0.51
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	4.21	1.12	-0.44

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Item	Mean	SD	Skew
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.56	1.24	-0.14
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	4.88	1.03	-1.22
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.*	4.81	1.06	-1.36
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	3.44	1.14	0.12
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	3.87	1.18	-0.40
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.84	1.28	-0.28
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	4.43	1.16	-0.90
25. Language classes move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	4.39	1.03	-0.69
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	3.95	1.09	-0.28
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.*	4.11	1.01	-0.55
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	3.33	1.11	0.04

*Reverse-coded item

Professional Standards in English for Specific Purposes

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Growth of interest in ESP

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)—the branch of English language education which focuses on training in specific domains of English to accomplish specific academic or workplace tasks—is attracting greater interest at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), as well as at Japanese universities, as the demand for university graduates with higher levels of competence in the English needed specifically for their occupations becomes increasingly important for Japan's survival in global markets and international communities. The Ministry's Action Plan to "*cultivate Japanese with English abilities*," announced 31 March 2003, includes the goal "*On graduating from university, graduates can use English in their work*," followed by the request that "*Each university should establish attainment targets from the viewpoint of fostering personnel who can use English in their work*" (MEXT, 2003).

This call for revising English language education at Japanese universities to include training in workplace English—beyond the already established goal of providing training in general purpose English—has also been promoted in white papers published by the Ministry (see www.mext.org), at major events such as English Forum 2004 (held March 28, 2004, Tokyo International Exhibition Center), and by the national press. This new educational task falls clearly within the domain of ESP and is thus generating heightened interest in the field and its professionals, who frequently address workplace English learning needs as an important part of their ESP work.

Who are the professionals?

This new interest in ESP at the highest educational levels has prompted considerable discussion at Japanese universities and companies alike, but one long-ignored problem within the ESP profession seems to be presenting some hindrance to the development of quality ESP design and implementation. Identifying the need for ESP is easy, but identifying the professionals who can do the work is not. This is a concern not only at MEXT but also among those at universities who would like to hire quality ESP professionals to implement the kind of reform that MEXT is calling for.

With the growing popularity of ESP, more and more language teachers are adding ESP to their list of specializations on their CVs, but university administrators cannot easily determine when a job applicant's claims are justified. There are very few diplomas in ESP to demonstrate qualification; even more importantly, there are no professional standards in ESP that can serve as a yardstick for evaluating ESP expertise. In most cases, job applicants create their own criteria for

evaluating personal skills in ESP and then assert their own professional competence. Professional qualifications in ESP currently remain self-appraised and self-proclaimed, with very little available to guide both practitioners and prospective employers in their assessment.

The need for standards

As a subset of ELT, ESP requires the same knowledge and skill sets that are required for other varieties of English language teaching; but in most cases, ESP also demands considerable knowledge of specific workplace documents, dialogue, culture, and content that can extend far beyond the material normally taught in applied linguistics and ELT certification programs. Students of computer science and engineering, for example, require specialized training in the reading and writing of technical documentation and specifications, patents, and project reports, but no ELT program offers this kind of training, and thus most language teachers must acquire this type of knowledge on their own. Specialized skills in research for needs assessment, and media design for materials development, are also required for expertise in ESP, but much of this must also be learned independently if ELT training programs do not include these skill targets in their curriculums.

But whether an ESP practitioner is university trained or self-trained is really not the problem. The problem is that the ESP profession has not yet generated any widely accepted standards that universities and individuals can use to guide their training, and that university administrators can use to effectively assess the ESP qualifications of prospective employees in their new workplace-English language programs. It can be argued that more attention to

developing professional standards for practitioners in TESL/TEFL is needed first, but actually considerably more progress has already been made in this area. Standards for ESP are needed more urgently in Japan, and they require special attention that has not yet been considered in general ELT because of the additional skills and knowledge that ESP work requires. This paper will touch on the issue of standards development in TESL/TEFL, but the more pressing concern is with professional standards in ESP. And that will be the focus of this article.

Where standards come from

Criteria for *membership* in a profession and criteria for status as a *professional* in a profession are not as firmly established as the laws of physics or mathematics. There are no universal absolutes that define these categories, and no single person or organization has enough authority to determine global standards for professional membership or professional status for all people everywhere. Rather, professional standards evolve slowly through discussions among practitioners at local, national, and international levels when people with common interests and concerns gather and set up professional societies. It is through the policies and publications of these specialist communities that standards for membership and professional qualification evolve and compete for acceptance in various realms. Standards only become authoritative through consensus, and different societies may agree on different standards. Criteria for membership in a professional *organization* may be clear (e.g., simply pay the membership dues), but membership in a *profession* as well as qualification to be classified as a bona fide *professional* in a profession may differ considerably from organization to organization and be limited by organizational

or national boundaries.

Criteria for membership and professional status in other organizations

In many fields, requirements for membership are stiffer than those in English language education, with membership in an association being synonymous with membership in a profession. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), for example, requires professional degrees and work experience in a designated technical or engineering field to qualify for membership, and then ranks members within the IEEE membership according to professional qualifications and contributions established by the society and enforced by a board of reviewers. Ranks beginning from novice to expert are *Student Member, Associate Member, Regular Member, Senior Member, Fellow Member,* and *Honorary Member*. Membership and rank in the organization reflect the association's views of status in professional expertise fairly clearly, with higher-ranking membership titles reserved for those with superior professional knowledge and skills.

The case is similar in other professions. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) requires that members be licensed architects in the United States to become a *Member*, or hold a degree in architecture and/or teach in a university program of architecture to become an *Associate Member*. The British Medical Association (BMA) requires *Members* to be doctors registered in the UK with the General Medical Council (GMC) and requires *Student Members* to be medical students enrolled in a registered medical program. Similarly, the Law Society of Singapore (LSS) requires *Members* to be practicing lawyers admitted to the Singapore Bar and *Associate Members* to be working in the legal field. Degrees in architecture, medicine or law alone are not sufficient for regular membership in these professional societies, nor is mere interest, but professional qualification via clearly specified standards (which typically include high scores on specialized examinations) is also required. In other words, membership in some professional organizations is synonymous with membership in a profession, and one's status within the organization may reflect one's expertise in the discipline.

Criteria for membership and professional status in English language teaching

In English language teaching (ELT), there is generally little or no relation between being a member of an ELT organization and being a member of the ELT profession, for membership in the organization is commonly open to anyone who pays the membership fees, irrespective of training, experience, or employment. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), for example, publishes no requirements for membership in the organization; The Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) announces that it is "*Open to all persons teaching English at Japanese colleges and universities and those interested in college English teaching*;" and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) advertises that "*Membership is open to anyone involved in the English Language Teaching industry*."

Other than student membership, which requires enrollment as a student, there is generally no criteria or system for ranking various levels of expertise, neither within most ELT organizations nor within the ELT profession itself, other than certificates and diplomas, which employers use to evaluate qualifications. But these range widely in their criteria for attainment and do not give people much information about the holder's

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real ability in the ELT profession. Membership in a professional language teaching organization may not be synonymous with membership in the language teaching profession at all.

In ESP, within the field of ELT, the situation is the same if not worse, for there are no organizations devoted solely to ESP, but rather only a few special interest groups within larger language associations. It is possible for *anyone* to claim membership in the ESP profession and classify him/herself as an ESP professional, for there are no standards established by the ESP community that people can use to clarify professional identities in objective terms. Joining an ESP special interest group, prompted by a sudden new assignment to teach business English to business majors or engineering English to engineering majors may be the only qualification a person has to establish his/her identity in ESP. More substantial qualifications are clearly necessary if universities plan to recruit ESP professionals to carry out the kind of reform that MEXT wants.

The movement for standards in English language teaching

Fortunately, the situation is starting to change. In its recognition that anyone can claim to be an English professional in the absence of standards, TESOL, for example, has begun to spend considerable effort and money on developing standards for the ELT profession and publishing them in various forms—one of the most visible being the position shown below, with sections of particular interest underlined.

TESOL Position Statement on Teacher Quality in the Field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

English language learners, whether in an English as a second language (ESL) or

English as a foreign language (EFL) setting, have the right to be taught by qualified and trained teachers. <u>*Native speaker proficiency in the target language alone is not a sufficient qualification*</u> *for such teaching positions; the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is a professional discipline that requires specialized training.*

Qualified ESL and EFL educators not only <u>*should demonstrate a high level of written and oral proficiency in the English language (regardless of native language)*</u>, *but also* <u>*should demonstrate teaching competency*</u>. *Moreover, qualified ESL and EFL educators* <u>*should be aware of current trends and research and their instructional implications in the fields of linguistics, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, language pedagogy and methodology, literacy development, curriculum and materials development, assessment, and cross-cultural communication*</u>. *Where applicable, ESL and EFL educators* <u>*should receive the necessary degree, licensing, validation, or certification as determined by their institution, country, or region from qualified ESL/EFL teacher educators*</u>. *Most importantly, ESL and EFL educators, like all teachers,* <u>*require ongoing professional development*</u>, *and should receive both the resources and support for continued professional growth and achievement.* (TESOL, 2003)—underlines mine.

TESOL has not yet developed a means for assessing these abilities nor begun requiring their attainment for membership in the organization, but these standards do provide language educators with a yardstick to measure their own progress toward professionalism, as well as criteria that graduate schools or employers can use to determine one's suitability for graduation or employment. This is a positive step in the

right direction.

In respect to other ELT organizations, the movement toward developing professional standards is slower. JACET, for example, appears to have no published standards for determining one's membership in the ELT profession or status as an ELT professional; however, it does confer three awards for professional excellence:

JACET Awards for Professional Excellence
1. Excellence in Research 2. Most Promising Newcomer 3. Excellence in Teaching

How candidates are evaluated and what criteria are used remains considerably vague, however. IATEFL has made less progress in the area of standards, for it apparently publishes no criteria for evaluating one's status as a member or as a professional in ELT, and there is no mention of any awards for excellence or expertise on its Web site.

The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) is similar in these respects for it also requires no special qualifications for membership in the organization, except that one pays the membership fees, agrees with the organization's purposes, and abides by its rules. The organization was created to:

foster research, hold conferences, issue publications, cooperate with related professional organizations, and carry out other activities <u>for those interested in the improvement of language teaching and learning in Japan</u> and contribute to the development of activities in language teaching and learning, social education, and international cooperation. (JALT Constitution & Bylaws, 2003)—underlines mine.

The JALT Constitution specifies that the organization exists "*for those interested in the improvement of language teaching and learning in Japan*" without mention of any requirements for experience or employment in ELT. This is not a criticism, but rather further evidence that professional societies in ELT (and their special interest groups, such as ESP) are gathering places for persons interested in ELT or ESP but not necessarily for persons with any commonly agreed upon qualifications in ELT or ESP.

The movement for standards in ESP

In the field of ESP, the movement for establishing standards for *membership* in the ESP profession and standards for qualification as an ESP *professional* (vs. qualifications for simply membership in an ESP special interest group) is a hot new topic of discussion among those working in ESP, but the discussions have yet to produce any specific results. ESP professionals remain self-proclaimed entities based on subjective personal criteria that differ widely from person to person. Memberships in professional ESP organizations serve as evidence of interest in ESP, but they do not yet certify the ability to successfully engage in ESP work.

The creation of standards for identifying professionals in ESP need not remain simply a topic for debate, but rather it can be a rich new area for research and development in Japan among interested persons in JACET, JALT, or any other organization. Japan can set the pace in the development of standards and best practices within ESP that can impact the profession in other parts of the world and serve to clarify professional development goals for increasing the number of qualified professionals who can meet the ESP demands requested by the Japanese government and Japanese universities. Where might the work begin? The following recommendations point to excellent starting points.

Feature Article: Orr

Potential criteria for membership in the ESP Profession

Criteria for determining membership in the ESP profession (i.e., when one is justified in claiming that he/she is an ESP professional) are not yet firmly established; however, several publications have already made considerable progress in clarifying what ESP work entails. Some of the most internationally visible are the following three books and two international journals.

English for Specific Purposes: Case Studies in TESOL Practice, Orr (Ed.), TESOL Press (2002)

Developments in ESP: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach, Dudley-Evans and St John, Cambridge University Press (1998)

English for Specific Purposes, Hutchinson and Waters, Cambridge University Press (1987)

English for Specific Purposes: An International Journal, Elsevier Press.

Journal of English for Academic Purposes, Elsevier Press.

Definition of ESP

According to descriptions that have evolved in ESP literature, a suitable starting place for defining ESP officially might be the following definition offered by Orr (2002, p. 1):

[ESP is] *a branch of language education that researches and teaches subsets of English to assist learners in successfully carrying out specific tasks for specific purposes.*

[The English] *that is primarily taught or researched consists of the spoken and written discourse in academic and workplace settings, which is unfamiliar to most native and nonnative speakers and thus requires special training.* [Proficiency in] *specific-purpose English includes not only knowledge of a specific part of the English language but also competency in the skills required to use this language, as well as sufficient understanding of the contexts within which it is situated.*

Examples of English language instruction for specific purposes contrasted with English instruction for general purposes has been illustrated as follows:

General Purpose English

Used to:
    initiate conversation
    make a doctor's appointment
    order food in a restaurant
    read a local newspaper
    fill out a credit card application
    comprehend the TV news
    shop via the internet

Specific Purpose English

Used to:
    negotiate a merger
    write software documentation
    engage in courtroom debate
    read technical specifications
    complete a grant proposal
    write a medical perscription
    explain how to operate a crane

(Orr, 2002, p. 2)

Practices that ESP professionals normally engage in are listed by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) as follows:

Primary Activities of the ESP Professional
1. Needs Analysis   2. Course Design   3. Materials Selection   4. Teaching   5. Evaluation

Articles that discuss the nature of ESP also provide excellent starting points for developing standards of practice and qualification

in ESP, such as the following, abstracted here:

ESP has become central to the teaching of English in University contexts and there can be little doubt of its success as an approach to understanding language use. This success is largely due to ESP's <u>distinctive approach to language teaching based on identification of the specific language features, discourse practices and communicative skills of target groups, and on teaching practices that recognize the particular subject-matter needs and expertise of learners</u>. Unfortunately, however, this strength is increasingly threatened by conceptions of ESP which move it towards more general views of literacy, emphasizing the idea of 'generic' skills and features which are transferable across different disciplines or occupations. In this paper I argue the case for specificity: that <u>ESP must involve teaching the literacy skills which are appropriate to the purposes and understandings of particular academic and professional communities</u>. The paper traces the arguments for a specific view, outlines some supporting research, and advocates the need to reaffirm our commitment to research-based language education. (Hyland, 2002, p.385). – underlines mine.

Potential criteria for status as an ESP professional

Although specific criteria for distinguishing professionals from novices are hard to negotiate among practitioners and specialists, I propose the following criteria, which might qualify as potential candidates for ESP standards:

Foundational ESP Qualification

An ESP professional must possess a central, overriding concern for the genuine needs of learners, above other considerations, and seek to address those needs in the best way possible.

General ESP Competencies

1. Ability to identify and understand a learner's goals in respect to target tasks.
2. Ability to identify and understand the linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge/skills required to carry out those tasks successfully.
3. Ability to identify and understand the learner's gaps in the required knowledge/skills required to carry out those tasks.
4. Ability to prepare appropriate materials/training to fill in those gaps.
5. Ability to assess the learner's progress toward the specified learning goals.
6. Ability to evaluate and continually refine the entire process.

Specific ESP Competencies

1. Knowledge of the field or profession being served, in terms of academic or workplace activities.
2. Knowledge of the field or profession being served, in terms of linguistic (e.g., words, texts), paralinguistic (e.g., intonation, stress), nonlinguistic (e.g., graphics, gestures) communication.
3. Knowledge of the field or profession being served, in terms of culture (e.g., values, preferences, best practices).
4. Knowledge of the field or profession being served, in terms of content (e.g., basic laws, principles, theories, concepts, goals, methods, issues, problems).

These requirements might serve as starting places for developing a set of specifications for professional certification in ESP that practitioners could aim at developing and organizations could use to evaluate the suitability of educators to address

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specific English learning needs. The actual development, refinement, and acceptance would require participation and agreement by many in the ESP profession, however, before the criteria could be given much credibility. But at least this proposal initiates a start in the right direction with a potential rough draft for others to refine further.

Conclusion

If the field of ESP wishes to make genuine progress toward clarifying its criteria for *membership* in the ESP profession as well as its standards for status as an ESP *professional*, there needs to be clear specifications and clear goals. At present, the field of ESP has yet to establish any criteria along these lines. This is a fruitful area for research and development within the ESP community, for it clarifies for teachers who are interested in ESP the nature of ESP work and the standards by which that work can be professionally judged. Potential criteria for determining membership and ranking within the ESP community might begin with some of the ideas suggested above; however, professional standards must ultimately evolve communally and be accepted widely before criteria can be officially established and goals for professional development be clearly identified. If standards can be developed for ESP within Japan, it will become clearer as to who is able to help Japanese universities develop quality instruction in workplace English, and it will become clearer as to what professional skills language teachers should aim for to qualify for this kind of work.

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Learners and Writing Instruction Backgrounds: A Preliminary Study

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Background

When Japanese students take university writing classes with native English speakers for the first time, their instructors often assume that students have had paragraph writing instruction, when that may not be the case at all. At the same time, many students are also introduced to process writing (brainstorming, outlining, drafting, etc.) and to the art of essay writing. Unfortunately, many students have difficulty with writing skills above the sentence level, often as a result of the ongoing grammar-translation focus of English writing classes in Japanese secondary education (Hirayanagi, 1998; Takagi, 2001).

In the university classes I currently teach, students seem to expect a grammar or a reading class, with writing coming as either grammar practice á la fill-in-the-blanks, or as questions to a given reading passage with Japanese translation provided. The notion of "rhetoric" appears new to them. Even when the term is translated into Japanese, few seem to understand that writing as a structured, creative process was something which could be taught. Wondering about the high school instruction students had received, not only in English writing but also in Japanese, led me to devise a short questionnaire in an attempt

Few seemed to understand that writing as a structured, creative process was something which could be taught.

to discover the writing instruction backgrounds of students beginning a university writing course.

Methodology

The total number of students surveyed was 43, roughly evenly divided between two sections of *Advanced Performance A*, a required once-per-week, year-long English reading and writing course for all first year students at a private four-year college in western Japan. One section consisted of Chinese language majors; the other, business majors. The questionnaire itself consisted of 6 "bio-data" questions, 6 "yes/no" questions and 2 open-response questions. A final question asked students to write down any proficiency tests they had taken. The questionnaire was distributed in the first class of the spring 2004 semester.

Questionnaire results

Questions 1 through 6 were "bio-data" questions about students' hometowns, ages, and so forth. These questions have been omitted here for the sake of space. The "meat" of the questionnaire began at Questions 7 and 9, which asked the students for a "yes," "no," or "I don't remember" answer, while Questions 8 and 10 asked those who

responded "yes" to explain their answer in an open-response format. As these four questions (Q7-10) are concerned directly with student writing instruction history, they are listed directly below. Questions 11 through 14 were all "yes" or "no" questions concerning diaries and computer usage.

Q7: Did you practice writing English paragraphs in high school?			
N=43	Yes	No	Don't remember
Raw number	12	24	7
Percentage of total	28	56	16

Question 8 asked students how they practiced English writing in high school class. Responses fell into 5 main categories: translation from Japanese, grammar or fill in the blank exercises, memorizing word lists, copying what the teacher wrote on the blackboard, and copying the text itself. One student wrote somewhat enigmatically, "I expressed things around me in English," while another simply wrote, "I don't understand [the question]."

Q8: Did you receive lessons about writing in Japanese in high school?			
N=43	Yes	No	Don't remember
Raw number	20	19	4
Percentage of total	47	44	9

Those who responded "yes" to question 8 gave various answers to the follow-up question (9) about the method of practicing Japanese writing. The categories were nearly identical to those concerning practicing English writing: practicing writing Chinese characters (*kanji*), memorizing *kanji*, writing *kanji* in fill in the blank sentences, copying the blackboard, and translation from English to Japanese. Two students claimed to have

written "personal opinion essays" (*go-kan-sou-bun*), while another student said he read the book and listened to the teacher's explanation. Somewhat confusingly, one student wrote that the teacher singled out students to translate from English to Japanese in front of class. Whether this was oral or written on the blackboard was not clarified.

Q11: Do you currently have a diary in Japanese?			
N=42	Yes	No	
Raw number	5	37	
Percentage of total	12	86	
Q12: Have you ever written an English diary for class?			
N=43	Yes	No	Don't remember
Raw number	2	40	1
Percentage of total	5	93	2
Q13: Do you own a personal computer?			
N=43	Yes	No	
Raw number	27	16	
Percentage of total	63	37	
Q14: Have you ever used word processing software for class work?			
N=43	Yes	No	Don't remember
Raw number	15	28	0
Percentage of total	35	65	0

Not all of those who answered "yes" to question 13 also answered "yes" to question 14. Comparing answers to those two questions, only 30% of students who own computers have used word processing for class work. All of these students were in the business majors section.

The final question (15) asked students to list any standardized proficiency exams taken. Forty-seven percent of students surveyed have taken the Eiken. Of those, 5% took 5th grade, 12% took 4th grade, and 21% passed 3rd grade. Only 9%, or 4 students among the 43 surveyed, claim to have passed pre-2nd grade of the Eiken. This also includes the

lone student who listed a TOEIC score (249). These scores indicate a fairly low level of English proficiency, as might be expected for non-English majors. At the same time, there are quite a number of students who have some experience of success on official English tests.

Discussion and analysis

Results of the survey clearly indicate that in addition to receiving little or no instruction in English writing, students also received little or no instruction in writing Japanese. The majority of students surveyed cited class methodology indicative of traditional grammar-translation, a method of teaching writing which persists in Japan apparently due to translation questions on entrance exams. Other students cited methods of a typical teacher-centered class structure with emphasis on memorization and drills, and little or no actual output. Many students seemed confused by the very question "how did you practice writing?" One student told the examiner, "What do you mean by, 'how did I practice writing Japanese?' I'm Japanese, so I already know how to write Japanese." While one or two students mentioned actual essay writing in their native language, none of those surveyed appear to have been instructed in organizational or drafting and revising techniques.

Many students appear incapable of forming an English paragraph, or even a well-formed sentence in some cases, without the labor-intensive step of first writing in Japanese and then translating word by word. This explains why those learners in the two sections who managed to produce English paragraphs generally wrote incoherent sentences with little or no logical structure or transitions between sentences, a jumbled mix of random ideas. This appeared to support

Takagi (2001), who surveyed 25 students who had studied both in the US and Japan and found that only one student had experienced paragraph writing in high school. She theorized that this was due to an "emphasis on prescriptive forms and mechanics" (p. 6) instead of on organization or process writing in English writing classes in Japan.

In the questionnaire, students also indicated in questions 11 and 12 about diaries that they do not write even in Japanese on a regular basis. Researchers of contrastive rhetoric argue about differences between L1 and L2 and influences of L1 rhetoric patterns on L2 writing (Cahill, 2003; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996; Kubota, 1997), but if the students in question don't know the rhetoric of their own language, it seems pointless to even consider written L1 as much of a factor. Writing is primarily a means of communication and should be taught as such, especially to non-native speakers, nearly all of whom are used to the idea of writing as a way of practicing grammar for a test (Gates, 2003; Shih, 1999). The meaning should always take precedence over form; personal expression should always be more important than "correct" English. However, students can hardly develop their own expressive abilities if they don't practice writing at all. The fact that less than 5% of all students surveyed have ever had a diary in any language clearly indicates that these students do not see themselves as writers. Leki (2003) comments that her learners generally regarded writing tasks as "necessary evils they would have preferred to avoid" (p. 317). Any rhetoric instructor should bear such a fact in mind—many of our students may not be interested in writing of any kind, let alone essay writing for a class that they would rather not take.

The most surprising result of the questionnaire concerned computer usage. Nearly

two-thirds own computers at home, yet only one-third say they used a computer word-processing program for class. This may be because of the prevalence of the *genkou-youshi*, or the vertical box grid sheets in which Japanese students write one *kana* or Chinese character at a time. The *genkou-youshi* are used starting in elementary school all the way up to the tertiary level. It goes without saying that few Western universities would accept hand-written reports or essays these days from students. Few businesses would accept such a report, either. Since typing skills are definitely more applicable in the real world of English, continuing to hand-write all writing assignments in English seems of questionable value.

Conclusion

In this study, despite one or two exceptions, most students find academic writing an incredibly daunting task, completely unlike anything they have done before in high school English or Japanese class. I cannot claim that other university instructors will find exactly the same patterns of educational background in their students, nor the same academic level. However, many of us have to teach English writing to non-English major students for whom English writing may seem of little importance. In order not to demotivate students, it might behoove instructors to temper their writing rhetoric demands, asking for more gradual steps and trying to instill in students the communicative enjoyment of writing for self-expression and meaning.

Of course, our job is to teach paragraph and composition structure; however, even for many native speakers, learning rhetoric style is not simple. Students must learn the patterns of English paragraphs, a feat which requires "an organizational ability—and one

which, incidentally, many native speakers do not possess" (Johnson, 1982, p. 177). Nunan (1989) has also pointed out that many native speakers find it difficult to write fluently and many don't use essay writing in real life situations.

Taking a quick glance at real life situations, the increasing dominance of web logs (blogs) on the internet shows that younger native speakers of English display an amazing lack of regard for style, coherence, grammar, and spelling. Much of what is published in online journals and diaries consists of run-on sentences, confusing punctuation and capitalization, and overuse of ellipses and parentheses, all of which combine to produce a nearly incomprehensible "rhetoric mush." Online, native speakers often seem to eschew clear writing in favor of a post-modern, deconstructionist "cool." This, too, TEFL instructors should keep in mind when asking non-native speakers to rigidly adhere to what may be perceived as a restrictive or conservative writing style. One must consider what students need to use writing for before we show them what we want them to do, where students are coming from before showing them where we want them to go.

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Feature Article: Apple

Opinion & Perspective
The Future for University English Language Instructors in Japan

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In the OP column for this issue, John Burrell offers a grim view of future employment possibilities for foreign teachers involved in tertiary level education in Japan and gives some advice for those who plan to stick it out.

If you are a university instructor on a limited term contract, with plans to stay in Japan, it is past time you took an objective look at your situation and perhaps made some hard choices. The future is extremely bleak for foreign university instructors in Japan, primarily because the demand for foreign instructors is dropping and will continue to do so. In the case of full-time positions, the situation is particularly dire, as a look at the job ads in JALT publications will show: the hours have increased but the pay hasn't. The real shocker is how high the requirements/qualifications have gone up for positions that seem more or less on par with NOVA conversation schools. Some of us may be in a position to leave teaching in Japan if conditions get worse. However, for those with very strong ties to Japan, like a spouse and children, this may not be a desirable option.

As for myself, I did not think I would ever come back to Japan after leaving in 1997. After eight and a half years I had topped out in terms of teaching positions and salary I could command with only a BA. More importantly, I decided that teaching was what I wanted to do for the rest of my working life and I believed that there were really no long term prospects for native-speaking English teachers in Japan. To my surprise, after completing a Master's in TESOL in the US, instead of going to the gulf, through exceptional luck and timing, I was offered an excellent limited term contract at a private university in Japan. Desperate for money after graduate school, and having previously enjoyed living in Japan, I accepted it. After spending the last few years in the university environment, I am convinced that the future for native-speaking English teachers at universities is even less encouraging now.

I grew up and worked in an industry in drastic decline, the timber industry in southern Oregon in the late 1970's, and I remember very well what it felt like. The English teaching industry in Japan felt that way when I left in 1997 and even more so now.

The primary reason should be no surprise to anyone who has been in Japan for any length of time; the rapidly declining number of children means fewer students for all schools. Recent government reports have been quite chilling for the future of many foreign teachers at all levels. One stated that the birthrate in 2003 was the lowest ever recorded in Japan, another that the number of places in tertiary institutions will outnumber applicants as early as 2007. The most recent

one reported that a record number of private universities failed to get as many students as they needed for the 2004 academic year. The two-year tertiary schools are a dying breed and many low-end private four-year schools are in serious economic difficulty because of a lack of students. The institutions are being forced to cut costs, and they often do this by cutting the numbers of foreign instructors who in their eyes are extraneous and often difficult to manage. There is a trend towards reducing the numbers of full-time contracted foreign instructors. A private university in my city did it last year with no warning. At least one university in Fukuoka also did it recently. The universities are looking more to part-time instructors, outsourcing for instructors from conversation schools, or decreasing the number of part-timers and increasing the number of classes for the full-timers that remain. With the continuing decline in enrollments the situation will only get worse.

There is another reason why there will be far less need for native-speaking English: the younger Japanese instructors as a whole are very different from their elders in that they are more fluent and better trained, and they will continue to develop. In my Master's program in the US there were at least nine Japanese nationals enrolled. If my relatively small program had these numbers, I think that it is true for larger programs in the US and other countries as well. They are being exposed to the same changes in the field as the native speakers and there is no reason to assume that they will not be able to apply them as competently. In addition, programs in Japan at institutions such as Temple and Columbia are also producing large numbers of trained Japanese graduates. The generations of Japanese instructors who teach English, yet can barely say "How are you?"

are fast retiring. As the new generations of Japanese teachers come up, the institutions are going to realize, correctly, that it does not necessarily require a native speaker to teach a foreign language. The new Japanese instructors are fluent, well educated, and easily function in the Japanese workplace, which is a huge bonus for the institution. I personally think this is good for Japan in the long run, but unfortunately it is not good for my future job prospects.

I have heard the opinion that the shrinking job market and higher standards will cut out the deadwood that exists in the profession. To this I answer, perhaps. I think the instructors who will be successful in the future in Japan are those who play the academic game the best. Their actual classroom teaching will have even less to do with them getting and keeping a position than it does now. They will have lots of publications and presentations. They will network like fiends. In short, EFL teaching will become just like other disciplines in universities. When universities hire a new math professor, how many applicants are asked to give a teaching demonstration or show that they really take that much notice of what happens in the classroom? They really want to know if the newly hired person will fit in, because the bulk of his or her work will not be teaching. It will be working on various committees and administrative tasks where the ability to get along will be critical for the smooth functioning of the institution. As the EFL departments become more like the other departments in universities, time spent on actual classroom teaching and preparation will come to comprise the minority of a professor's time compared to research and administrative duties. Unfortunately, it may be that rather than the best teachers surviving the change in the industry, it will be deadwood of a different

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type who will succeed.

If you are a younger teacher and are thinking of staying in Japan long term, you should start working on a PhD in TESOL, Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, or similar field. I think that very soon, a PhD, or progress on one, will be a prerequisite for any full-time position, contracted or not. At the better universities it will become true for part-time positions as well. Publish and present as much as humanly possible. Join as many professional organizations and take part in them to the extent you can stand and beyond. They are invaluable for information on positions and for expanding your resume. Do your research, find out which universities actually offer real full-time positions and do whatever it takes to get a position. Embrace the academic way of life and develop a specialty. Just being a general speaking/listening instructor is not going to be enough in itself. You should have a demonstrated ability to teach test preparation, such as TOEIC or TOEFL, CALL, or another specialized area within EFL. You may not end up doing a lot of classes in your specialty, but it will be something that will set you apart from the other applicants. As unpleasant as it is, you may have to be in permanent job search mode for a long period of time with all of the stress this entails. You should also study Japanese and get to a level where you can function reasonably well in a Japanese institution, in Japanese. This would include reading and writing. If all of this is anathema to you, maybe you should get out now while you are still young enough to do something else. The worst thing you can do is float along, led by a couple of good limited term contracts. Along the way you get married to a Japanese person who doesn't want to live in another country, have some kids, and then are really stuck when you are too old and not qualified

for the few positions offered.

In the case of older instructors, such as myself at 45, and given the ageism in the industry, the situation is the worst. At the least, you should do all of the above. In addition, there is no excuse, especially for those with spousal visas, not to at least explore other areas of employment. They could be education related, publishing, home stay programs, whatever, but you must think about another option to support yourself and your family. As for teaching, with fewer opportunities you will have to be more flexible about where you are willing to work. The qualifications that may not get you a full-time university position may be perfect for one in a secondary school. I have seen some very good positions in high schools, and with the declining enrollments and increased competition those positions will also be raising their requirements. Do not panic if you have to settle for a number of part-time positions. I have known a number of full-time contracted instructors whose time at a particular university was coming to an end and they refused to even consider taking only part-time positions. They put themselves under extreme stress trying to find a full-time position; even a limited term contracted one. Some settled for positions that were terrible, but which were at least full-time. I really do not understand why. The contracted positions with limited terms are ultimately no more secure than part-time positions because they end. The conditions in these positions are getting worse. Part-time positions have far fewer responsibilities, and with judicious schedule juggling, total income can be adequate. I think in some cases it has to do with ego. The perceived need to be a full-time professor with all the perks and status seems to be strong in some. However, to be fair, it is always difficult to

go from a good position at one institution to scrambling around with multiple positions and getting to various locations with often long commutes. Also, in recent years there are fewer part-time positions available.

At the end of my present limited term contract I will "almost" certainly leave Japan. I say almost even after writing all of the above because one never really knows. I said one more year for nine years the last time I was here. I could even get lucky again and fall into another good position. Realistically though, I will be 47 so the possibility of another good full-time position, even of the limited term type, is probably remote. I have thought about doing only part-time positions, but that would entail moving to a much larger metropolitan area to be practical. Moving to another country is the most likely choice because living and teaching in other countries was one of the reasons I got my MA in TESOL in the first place. I have enjoyed my time in Japan and probably would not leave if I could have my present position indefinitely.

Opinion & Perspective

From the Chalkface

World Populations as Pronunciation Exercise

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Introduction

The World Polulations activity is flexible, adaptable and extendable. I have used it with very basic level students as well as quite advanced classes. It has been very well received by my students. It is an excellent chance for them to practice using cardinal numbers, something that is often neglected in the EFL classroom. Numbers are usually one of the first things learned during natural acquisition, showing their importance and usefulness in daily life. Yet in an EFL setting often even advanced students still have trouble expressing large numbers fluently and accurately. This activity also provides an excellent chance to review geography and names of areas that many Japanese students are often unfamiliar with. By using real figures, in this case from United Nations' 2001 data, students may gain some interesting insights into the distribution of the human race. Finally, it is a chance to learn the stress and pronunciation of numbers as well as characteristic aspects of the articulation of consonant sounds in English.

Purpose

This lesson can be used as simply a communicative pronunciation exercise for numbers, consonant sounds, or both. It can also be used to create a diagnostic profile for each student, as explained by Suzanne Firth (1992) in Avery and Ehrlich's *Teaching American English Pronunciation*. Firth, notes that it is generally easier for students to modify production of consonant sounds than it is to modify vowel sounds. Thus consonants would seem a good place to start when teaching pronunciation, at least when focusing on the micro level of individual sounds. A diagnostic profile of each student is helpful to the teacher in assessing their needs and progress, while a profile of the class as a whole can be used to plan a pronunciation syllabus. By focusing the students' attention on numbers, the teacher is better able to determine their ability to carry over the production of isolated sounds into real-life communication focused on content rather than form.

Materials
Population cards
Worksheet to record data
Chalkboard or flashcards

Materials available online at
http://allagash.miyazaki-mu.ac.jp/CUE/

Procedure

Pronunciation and Stress

Teach the pronunciation and stress of numbers as well as all consonant sounds—or the areas matched with each sound (Firth, 1992). In teaching the units used to count from one to one billion, I focus particular attention on the difference between the teens and

multiples of ten. I find using hand motions is useful, especially for lower level students. The teens get a quick chopping motion followed by a lengthening gesture. Although these numbers may be stressed on either the first or second syllable, I find stressing the second syllable is very helpful for students. Also this is the stress pattern native speakers would choose to clearly differentiate from a multiple of ten. The gesture I use for 20 thru 90 is two quick chopping motions. I also indicate that these numbers are predictably stressed on the first syllable. The consonant sounds can be taught in isolation first or simply as part of the name of an area. When this latter approach is adopted it is fun to have the students try to guess the pronunciation from the spelling.

Population cards.

Give each student one population card. I like to print mine on business card stock and then laminate them for future reuse. The card has the name of a country or area and its population. This is a good point in the lesson to discuss politics and geography with higher-level students. For example, Wales/UK and Hong Kong/China quickly come to mind.

The populations are fairly current at the moment, but they can be updated from the Internet as needed (UN, InforNation).

Worksheet

Country	Popluation
Poland	38,577,000
Bolivia	8,516,000
Mexico	100,368,000
Finland	5,178,000
Vietnam	79,175,000
Lithuania	3,689,000
United States	285,926,000
Tanzania	35,965,000
Denmark	5,333,000
Singapore	4,108,000
Zambia	9,959,000
Norway	4,488,000
Libya	5,408,000
Romania	22,388,000
Bangladesh	140,369,000
Malaysia	22,633,000
China*	1,284,972,000
Japan	127,335,000
Canada	31,015,000
Guyana	763,000
Hong Kong	7,303,000
Wales	2,946,000
Yemen	19,114,000
Hungary	10,075,000

Pass out the worksheet for the students to record their classmates' data. The top of the sheet has a question and answer pattern that can be used or deleted depending on the class. Sometimes I teach the stress and intonation patterns for these in the previous class. In lower level classes or if I am pressed for time I often skip these and simply have the students read the name of the country they have and its population. However I never neglect this chance to practice *useful classroom language* (see bottom of worksheet). The procedure is simple. Each student takes a turn (often standing) and tells the class his or her data. The other students listen and write this information on their papers. Thus receptive as well as productive skills are practiced. Students usually get immediate feedback from their classmates on how well they did or did not do.

Conclusion

The flexibility and adaptability of this activity make it suitable for a wide range of classes and students. It also offers tremendous opportunities for expansion. A simple explanation of where the country is located is often needed, especially for developing countries. A map is quite useful here. Discussion can be elicited about travel, culinary or business interests. Political issues, such as the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, are also appropriate for some students.

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Comparisons between different countries are interesting. For example, many students are unaware that Bangladesh has a larger population that Japan. Introducing nationalities is also another possibility and could be used to show how stress in a word changes with the addition of a suffix, such as CAnada & caNAdian. The range of expansion activities possible means it can be recycled extensively while still remaining fun, fresh and interesting for the teacher.

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From the Chalkface

Developing Students' Strategic Competence

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Do Japanese students lack strategic competence?

A number of years ago, shortly after my arrival in Japan, I went into a *Subway* sandwich shop for lunch. At that time I was studying Japanese twice weekly at a language school and approached the challenge of negotiating my sandwich in Japanese with great enthusiasm. Initially, I was successful, "Veggies ando cheezu onegai shimasu, zenbun irete mou ii" but then the young girl behind the counter asked if I wanted *salt*, a word I hadn't yet encountered on my basic Japanese course. I looked confused and said "Sumimasen?" at which point the girl panicked and dashed off to get her supervisor who strolled over with a very fluent "Yes sir, how can I help you?" I had failed in my attempt to resolve the communication problem. But the failure was not mine alone; my speaking partner had avoided the process of 'negotiation of meaning' by running away. It would have been very easy for her, at the point of the breakdown in our communication, to hold up the salt shaker, point at it and say, "Kore wa shio desu, hoshii desu ka?" thus allowing me to develop my vocabulary and exploit this learning opportunity.

This type of scenario must be all too familiar to teachers in Japan. It has already been well documented in the literature (e.g., Brown, 1979) and clearly indicates a lack of strategic competence. Strategic competence refers to a speaker's ability to exploit verbal or non-verbal communication strategies when communication problems arise, compensating for deficiencies in other areas of competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1995). Why is it that Japanese students seem to lack strategic

competence, even in their own language? The answer may stem from the fact that Japan is not a multi-cultural society, so instances of communication breakdown between interlocutors are limited. In a homogeneous community, speaker styles converge so that the possibility of misunderstandings (which trigger the deployment of communication strategies) are minimised. It may also be due to the fact that Japanese is more ritualised than many other languages; for many communicative events, there are often a very limited number of preferred responses. This has also been noted in the literature, for example Loveday (1982) gave Japanese and English native speaker informants a questionnaire asking: 1) What would you say to someone who saved you from drowning? And; 2) What would you say to someone who gave you a present? The majority of the Japanese used the same formula to respond to both cues while the English-speaking informants showed a preference for more individualised and varied responses. This, of course, is not meant to be judgemental in any way. Both interaction styles achieve their own aims in the context in which they are produced; the Japanese stressing group harmony and the English speakers stressing differences.

How can we develop students' strategic competence in the classroom?

Developing strategic competence is something which can and should be done very early on in students' English language learning careers, since the 'linguistic tools' needed are fairly basic and the skill of being able to negotiate meaning when communication breakdown occurs will increase their confidence and aid their L2 acquisition. Below, I outline one way for teachers to begin developing this type of competence in their learners in the hope that it may be of

some use to other teachers. The activities are based loosely around a listening activity from *Learning to Learn English* (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989) – a book which comes highly recommended as a useful source for learner training – but teachers can easily adapt the procedure by recording native speakers role-playing a similar scenario. I usually introduce these communication strategies over two lessons and then try to recycle the language throughout the course where instances of communication breakdown occur in class.

Day 1

1. Hold up an unusual object (for example, a bottle opener/corkscrew) and tell students that you want to buy one of these in a shop but don't know its name in English. Ask students to brainstorm ideas in pairs, then conduct a feedback session, summarising their ideas on the whiteboard and adding any strategies that they miss. You should end up with the following list:

a) Using a foreign word: *I'd like to buy a "wain oupunaa."*

b) Describing what an object is for: *It's used **for** open**ing** wine bottles/It's used **to** open wine bottles.*

c) Describing what an object looks like or is made of: *It looks (a bit) like a screw with handles/It's silver (brainstorm other colours)/ It's about xcm long/wide/tall/ It's about this big (demonstrate with gestures)/ It's made of metal or plastic (brainstorm other types of material).*

d) Using a word close in meaning (e.g. a hyponym or superordinate): *It's like a big screw/ It's a kind of kitchen equipment.*

e) Inventing a new word or expression: *I'd like a cork puller.*

f) Using a substitute word: *It's a thingy / thingummyjig / thingummybob / watchamacallit for opening wine bottles.*

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g) Other strategies: *mime/drawing noises*.

2. Next, learners listen to three native speakers trying to buy an unknown object in a hardware store and have to try to guess what it is. In *Learning to Learn English*, the object sought is a rawl plug, an item, which is unfamiliar to most Japanese, but this is not of major importance since the focus of the activity is on how the native speakers use communication strategies to negotiate meaning. Teachers may choose to re-record similar interactions using an object more familiar in Japan; if this is the case, make sure that the full range of strategies are employed in the listening activity.

After this listening task, students listen to the tape again and note which strategies are used by each speaker. At the post-listening stage, students can be given the tape script to check their answers and be asked to underline all examples of strategies used by the native speakers.

3. Highlight the target language and focus on pronunciation problems with some quick choral/individual drilling. Areas to focus on might include the pronunciation of the substitute words, the use of the weak form (schwa) and linking in, *It's a kind of… or It's used to…* etc.

4. Hand out a couple of other unusual objects (or pictures of objects) and ask pairs to work together describing them using all seven strategies focused on above, then summarise their ideas on the whiteboard.

Day 2

1. Review the communication strategies taught in the previous lesson and hand out sheets with around 10 pictures of unfamiliar objects on them. I use pictures of nutcrackers, tweezers, razor blades, hinges, hot water bottles, jack plugs, hampers, wallets, dummies (pacifiers), clothes racks and so on. Ask pairs to work together to describe each of the objects using as many of the strategies as possible. They should be able to come up with descriptions such as: *It's a thingummyjig used for opening nuts/ It looks like the letter 'V' and it has teeth in the bottom part/ It's made of metal/ It's about 20 cm long/It's a kind of kitchen equipment/It's a nut-breaker.* The teacher should monitor carefully during this writing stage, helping individuals and correcting any mistakes.

2. Students then form new pairs and describe objects at random to their partner who tries to guess what is being talked about. Again, the teacher monitors and notes down examples of particularly successful or unsuccessful strategies for feedback at the post-speaking stage.

3. The final stage is to see how well students can use these communication strategies *without* preparation. Prepare some more pictures of unusual objects and tape one picture onto each student's back. Allow students to stand up and mingle, describing the objects on other people's backs. After 10 minutes or so, the students should have a good idea what object they have on their back.

Conclusion

Communication strategies are extremely important for Japanese learners and, as shown above, can be taught quite simply even to fairly low-level students. As well as giving learners the linguistic tools to effectively use communication strategies it is also important to encourage a change in attitude in the classroom: to see breakdown in communication not as some insurmountable obstacle to be avoided but as a wonderful opportunity for learning. This message needs to be reinforced in each lesson through the teacher's own attitude to communication problems. If

students don't know a word in English, they should be encouraged to describe it rather than looking for an instantaneous translation in their bilingual dictionaries. If the students don't understand a word used by the teacher, he or she should use it as an opportunity to review the strategies taught earlier without supplying the meaning in Japanese. Most importantly, students should be encouraged to relax in the face of communication breakdown. In cosmopolitan Western cultures, people tend to be very familiar with this type of problem and are not at all embarrassed —learners need to develop a similar type of confidence.

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From the Chalkface

RESEARCH DIGEST

A Letter to Researchers

You probably noticed Research Digest no longer posts snippets in the back corners of *On CUE*, but spotlights full-length articles and reviews. This section now covers, and uncovers, the latest resources, tools, and methods. These pages will inform you of developments in theory and practice, bare the research processes from your favorite people, and provide a forum where methodology itself gets critiqued. Potential contributors, please read the submission guidelines on the inner flap.

In this issue, Christopher Sullivan exposes a world where many have yet to venture, Systemic Functional Grammar. He asserts this model reinvents the way we look at language, and he invites you for a peek. Also in these pages, Parrill Stribling takes SPSS 12.0 for a test run, and assesses this new version of the statistical software package.

CUE encourages its members to lead the way we think and teach at the tertiary level in Japan. This SIG avidly sponsors retreats and conferences to get people connected. Our homepage <http://allagash.miyazaki-mu.ac.jp/CUE/> offers downloadable materials, and we will soon host a database where your buried in-house publications can be unearthed for good use. And do not forget—*On CUE* promoted to a refereed journal last year. This is a supportive community, and I hope Research Digest stands as a cornerstone in it. So stick around, pitch in, and read on.

Joe Falout

Section Editor

Systemic Functional Grammar: Two Recent Views

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Introduction

M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has been a major influence in linguistics for some time now, and is currently making in-roads into the world of language education as well (Kilpert, 2003, p. 201). Its increasing popularity is due to the fact that it is a comprehensive, articulate, and pliable model that completely reinvents the way people look at language. This paper presents a brief overview of SFG in light of two recent articles on the theory, "Language Education in English Education: Grammar Instruction, Grammar Plus, or Critical Social Analysis?" by Judy Diamondstone (2002) and "Getting the Full Picture: a Reflection on the Work of M. A. K. Halliday" by Diana Kilpert (2003). By examining SFG's advantages, criticisms, and applications, I hope to encourage educators to discover more about the SFG model of language for themselves.

Systemic Functional Grammar

SFG divides language into two sets of levels: the extralinguistic, and the linguis-

tic. The extralinguistic level provides the background for a text. It is comprised of two different contexts: the context of culture and the context of situation. The context of culture represents the entire collection of meanings that are possible to express in any one culture. The context of situation refers to three different areas: the social processes a text fulfills (field); the social relations between the participants in a text (tenor); and the way the text is organized (mode).

The linguistic level provides the structure of a text. It is comprised of the level of semantics; the level of the lexicogrammar, and the level of expression. At the level of semantics we find the system of meanings present in a language. Meanings are encoded in the language simultaneously by way of three so-called metafunctions: the experiential, the interpersonal, and the textual. These metafunctions operate simultaneously in every instance of language and they are directly related to the field, tenor, and mode from the context of situation. Field corresponds with the experiential metafunction, tenor with the interpersonal, and mode with the textual.

The experiential metafunction refers to the existential ideas, qualities, and entities found in a text. An utterance such as "please open the back door" contains the experiential meanings 'open', 'back', and 'door'. The interpersonal metafunction refers to the type of interaction manifested in the text. In the previous example, the interpersonal meaning would be 'request'. The textual metafunction refers to the way in which a text organizes its experiential and interpersonal meanings into a coherent whole. The textual meaning in the previous example is manifested through the word 'the': it allows both requester and requested to understand which back door is being referred to.

The level of lexicogrammar comprises the system of words and the way that they are arranged. Here, the term 'lexicogrammar' is used because SFG argues that there is no explicit distinction between the grammar and lexicon of a language. Finally, the level of expression contains the systems through which the language is physically manifested: sound, gesture, and writing. For a more comprehensive introduction to the SFG model, the reader is directed to Butt et al. (2003).

Advantages Of Systemic Functional Grammar

There are many advantages to adopting the SFG model. One of the biggest is that SFG demonstrates how a language system and society are inextricably intertwined. While other models have traditionally treated language as an entity in its own right, SFG recognizes that language and society coexist and are inseparable. This is one of the main arguments in the Diamondstone article. "In my view," she writes, "SFG offers a conceptual advantage to those who want to make the link between grammar and broader concerns" (2002, p. 317). Kilpert makes a similar point when she states that SFG "brings language and society together in the grammar" (2003, p. 179). Society is reflected in the field, tenor, and mode of a situation, and these in turn are manifested in the language through the three metafunctions. As an example, Diamondstone describes how a focus on the grammar of the interpersonal metafunction is necessarily a focus on the social positioning and identities found in the tenor of a situation (2002, p. 324). By introducing SFG into the classroom, educators can demonstrate that grammar represents more than just 'rules of language'; the grammar of a language is also a reflection of the society it belongs to.

Another advantage to the SFG model is

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that it builds on, instead of attacking, the work of others. SFG does not attempt to clear a space for itself in the world of linguistics by attempting to discredit the theories which contradict it. Instead, SFG "picks as valid as a new one for a particular purpose" (2003, p. 162). Halliday's SFG allows that a number of different views might be correct at different times and for different purposes (ibid.). This is a refreshing viewpoint, and as educators or linguists, I believe that it behooves us to adopt a similar philosophy.

Related to the idea that there may never be a single complete and correct model of language, is the idea that we may never be able to neatly dissect language into clean and compact units. Because language has evolved, and is still evolving, there is a great deal of indeterminacy and 'fuzziness' built into it, and a third advantage of the SFG model is that it recognizes and accepts this fact. "The point we would want to convey to students," Kilpert states, "is that it is not a case of finding the 'right' interpretation, of saying [a certain] clause definitely 'is' one thing or the other, but of accepting the indeterminacy as an aid to engaging with language in all its complexity" (2003, p. 188).

A few of the other advantages of the SFG model identified by the two articles include the concepts that: while other theories divide language into opposing elements (system vs. use, competence vs. performance), SFG shows how language is a whole system (Kilpert, 2003, p. 184); SFG shows how language is a network of choices made available through and constrained by cultural experience (Diamondstone, 2002, p. 326); SFG can identify significant pieces of language because these detach themselves from the typical patterns of everyday text (Kilpert, 2003, p. 192); and SFG has been designed to be accessible not only to the linguist, but

to the layperson as well (ibid., p. 199).

Criticisms Of Systemic Functional Grammar

SFG is not without its criticisms. One of the main complaints, and one that is recognized by both Diamondstone and Kilpert, is that SFG requires an elaborate terminology, especially for describing the experiential metafunction (Diamondstone, 2002, p. 324; Kilpert, 2003, p. 172). The experiential metafunction is the part of the SFG model which most closely resembles traditional grammar, and it contains a similarly large collection of terms and categories. Compounding the problem is the fact that much of the work of SFG linguists relies on liberal use of charts, boxes, graphs, diagrams, and tables in order to illustrate various aspects of the model (Kilpert, 2003, p. 172). All of this can be very intimidating to the linguist not familiar with SFG, even more so to the student or language learner. Unfortunately there is no real counter to this criticism aside from accepting that it is the nature of the model that demands such detail. Some of the introductory SFG texts do an admirable job of keeping the terminology to a minimum; again, the reader is directed towards Butt et al. (2003) for an example.

Another serious complaint is that SFG requires a fundamental shift in perspective on what counts as grammar (Diamondstone, 2002, p. 324). Kilpert describes how adopting the SFG model, "requires a change of mind-set, and a background in formal syntax may prove a stumbling block, because of the habit it inculcates of looking at sentences as autonomous entities" (2003, p. 191). Because of the experiential metafunction's resemblance to traditional grammar, it is the easiest of the three to relate to. The textual metafunction can be difficult to comprehend because people are used to concentrating on

sentence rather than discourse level patterns. The most difficult of the three metafunctions to understand may be the interpersonal metafunction. Until now, grammar and interpersonal relationships have not been dealt with together, as they are in the SFG model (ibid.).

Diamondstone has another complaint: "A SFG-based approach to grammar instruction requires an elaborate infrastructure—the support of policy statements, curriculum documents, and knowledgeable practitioners as well as linguists who are available to teachers" (2002, p. 324). I agree with her to an extent. Her criticism is valid if SFG is to be implemented on a large scale—if it were adopted by the language department of a university, or by a local school board. It would require curriculum designers who were completely familiar with the theory, as well as training programs to introduce teachers to the model and its mechanics. Asking teachers to teach SFG-based lessons without giving them enough prior instruction would only result in frustrated teachers and confused students. It is much easier for SFG to be implemented into the classroom at the individual level. Once teachers feel confident enough in their own understanding of the theory, they can begin to use it in the classroom.

Applications Of Systemic Functional Grammar

SFG has applications in psychology, psychotherapy, and speech therapy, as well as in the fields of computer software design and forensic linguistics (Kilpert, 2003, p. 200). The main application of the model, however, is in language teaching. SFG allows students to see how the field, tenor, and mode of a situation determine the form that a text takes. The field, tenor, and mode are represented in the language by the three metafunctions, and the meanings that the three metafunctions express affect the way in which the lexicogrammar is structured. By teaching students to become aware of the field, tenor, and mode of a situation, and by familiarizing them with the concepts of the metafunctions and how the metafunctions organize language, educators can help students produce language that is more appropriate and correct.

Diamondstone's article therefore contains several examples of classroom activities developed to show "that grammatical choices are sensitive to situational and cultural context, that grammar is used to do things with words, and that it varies systematically depending on what is done" (2002, p. 325). As an example, she relates how she asked one student to answer a set of questions orally and record and transcribe the answers, and then answer the same two questions in writing. By doing so, she was able to demonstrate to the student how the structure of speech and writing differ, and made it possible for the student to identify some of the patterns of language specific to narrative and description (ibid.)

She also offers a link to the Systemics and Education Home Page (http://www.wagsoft.com/Systemics/Education/index.html) which contains further teaching resources that utilize the SFG framework.

The Two Articles

Before concluding, I would like to offer a brief review of the two articles. In comparing the two, the Kilpert article appears to be the better organized. She presents her overview of Halliday's work clearly, with each part of her analysis building on the one that comes before it. The sections also segue into each other well: the final thoughts of one section alert the reader's attention to the ideas

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that will be developed in the next. The title, abstract, and content of the Diamondstone article, on the other hand, seem to be at odds with one another. The title mentions "grammar plus," a term which is never explained; the abstract describes "a one-semester course for preservice teachers" which is never mentioned again; and the content tends to wander from topic to topic within each section. Furthermore, she refers to the ATEG "scope and sequence" document several times, yet never provides a reference. Although Diamondstone's argument (that meaning should be included in language education, and that SFG is the best way to achieve this) is strong, her presentation detracts from its force.

Pedagogically, the Diamondstone article has more to offer than its counterpart. As well as arguing why SFG should be used in the classroom, she also provides examples of SFG in use, and links to sites which contain SFG-based teaching resources. Kilpert's article does make mention of the pedagogic applications of SFG, but remains essentially a linguistic exercise. In this sense, the two articles complement each other well: the one provides a concise examination of the pedagogical applications of SFG; the other a much lengthier look at the theory's linguistic aspects. Reading both texts allows one a better view of the scope of the SFG model.

Conclusion

In her introduction, Kilpert writes, "[SFG] has enlarged our current picture of language by foregrounding motifs of opening up, expanding, and seeing things from multiple perspectives and . . . it has broadened the scope of linguistic inquiry and enabled the discipline to extend its sphere of influence and to speak to the needs of the consumer" (2003, p. 160). These are very large claims, and yet I believe that they hold true. It is hoped that this paper has given the reader an idea of how revolutionary SFG is, and that the reader will be encouraged to discover more about the theory on their own.

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SPSS Version 12.0: A Review

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SPSS version 12.0 is now standard software for many research-based departments. Considered by many departments user friendly and more comprehensive than other statistical programs, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is the statistical program many students were introduced to. The software program has become an important tool in quantitative research. There are some negative aspects of the program; namely expense and the availability for Macintosh users.

I need to confess, before proceeding with this review, that I am not a statistician. I use SPSS for my research only and do not consider myself an authority on the SPSS program. I use the program because I am familiar with it and have only briefly employed other statistical programs. I like SPSS because it performs the analysis I need to answer my questions.

One positive aspect of the program is that it has evolved through various previous versions and is now far easier to manipulate. The instructional language style is uncomplicated and comprehensible, which had been an obstacle for the novice statistical student. There are fewer anagrams in the descriptions of various analytical procedures. Definitions and instructions for those less versed in statistical jargon are understandable. The help section actually does make sense to someone non-versed in statistical jargon, and it is clearly and concisely written. It also offers useful examples illustrating which analysis to administer on different types of data, and it suggests how to interpret the results.

Entering and labelling the data has been made far more practical than previous versions. It is also possible to assign like variable attributes to multiple variables simultaneously, and it is faster and easier to switch rows and columns. Downloading data off the web is now feasible. The program will read and recode data saved in other programs such as the Excel software. It claims to be able to use a larger database than previous versions. I practiced on it using a database of 278 variables and 264 cases, and there were no problems regarding speed and management.

Working with tables and graphs are more manageable than previous versions. It is easier to save a table in Word software. I practiced using a table of about thirty variables and the result was easily passed on to one A4 page. Graphs have also become more utilitarian and instructional; one can, for example, observe the change on a factor analysis with the click of the mouse. This can be quite enlightening.

Another aspect I appreciated was the table labelling. Tables in version 12.0 are far more understandable. Now the program labels part and partial coefficients that it did not previously perform. Determining significance,

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however, requires a long scroll down. It is also possible to keep more windows open as one switches from the sub-procedures of analysis to the output. This can be helpful to determine which procedure to pursue in the research.

The program also claims to offer more statistical procedures than the previous versions, which I am not able to verify. I tried to perform Statistical Equation Modelling on some old data, but the program did not run. Perhaps one must purchase the additional AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) companion program to perform this procedure. SPSS 12.0 is more adaptable than previous versions. The document I used had been saved in Word. Just to be difficult, I asked a PC to open it. It opened the document and read the data without any loss of variables, labelling, or cases.

There are some negative aspects for Mac users: expense and limited availability. One must purchase an extra SPSS basic program before installing other versions, and as mentioned, some analytical procedures are not included in this version. It is difficult to understand why Mac users are penalized this way. SPSS version 12.0 is available only for PCs. But Mac software is either unavailable (AMOS), or two or three years behind. Now version 11.0 is available for Macintosh OS X. Yet there is a newer version (13.0) for PCs, only available in North America.

I like the new version, warts and all. There has been a sincere attempt to make the software program easier to use and understandable for the beginning or even average statistical researcher. I think, however I will wait to see what version 13 has to offer before I make the extra purchase.

Note

More product information is available at *http://www.spss.com*

Read any good research lately?

Research Digest seeks up-to-date surveys and analyses on specific areas in SLA or related fields, and how they can apply to pedagogy; perspectives on research, including critical analysis or personal reflection, up to 2500 words. Reviews on the researcher's resources and tools, up to 1500 words.

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Conference Reviews
A Bridge to Laos

Martha Robertson, Obirin University
Lewis Malamed, Tokai University

Lao TESOL held its 5th annual conference February 3- 4, 2004 at Vientiane College in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The College works closely with the Ministry of Education to develop English language curriculum in the public schools and to provide training programs for future teachers. The College also has been instrumental in the inception and development of Lao TESOL. The Lao TESOL conference brings together educators from all over the country to share knowledge and discuss how to best foster the development of English language education in this diversely populated and impoverished nation. The constraints of social and economic conditions upon language teaching are an inescapable, daily reality for Lao TESOL conference sponsors and participants. Overcoming these constraints was a recurrent theme of the sessions and informal discussions at the conference. Therefore, we will first present an overview of the status of education in Laos followed by a review of one exemplary conference session.

Overview

Leaving the Friendship Bridge behind, our battered taxi enters the dusty, two-lane highway into Lao's capitol, Vientiane. Our driver weaves through all six lanes of oncoming traffic with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, slowing down only to let a procession of square, black sedans escorted by a motorcycle guard whisk some important personage toward Thailand. The personage was most likely an ASEAN tourism conference delegate fleeing the sparse accommodations and meager nightlife in this would-be Southeast Asian tourism capital. Lao PDR has recently opened its country to privatization and a free market economy, and ASEAN tourism promises a much–needed influx of foreign money and jobs. Attracting international business, however, requires a skilled workforce. Only three percent of Lao's labor force has completed secondary school, and sixty-eight per cent of the workforce has never attended school, or has failed to complete primary school (The World Bank Group, 2002, *Project description*). Except for Vientiane, where a surplus of foreign-educated professionals reside, the low educational attainment and the poor quality of education outside the capital city present formidable obstacles to Lao's economic development (Venkman, 2002).

Lao PDR is an unusual setting for an international conference on education. The literacy rate of 66% of the adult population is one of the lowest in Asia. Efforts to improve the educational system are hampered by crippling poverty. According to The World Bank Group and United Nations data profiles, 46% of Laotians live below the Lao poverty level. Life expectancy is about 55

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years, and the infant mortality rate is 87 per 1000 births. Nearly one half of the children suffer from malnutrition, and only about 53% of the population have access to clean, safe drinking water. Laos hopes to move out of the World Bank's "least developed status" by the year 2020, but insufficient funding for education and the inequities of the education delivery system present formidable challenges to meeting this goal (United Nations, 2004; World Bank, *Lao PDR data profile*, 2004; World Bank, *edstats*, 2004).

From the taxi window, the landscape unfolds like something from a National Geographic special. Weathered teakwood houses line the road. Water buffalo graze peacefully in the distant fields. Scrawny chickens scrabble in the red clay, dogs seek shelter from the heat, barefoot children play tag, and adults go about the business of buying, selling, and farming in much the same manner as they have for generations. Bucolic, rather than impoverished, is the impression that comes to mind. However, the picturesque setting along the Vientiane highway belies the grim realities of Laotian life. We do not yet know of the schools that hold half-day sessions so that teachers can work a second job to feed their families or of the minority tribes in the north where young girls rarely receive any schooling and are married off when they reach puberty. We have not yet heard about the young monks who are so eager to learn English that they beg for a visitor's English language newspaper, nor of students who cannot afford a 10-cent notebook, nor of the resourceful high school teacher who arranges for her students to tour the local paper factory in hopes they will be given enough paper to write essays. These are the stories of courage and desire shared in the Lao TESOL conference sessions where teachers have gathered to support and encourage one another and

to develop a modern education system that will enable Laos to emerge from decades of conflict and poverty.

Later, on a day trip to Vang Viang, we recall the Lao teachers' stories as we see first hand the serious gap in equality between the capital and the rural areas, where schools are built by community members and primary school teachers are sent to teach with only one month's training. Schools here are long, low, open whitewashed buildings set in the middle of an open field. The school ground is a community area where students eagerly gather at recess and before and after school. There is strong community support and pride in the local schools, even though classrooms are bare and there is no money for materials. Early mornings and again at noon, when some schools finish for the day, swarms of laughing children line the roads to and from their school, but middle school and high school students are noticeably few in number. All but the fortunate few have left school to find work or to help their families on the farm.

At the conference, we learned that, in both primary and secondary schools across Lao PDR, class size frequently ranges from 60 to 120 students, and, in many cases, the teacher possesses the only textbook. In the rural areas, at least half the pupils do not receive instruction in their native language. For teachers who may not speak the language of their students, but who are charged with introducing English as a second language, the diversity of cultures and languages presents a formidable challenge. Lao English teachers' own inadequate grasp of the English language is an additional barrier to instruction. For the rural teachers in particular, Lao TESOL is a rare opportunity to improve their English skills. A government-funded conference stipend is available for travel

expenses, enabling teachers from the most impoverished areas to meet once a year with their colleagues.

In the five years since its inception, Lao TESOL has become the Ministry of Education's major facilitator for teacher education. This year, the conference participants included approximately 200 local high school teachers, 80 teachers from the Ministry, and 62 teachers from provinces all over the country. For many attendees, this was the first time they had an opportunity to meet their colleagues and share ideas and experiences. Each day of the conference ended with a special session for Lao teachers. These sessions gave teachers, many of whom had never attended any sort of professional symposium, an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the sessions they had attended. These sessions were also the occasion for establishing ongoing networks that are the teachers' primary, and often only, resource for professional development.

For those of us from economically developed countries, the conference was a reality check. Some presenters began talking about using video and computers in the classroom. "We don't have computers," interjected the Lao teachers. "We don't have videos," said another. In a country without advertising, even old magazines to cut up for visual aids and student projects are not affordable nor easily obtained. A blackboard and chalk are the coveted high-tech features in many rural classrooms, causing those of us with access to so many sophisticated materials to re-evaluate our resourcefulness as teachers. Most sessions were offered twice during the conference. By the second round, presenters had adapted their presentations to better support the Lao teachers' needs without diminishing the value for a wider audience.

The contributions of the Lao participants, however, were often more enlightening than the wisdom offered by the presenters. The small, intimate setting of Vientiane College encouraged informal conversations with conference participants during and between sessions. Teachers asked questions and eagerly discussed the ideas introduced. They shared their experiences, told incredible stories, and humbled us with their resourcefulness and courage. We envied the hunger for learning exhibited by the teachers and their students, and we wondered about our own ability to function in the teaching situations they face.

As we attended the sessions, and as we listened to the participants respond and share their experiences, a door was opened upon a world that we never knew existed. It was exciting to be part of the dreams taking shape. We in the developed world have many technological and economic advantages, but the future of Laos lies in the hands of this remarkable group of educators. From what we saw and heard during the two days of the conference, Laotians will do everything in their power to make the dream become a reality.

Exemplary session report

The following account of a conference session, The Questions of Questions, presented by Dr. Alan Maley, demonstrates the typical session format and the engagement of the participants that makes Lao TESOL such a dynamic and inspiring event.

Most Lao TESOL conference sessions are presented as workshops. *The Question of Questions,* led by Alan Maley, visiting professor at Assumption University, Bangkok, demonstrated the effectiveness of this presentation style for the Lao TESOL audience. Dr. Maley is an experienced presenter whose talks are finely tuned to meet the special

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needs of his audience. In Laos, Dr. Maley incorporated English language instruction into a presentation about teaching, knowing that Lao teachers would benefit from both objectives. Dr. Maley began by having us think of one question to ask. Almost immediately, there were hands in the air, and an active session was underway.

Dr. Maley used our questions to make a distinction between "display questions," used to demonstrate a point, and "referential questions," which are the usual type of questions people ask to gain information. To answer these questions, the respondent must refer to previous knowledge. Maley then distinguished between "convergent questions," with one right answer, and "divergent questions," with many right answers. Maley explained that a question like "What time is it?" has a "narrow range," whereas a question about feelings, thoughts, and experiences has a "wide range." Why, Dr. Maley asks, do so many teachers give so much attention to the first kind of question and so little to the other kind when it's clear that the wider the range of the question, the more likelihood there is for discussion and variety in our conversations?

We then were asked to write as many questions as possible about the following statement: "Jane lives in Castle Street." The first question created was: "Why do British people say, "in" Castle Street?" Many questions followed: "Does Jane live alone?" "Does she enjoy living there?" The participants' ability to phrase grammatical questions varied widely, but even the teachers who could barely keep up made enthusiastic contributions. This was an English lesson as well as a lesson about teaching, and participants were highly motivated to get all they could from this opportunity.

Moving onto pair-work, we were asked to share one unusual piece of information about ourselves with our partner. Our partner would ask two questions about the information. This didn't go smoothly. When I said, "I broke my foot one week ago," my partner asked, "What country are you from?" It took a while to communicate the purpose and direction of the task to my partner, but we were finally successful.

We were then asked to read a simple folk-tale about a man called Nasruddin:

Nasruddin was on his knees outside his house, looking for something.

"What are you looking for?" asked his neighbor.

"My keys. I dropped them."

"But where were you when you dropped them?" asked the neighbour.

"In my bedroom," said Nasruddin.

"So why are you looking for them outside the house?"

"Well, there's more light out here," replied Nasruddin, "so I should be able to see them better."

We formed groups and created factual and interpretative questions about the folktale, such as "Where is this folktale from?" and "What is the moral of the story?"

The questions generated lively discussion and elicited some very interesting answers.

Concerning the moral of the story, two particularly insightful answers were offered:

1. *We may need to look in uncomfortable places if we really want answers.*

2. *We teach what is easy to teach, but not necessarily what students need to learn.*

Dr. Maley concluded the session by pointing out that factual, cause-effect, and inferential questions are necessary, but are overused. Interpretative, personalized, and speculative questions offer more opportunities for engagement and discussion, but are not asked enough. Dr. Maley's presentation

style confirmed that divergent, wide-range interpretive questions are more thought provoking and facilitate greater student involvement.

Conclusion

When the conference ended, our own questions still resonated: What is essential for education to flourish? What makes a good teacher? Could we be good teachers under Laotian conditions? From where does the hunger for learning come, and why have so many of us lost it?

Some writer whose identity is lost in the recesses of my mind once opined, "It is more important to ask the right questions than to have the right answer." At the Lao TESOL conference, inspired teachers were asking

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Pragmatics Heaven on the 7th Floor

David Woodfield
Poole Gakuin University

Over the weekend of May 22nd and May 23rd the 2004 JALT Pan-SIG conference was held at Tokyo Keizai University's campus in Kokubunji. The conference focus was the interface between pragmatics, language teaching, and assessment.

It was a particularly stimulating time that provided opportunities for members of the CUE, Pragmatics and Testing fraternities (SIGs) to catch up with the latest in their own fields and to find out what was happening in other fields. Not only that, though. Some of the presentations developed a real synergy. As I attended the various lectures, I noticed two themes coming through. Some presenters emphasized the facility of drawing upon *observed language use* when selecting material for teaching language. As Andrew Cohen put it (and I paraphrase) – "obtain knowledge of how language is used, teach it and test it." Others, in describing, in a very detailed way, conversations through which learners *orient* to language form, *implied* how discourse might be structured in the classroom. In other

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words, analyses of how language is used may provide *appropriate content for the language classroom*, and analyses of how language is learned may provide *useful models for language learning activities*.

So how is language used? This is what the presenters had to say . . .

Jenny Thomas of the University of Wales in her plenary focused on the organization of knowledge in the mind. To describe the topic of her talk she coined the word "psycho-pragmatics." She pointed out that knowing a language involves having an understanding of concepts that is particular to that language, and that different understandings of such seemingly simple concepts as "cat" can lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure. Here she drew upon prototype theory, explaining that in a language a word has "an abstract set of characteristic qualities." *Cat* she explained, in British English has the following qualities "living, cuddly, responsive, tame, soft, lives in house, friendly." She pointed out that in many African languages the characteristics of cat are very different, and don't include such features as "cuddly" and "lives in house" (and she *wasn't* talking about big "cats" here, such as lions and tigers). As a result of such a mismatch in meanings she pointed out that while it may be simple for a language student to learn the word "cat", it is another matter for that student to know what the word actually means.

In response to this situation, teachers should draw students' attention to the pro-totypical qualities of important concepts. For those of us teaching English in Japan, we should consider which key concepts have different qualities in English than they do in Japanese, and mark these for special attention. For instance, we might teach that "love" in English can be used to describe a strong affection for food, as in "I love chocolate" unlike the Japanese equivalent *"aishiteimasu,"* which cannot be used to describe one's feelings about food.

Andrew Cohen, the other plenary speaker, pointed out that speech acts are realized in each language in a unique manner. He advocated drawing upon research-based descriptions of speech act realizations in teaching students how to apologize, invite and so on. Cohen and his colleague Noriko Ishihara have summarized the research on a number of speech acts and have created succinct descriptions of how these acts are performed. They have placed these descriptions on a University of Minnesota website in order to make them available to teachers. So in order to find models to teach speech acts or to check the accuracy of the models in the textbook you have been using go to *http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/descriptions.html.*

Cohen's presentation made it apparent to me that the explicit teaching of strategies for performing speech acts can go a long way. Cohen discussed strategies that could be taught to Japanese Second Language (JSL) students such as "speaking hesitantly to appear humble" and "using repetition." In Japanese for instance one needs to repeat statements of thanks more often than in English in order to display the appropriate amount of appreciation. The statement *"kono mae domo"* ("Thanks for what you did earlier") is often used in Japanese discourse, and if learners of Japanese use it too, their interactions with Japanese speakers are likely to be smoother.

Cohen said in his talk, "a powerful influence is working against the appropriate application of L2 forms—namely how we do it in our native language." Such negative language transfer was also a theme of Thomas's address. She talked about how one's

understanding of a concept in one's native language can make the discussion of this concept in another language incomprehensible. Masako Kondo and Kazumi Kimura also took up the theme of negative transfer.

In their presentation, Kondo and Kimura contrasted the Japanese concepts of *shuujigaku* and *danraku* with the English concepts of rhetoric and paragraph. In examining reference books and writing texts they found that the purpose of *shuujigaku* is to "impress" readers, while rhetoric's emphasis is on the "effective communication of an opinion." A *danraku* they discovered is defined as "a section of a long passage" while a paragraph is defined as a "basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one idea." They found that paragraphs were described as having three components – a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence; however, they couldn't find any mention of the components of a *danraku*.

Kondo and Kimura had 72 Japanese university students write compositions on the same topic in English and Japanese, and they found that many of the paragraphs the students wrote in their English compositions did not conform to the description of a paragraph they had established from English writing resources. Many of the students' paragraphs had no topic sentence, some had two topic sentences, and others lacked unity. Kondo and Kimura suggested that the students' paragraphs took that form because they were writing them as if they were *danraku*, which it appears have no hard and fast requirements regarding structure.

To deal with the problem of their students writing compositions in English that would not be highly evaluated by the typical users of English academic writing, Kondo and Kimura began teaching about the character-istics of English rhetoric and the paragraph. Once again the answer advocated is to turn to models of communication in the target language, and to teach their particular features.

This is also the approach followed by Alex Gilmore. In his presentation, he focused on the use of "authentic materials" in the EFL class. He pointed out that many course books provide dialogues which do *not* reflect either how people actually speak or what they tend to talk about. He cited research which found gossip and story telling have the important function of building rapport. So he decided to teach his students how to tell stories in English. Using a scene from the movie *Reservoir Dogs* in which a cop tells a fellow cop about an incident when he pulled over a driver, Gilmore provides his students with a number of consciousness-raising activities, which empower them to discover layer upon layer of patterning in the story-telling exchange. He encourages them to consider the various stages in a story-telling routine, the tense that tends to be used, and the register, intonation and body language.

Gilmore's goal is to use authentic materials to develop students' communicative competence. It struck me that his approach might well succeed in assisting students to develop just that, as it challenges them to notice exactly how speakers of the target language communicate. But as Cohen said, regarding the introduction of material in his address, "do it humorously … with hooks." And I think here too Gilmore has succeeded, as the film clip he chooses is highly entertaining: simply full of the "colorful language" and emotional display college students tend to be interested in.

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What light did the presenters shed on how language is learned?

To answer this question I would like to turn to some of the presentations given during the colloquium on conversation analysis. Conversation analysis (CA) is a method of analyzing talk that has its origin in sociology. At the colloquium, Gabriele Kasper of the University of Hawaii described it as the study "of how co-participants maintain order in social activities through their verbal and nonverbal conduct." I believe the approach is useful to the study of SLA. It requires the rigorous transcription of conversations so that volume, pauses, breaths, occasions when two people are talking at once, and other features are noticed. In applying the rigor of CA to conversations that language learners have, it is possible to notice features of talk that may lead to language learning.

We may ask, then, what do language learners get from conversation with other language learners, and is there any point structuring this activity in class?

Jack Barrow has found through his analysis of the conversations of college English students that they tend to try to repair their utterances within their current turn. An example is as follows:

Um:: (2.0) I um: (0.9) I: ah: (4.8) I studied ah (.) I studie:du, (0.7) I'm studyingu homework.

It is possible that the stimulus to repair that talk provides may consolidate their grammatical knowledge. It may then be worthwhile giving students opportunities to talk with their classmates.

Yuri Hosoda and Erica Zimmerman both discussed talk between learners of JSL and Japanese native speakers, in their presentations. Both discussed extracts of conversation in which a Japanese native speaker and a JSL learner take on the identities of teacher and learner, the Japanese native speaker in one case explaining the meaning of a word at length, and in another correcting the learner's pronunciation of a word. Such discussions of language may have potential for language learning. In structuring opportunities in class for language learners to discuss texts they are creating together, such as reports or projects, we may be able to make it more likely that the students will orient to language form, and take on the roles of language teacher and learner, and vice versa, in their discourse.

Well my reflections on the 2004 Pan-SIG come to an end. It was a great weekend. I would like to commend those who organized such a great conference. They brought together three of the world authorities in the application of pragmatics to SLA. The venue of the conference was perfect. Everything was on one floor, with a spacious registration and mingling area, supplied with coffee and cookies, surrounded by equally spacious seminar rooms. Sure, there were some equipment glitches. The presentations, though, were typically well organized, well presented and thought provoking. I don't know if I have been treated to as much "mind candy" in a two-day period for a long time! Roll on next Pan-SIG.

CUE Members at Pan-Sig 2004

Photo by Tim Newfields

Book Review

Professional Development in Language Education Series: Volumes I, II and III.

Murphey, T. (Series Ed.). (2003). Virginia: TESOL. vol. 1, 124 pp.; vol. 2, 126 pp.; vol. 3, 128 pp.

Reviewed by Debra L. Simms-Asai

Truly helpful professional development resources for language educators are generally in short supply. It is fortunate then, that TESOL has produced a three volume series loaded with concrete advice from successful practicing professionals. While certainly not written exclusively for a readership in Japan, a surprising number of contributors have Japanese experience. The focus on Japan may be due to the fact that the series is edited by JALT's own Tim Murphey, himself a highly active contributor to the language education scene in this country.

Thus far there are three volumes in the series. A fourth volume is currently in development. Each volume is slim, none over 130 pages. The series is formatted for maximum reader accessibility. Each chapter follows the same pattern. First, there is a brief narrative to set the context of the contribution and introduce the author or authors. Each narrative is followed by a description of a professional development activity, the steps involved, and a conclusion. The conclusion is followed by a resource section. More than a bibliography, this section has short explanations of each item. Lastly, a short biography of the contributor is provided, complete with his or her email address.

Volume One, "Becoming Contributing Professionals," assumes that the reader has yet to pursue any career enrichment beyond initial teacher training. It will appeal to those teachers who want to make their ESL experience more meaningful and rewarding. It will be particularly valuable to those who teach in isolated communities or find themselves surrounded by uninspired coworkers. Readers learn how to make the most of professional organizations, how to begin sharing teaching ideas, and how to take advantage of new technologies. Ideally, this first volume would be included in the TESOL membership package. It makes TESOL appear to be what it is – not a bureaucracy in a far away land, but a network of living, breathing teachers.

Volume Two, "Extending Professional Contributions" assumes that the readers' professional development feet are wet and that they are looking for greater challenges. The contributors share stories of collaboration, research, and graduate studies. Particularly inspiring is the chapter by Patricia L. Miller. Miller began her Ph.D. work in composition and TESOL at age five-five. Her story is a good reality check to those who assume it is too late for graduate school.

The third volume, "Sustaining Professionalism," offers advice from masters in the field of TESOL. The experience of these language education veterans makes excellent reading for those of us who may have trouble imagining our personal and professional lives over the long term. Included in this volume is a "Checklist of Activities to Enhance Careers Over Time" which lists twenty-one profes-

sional development ideas. Items include "edit a book," "take on an administrative position," and "become a teacher educator." The list reinforces the message of the whole series -- namely that learning isn't over after initial teacher training. Nor is it complete when one becomes comfortable teaching in the classroom.

The Professional Development in Language Education Series demonstrates that career satisfaction is largely in the hands of the teacher. Given the predominance of contributors with Japanese experience, it is a particularly useful resource for language educators here.

The PDLE series can be obtained from the TESOL catalog or online at <http:www.tesol.org/>. The books are available individually at 29.95 USD for non–TESOL members or 19.95 USD for TESOL members. The most economical way is to get them as a package set and pay 70.00 USD for non-TESOL members or 54.00 USD for TESOL members. As noted above, TESOL would do teachers a great service by giving away the first volume with the membership.