

全国語学教育学会

The Japan Association for Language Teaching

College and University Educators
National Special Interest Group Newsletter

ON CUE

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ON CUE

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CUE MEMBERS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO TWO
CUE-SPONSORED EVENTS AT HAMAMATSU
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11TH

I
TIME: 14:15 TO 16:00
ROOM SE-37

OKURA ACT CITY HOTEL HAMAMATSU, SEMINAR & EXCHANGE CENTER

DAMIAN LUCANTONIO: A GENRE-BASED LEARNING-CENTERED CURRICULUM.

THIS WORKSHOP ON GENRE THEORY EXPLORES HOW LEARNERS CAN USE LANGUAGE FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES. PRIMARY CATEGORIES OF CURRICULUM WILL BE DISCUSSED WITH A FOCUS ON STUDENT NEEDS ANALYSIS. PARTICIPANTS WILL DESIGN A CURRICULUM FOR HYPOTHETICAL OR REAL CLASSROOM SITUATIONS.

II

CUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TIME: 16:15 TO 17:00
ROOM: SE-37

OKURA ACT CITY HOTEL HAMAMATSU, SEMINAR & EXCHANGE CENTER

Role Reversal

Learning Japanese abroad.

Elin Melchior, Komaki English Teaching Center

When I arrived at my U.S. alma mater for a one term (ten-week) faculty exchange, I was very excited that I would get to take Japanese 212 (second year, second quarter) and really improve my Japanese language ability.

While working on my MA, I took Japanese 111 and 112. During my five abysmal Japanese language classes in Japan (one tandai class for exchange students, one YWCA class, one community center class, and two private classes), I have often waxed nostalgic for Japanese 111 and 112 where we actually spoke to each other in Japanese during class and used Japanese writing systems rather than romanji.

Of course it is never quite the same. Staff turn over and subsequent turf wars had brought an end to the system and materials used when I was there before. The great Japanese TA revolt of 1994 greatly reduced the two hours of written homework a night that had been commonplace in 1992. And my friends weren't there. But it was still a good class for me in that it was a serious class that met an hour a day, four days a week and had a syllabus, homework and tests.

I am able to give a scheduled class a priority that I would never give to something less formal. Of the completely unrealistic goals that I set for my 10 weeks in the U.S. (teach a high level academic core class (12 hours a week - grammar, reading, and writing), assist

with HTML seminars, learn SPSS and finish the statistics for my TESOL presentation, publish a CALL N-SIG newsletter, fulfill my duties as co-chair of the JALT CALL conference, set up an e-mail exchange class, observe colleagues, study Japanese, get my driver's license for the first time, buy CDs and sci-fi books, and watch TV), Japanese class was one of the five I actually completed. (My roommate didn't have a TV.)

The biggest surprise for me in the class was how difficult I found it to speak Japanese in the face of an English response. Despite that I routinely, quite happily, make a fool of myself using gestures and speaking bad Japanese in Japan, it was difficult for me to do this in this class. Despite demographics that most FL teachers can only dream of (students from Korea, Taiwan, Sweden, Guam and Malaysia making up 30% of the class), the atmosphere was that of an American undergraduate university class - English. There was no Japanese used by students for communication outside of teacher-directed class activities. If I made a comment to another student in Japanese, I was answered in English.

I was disappointed that I never really got to talk to any of my classmates.

I was only able to speak in Japanese a couple of times before I was intimidated by the classroom atmosphere into speaking English or not speaking at all. (There was that sorority/fraternity/jock clique in the center and the rest of us on the outside. OKAY - this is illogical and sophomoric - but that is what taking an undergraduate class does to you - I didn't want them to snicker and smirk at me.) I hadn't realized how quickly I would succumb to peer pressure.

The teacher did make a concerted effort to create a Japanese language atmosphere. She used Japanese for all aspects of class communication - informal greetings, jokes, directions, and explanations, but she translated to English at the slightest sign of incomprehension, which greeted almost everything she said.

I was disappointed that I never really got to talk to any of my classmates. It was almost the end of the quarter before I found out that one of them had a Japanese mother and another one had spent 4 years on military bases in Japan.

Granted it is not up to the teacher to make me outgoing, but I think loosely structured, more social activities during class would have served well in providing conversation and in building class morale. It wasn't that we didn't do information gaps, etc., and it wasn't that the program didn't ask for conversation - half of the grade depended on interviews and write-ups with a Japanese conversation partner outside of class, it just would have been nice to have had more real conversation more frequently.

Before this, I had always thought that "free conversation" during class was a waste of time. Students can talk anywhere, right? They only get class once a week, we'd better pack it full of highly meaningful activities, right? But the truth of the matter is that we don't speak another language anywhere or anytime - most of us only do it when strongly encouraged, if not forced, to do it. The low-stress basic social conversation is very important to help us feel comfortable in a language and give us a chance to try the language that we have been playing with in our minds. I also discovered that I only worked well within a daily study pattern. As long as I was given homework every day, I did it; however, if there was a day without

homework, it often took me two more days to fit doing homework back into my schedule. I also found language and computer lab assignments extremely annoying as they did not fit conveniently into my normal daily schedule.

All "extra" events, like conversation hour, were written into my schedule with the best of intentions but quickly crossed out as something more important came up. I simply did not have the time to do anything that was optional or could be put off until next week. I was obviously not the only student who did this as conversation hour was eventually canceled due to lack of participation.

Looking around the class before quizzes and tests, I was truly amazed by the wide range of learning/studying strategies used. Next to my boring, folded-over bilingual lists, silly mnemonic devices (goshujin - the man who says go get my shoes, omochikaeri - I'm going to take my honorable mochi and return home) and imaginary Japanese conversations in my head, there were pictures, flashcards, audiotapes, color-coded hi-lighting systems, study partnerships, and even a HyperCard program. (It would be very interesting to find out where these strategies were acquired and whether they were learned or intuitive.)

So what did I learn: some Japanese (I need to do more studying and talking before I'll be able to actually use it - but it's there); that the word "beer" can be successfully used in an example sentence for a given grammar point; never choose a text book which takes 25 days to cover driving and driving vocabulary; and most of all, that those students that I find annoying as a teacher -- the late ones who ask stupid questions, yes, there are stupid questions -- and try ever so hard to give some slack to -- well they are THREE TIMES as annoying to another student.

Life after Japan

An ex-pat speaks out.

**Stewart Hartley,
from Spain**

Having recently left Japan after more than twenty years working as a teacher/textbook writer, I now find myself in Spain, doing some teaching to make ends meet while trying to start a second career. My experiences with Japanese learners seen in the light of my current teaching context inevitably prompt me to look back, consider and compare.

My comments arise from my own particular experiences and may or may not be generalisable to others, but I offer them in the hope that they may inform and assist anyone thinking of moving on after an extended period of working with Japanese learners, particularly at college and university-level.

In some ways what I have to say here may be best described as a litany of frustrations: I returned to Japan in 1981, full of the burgeoning theories of Communicative Language Teaching — CLT — I had so painfully studied and helped formulate during post-graduate studies in the U.K. in the mid-70's, to find learners, administrations and society at large unprepared for change. In consequence I spent a number of years explaining, refining and adapting CLT to meet the exigencies of the Japanese situation. Much of my interest in Learner Development arose from these attempts to introduce learners to methodologies with which they were unfamiliar and which, in their essentials, were at variance with received wisdom. I now find myself faced with almost a mirror-image of those days: my time in Japan has 'dumbed me

down' so to speak, so that I am now less-than-prepared to meet the demands of my current learners and I am forced to relearn techniques and strategies I had all but forgotten, to dust off materials and methods which have been lying on the shelf for years, and to reapply principles which had become clouded by Japanese realities.

The reasons behind my present predicament are many, and involve, inter alia: the Japanese system of English Language education within the broader framework of Japanese educational policy and practice; the practices of English Language education in Europe; the differing roles of teachers (native and non-native), universities and learners within the societies and, of course, the subjectivities of the teacher involved. This list is long, though far from exhaustive, and to investigate each of these factors alone, never mind the totality and their inter-relationships, is clearly beyond my scope here. Nor is it the type of analysis that concerns me — my purpose here is to report my own experiences, both as objects in the social world which are amenable to analysis and hence to change, and as subjectivities.

*My time in Japan has
'dumbed me down' so to
speak.*

That Japanese learners enter university with a relatively low level of ability in English and severely under-developed learning strategies is a truism. This is not intended as a criticism of Japanese students, it is merely that this is the way things are; and while it is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this state of affairs, this again is not my concern here. What is important to me is what this means for the teacher — and what this

means is that the teacher is faced, year after year, with fostering the acquisition of fundamental language skills in the traditional four areas of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, be they organised grammatically, functionally, notionally or whatever. Thus we find a plethora of text books for university students where the focus is on, say, oral communication, and where the level of the focus language is what may be termed Lower Intermediate — TOEFL 400 — (asking for street directions, asking for and giving personal information, talking about likes and dislikes).

This is not to suggest that skills development is (or can be) discrete from work on language — merely that there are different focuses of attention.

When I came to teach university reading and devised a syllabus, after much thought and remembrance of previous classes, I came up with the following (read from left to right):

Now this is far from perfect, and may be neither as taxonomically pure nor as self-explanatory as I might like, but I believe it does show at least some of the necessary skills which our Japanese learners have had little experience in applying in L2 contexts and hence the types of skills with which they need assistance and opportunities to explore. Likewise, in teaching writing classes I found it necessary to concentrate to a very great extent on fairly basic features of English prose such as the nature and structure of the paragraph. Beyond these 'content' matters, texts read and produced tend to be short and to take a considerable time to process. With extensive reading, I found the preferred level of readers to be around EPER E and D (Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading — these levels roughly correlate to TOEFL 350 and 400 respectively).

Another factor to take into account is the amount of work required by the teacher in fostering the development of learning skills. In my own experience I found that with a university class (of any year) Term One was almost entirely given over to these 'enabling skills'; in Term Two we applied the acquired skills to 'content'. In Term Three (when it happened) it was sometimes possible to give

<i>Course Introduction</i>	<i>Co-operation</i>	<i>Previewing</i>
<i>Skimming</i>	<i>Scanning</i>	<i>Skimming & Emotional Response</i>
<i>Text Organisation</i>	<i>Summarising</i>	<i>Summarising & Information Exchange</i>
<i>Main Ideas</i>	<i>Predicting</i>	<i>Note-taking</i>
<i>Summarising & Information-Exchange</i>	<i>Inference</i>	<i>Emotional Response</i>
<i>Organisation of text</i>	<i>Reference & Organisation of text</i>	<i>Summarising & Information-Exchange</i>

learners free rein in the belief that they were now able to utilise the skills and strategies more or less autonomously and to concentrate more exclusively on language per se.

This is not to suggest that skills development is (or can be) discrete from work on language — merely that there are different focuses of attention. Thus, much of my university teaching in Japan required me to develop, apply and refine approaches to language teaching which had at their centre the fostering of basic (language and general) learning skills within a framework of assisting the development of language competencies from a base of upper elementary to lower intermediate levels of language ability. This applied across the language teaching spectrum and included all four skills. Why this should have been so is partly a result of the learners' prior English Language learning experiences but may also have much to do with the way that foreign lecturers are viewed by Japanese colleagues and administrations. In my experience, foreign lecturers are viewed as native users of the target language and culture first, and as language teachers (and experts) second, if at all. Despite the requirements for advanced degrees, we are usually limited to teaching 'English Conversation' to the least able students in the university and our special areas of expertise — linguistics, phonology, discourse analysis, ESP, reading or writing — are discounted at best or viewed with suspicion at worst. I recall coming out of my university library one evening under a mound of journals and encountering a senior Japanese professor. "What are you doing with all those books?" I was asked. On being told that I was working on a paper on metaphor in everyday language his response was an unequivocal: "Well, you shouldn't be at this university." (I soon wasn't, by the way.) It is ironic that the more advanced

degrees are required, the more we find ourselves limited to teaching basic skills.

Once again, the motivations underlying this view of the role of the foreign teacher may be of great fascination, but they do not constitute the purpose of this paper. However, I cannot resist a few suggestions: that we have specific TESOL training in most cases; that our training is often of a more recent date than that of our Japanese colleagues; that many of them show much less interest in their own professional development than we do; that perhaps they suffer both the stress of competition and guilt at their tenured sloth. Whatever the motivations may be, it remains a fact of my own experiences that seldom did I have the opportunity to practise in my own areas of expertise; that seldom did I have advanced classes, and that the short-term nature of my employment contracts made an impossibility of any long-term research plans — who is going to undertake a longitudinal study of anything when one never knows from year to year if one has a job or not?

So what does this mean for me now that I am teaching in a little private school, working privately with English Philology majors from the local university and conducting INSET workshops for high school teachers? First, even 15-year-olds I teach at the private school are more advanced than almost any Japanese university students I taught; they are preparing to take Cambridge First Certificate (TOEFL 480), while the young adults and adults are preparing for Cambridge Advanced (TOEFL 520) or Proficiency (TOEFL 550). The mass of materials I have carefully gathered and written over the years is of little relevance to these more advanced learners (except for some remedial work on specific examination points). The amount of material now is perhaps three times that

required for a Japanese university class. Most of the students I work with have quite well-developed learning skills, and their needs are to be met with a constellation of approaches, methods, techniques and materials with which my Japanese experiences have perforce made me no longer so familiar as I used to be.

Skills I acquired on two advanced degree courses were deformed by the need to work with students of low ability.

The focus on working with low-ability-level learners year after year, the unwillingness of universities to provide more advanced classes or classes commensurate with my areas of expertise, the poor state of Japanese learners' learning skills — yes, all these have 'dumbed me down'. The skills I acquired on two advanced degree courses were deformed by the incessant need to work with students of low ability and lower learning skills. My current learners do not need to learn what defines a paragraph; they know what a Topic Sentence is; they are skilled in the intricacies of anaphoric (forward-pointing) and cataphoric (backward-pointing) reference; they can skim and scan with the best of us, and they can ask and understand the way to the nearest post office. My learners know how to take notes, how to use a vocabulary notebook and a monolingual dictionary, how to organise their learning (although imperfectly) and how to manage class activities such as pair work, group work, jigsaw activities and task-based learning. From a Japanese perspective it would seem they have little to learn, but of course they do: they need to refine their awareness of appropriacy in the use of

lexis and structure; they need to extend their vocabulary; they need to master the use of cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences, extraposition and the like for rhetorical purposes; they need to increase their fluency in reading and writing and extend that fluency through genres; they need to increase control over a range of registers and become familiar with a wider range of spoken English accents and dialects. They also have individual needs related to study or employment. They still have much to learn and they trust me to help them learn it — it is unfortunate that I feel less than confident and wonder if their trust may be misplaced.

All this sounds so negative, I know, but in addition to the challenge of the different and the opportunity to more fully employ skills I have acquired over the years, there is a new sense of freedom — a freedom from the tyranny of the quotidian and a freedom to explore other avenues — which I find invigorating and, were I a few years younger, would relish even more than I do.

Now, all that I have written is done so with the widest of brushes — I know for example that I am working with an elite within Spanish educational society and that Manuel of 'Fawlty Towers' is alive and kicking, creating 'Communication Problems' in hotels around the world. I know also that my experience with Spanish learners is woefully limited and that my experiences in Japanese universities may have been so unique as to debar me from making any generalisations at all. I am aware that culturally and linguistically Spain is much closer to English language and culture than Japan and that sharing a common heritage makes teaching and learning qualitatively different. However, with these caveats I offer these reflections to those who may be thinking of moving on from Japan for whatever reason.

Q & A: English for Specific Purposes

Excerpts from an e-mail dialogue.

Bill Holden,
Hokuriku University
&
Jack Kimball,
Miyazaki Medical College

BH: My working assumption is, as ESP learners often know more about the subject matter at hand, be it music or chemistry, than their ESP trainers do, the "content" would already have been learned in L1, at some prior stage in schooling or professional experience, qualifying them as members of a discourse community in their first language. The role of the ESP instructor would not be to "teach" a subject to people who are already pros, but to help them render their knowledge in L2, thus confining ESP teachers to what we're actually qualified by training to do.

JK: In reply to whether learner needs-assessment is necessary, you say: "Used to be....the working assumption being that learners were more aware as 'insiders' of what would constitute valuable language training than their trainers were."

BH: What I was taught and what subsequent experience has reinforced is that we have to work from the inside out, e.g., suss out what it is that our course participants need to be able to do from their perspective. Learners need to be the source of input as to what is taught on the course, lest we run the risk of delivering a course which misses the mark and fails to prepare them for what they know they need to be able to do in the target language in their chosen profession(s). Thus, ESP proceeds most securely from a thorough analysis of learner needs.

ESP does seem to me to attract a more "goal-oriented" type of instructor than does the profession as a whole. To me, however, ESP is not a matter of technical knowledge or awareness, but an orientation toward parameters and setting priorities: The students know "X"; they need to be able to do A, B and C by the end of the course. We have 30 training hours to get them to the point where they need to be. If A, B and C cannot all be covered in this span, how do we set goals, and how do we evaluate student performance on something akin to a real world measure?

Proceeding from stated needs is not the only path, but the most viable. I say this because working from a negotiated syllabus requires learners both to think about what they must be able to do in the target language and to take responsibility for their own success at a deeper level than in the case of an "imposed" syllabus, e.g., they can't simply say that the course didn't suit their needs. As practitioners of ESP, we are not doctors, currency traders or engineers, and thus cannot accurately predict from the outset what our course participants will need to know or find valuable. We can find examples of real-world language from the disciplines in which our students work, analyze these examples and derive content and materials from them.

We know that we are providing something of value to the students when they are able to demonstrate that they can adequately manage situationally-driven communicative needs in the target language - the same as with any communicatively-oriented methodology. Students say, "We've gotta be able to do A". Instructor says, "Here's how it's done - let's get it down". The difference in this example and a "general English" approach is that in non-ESP situations the first point never gets raised, so instructors try to make educated guesses about what students need, follow existing curricular guidelines, or simply do whatever they want to. The lack of specificity makes evaluation problematic, and the lack of

feedback from meaningful, apposite evaluation denies an instructor the input necessary to improve his or her course.

Here is probably what the nub -- "Does ESP entail specialist knowledge on the part of trainees?" We both agree that it necessarily does, but perhaps disagree about the point at which specialist knowledge is gained. I have had the "luxury" (ahem) of teaching adults who are already on career paths, and whose job descriptions and language needs have been fairly well defined, i.e., members of discourse communities in their first language. You seem to have a situation in which students are gaining the specialist knowledge they need in their chosen field alongside the foreign language they MAY need to be able to perform these tasks in. Two problems arise: first, students do not have to have perspective gained from work experience to know what they will need and what they will not need to know on the job; second, there is the matter of conflating content learning and ESP. To me, ESP is a need-driven orientation.

JK: Explain, will you, what you mean when you say, "ESP has 'generally' been a process of mapping language onto preexisting skills or knowledge, though more target-language content is being used in ESP."

Instructors are not au fait with students' needs. (B.H.)

BH: ESP has traditionally been that way because ESP instructors are not (usually) completely *au fait* with the working environment or professional language needs of their students. Thus the 'historical' reliance on learner-stated needs and instructor-supplied materials and methodology. BOTH, of course, rely on content. I would never maintain that ESP cannot be taught alongside content, or better yet while integrating natural language content; however, content-based ESP (?) does put the instructor or curriculum developer in the

position of intuiting/inferring learner needs from the target material, or even in a worst-case scenario of limiting communicative needs to be addressed TO the material, and to that extent runs the risk of a mismatch between course content and meeting learners' communicative needs. The use of intranets could go a long way toward solving this problem, though, given that the selection of sites is wide enough to cover the bases, that students are informed in their selection, and that tasks and evaluation call on students to develop "real-world" language skills.

To unpack learners' inside info, (a) run a diagnostic, and (b) solicit ideas from them as to what they might want to work on in English. (J.K.)

JK: As you suggest elsewhere in your post, unpacking learners' inside info is feasible in a small group of similarly-oriented students. For example, if tomorrow I had to face the challenge of tutoring a "high-level" (please note "high-level"...) trio of musicologists (to make the metaphor sing), I would likely (a) run a diagnostic to find out just how high a level they were operating at, and (b) solicit ideas from them as to what they might want to work on in English. Even here, though, I would be suggesting to them directly, or indirectly, but surely in an anticipatory mode, that reading and talking about musicology -- such as performance standards, cross-genre analysis, composer biographical data -- would be a point of departure.

BH: I still don't agree that it would be the case that you were somehow obliquely suggesting that certain things are fair game for the course and others not. To the extent that needs are professionally as opposed to situationally-determined, this is certainly a

valid working assumption; on the other hand, if our hypothetical musicians were going to tour Europe for a month and needed 'only' to be able to get through customs, check in and out of hotels, get meals in restaurants and go shopping, they could for all intents and purposes be hookers or zookeepers. We are concerned only with specifying language needs. It is the language itself which changes genre to genre, not the needs, i.e., genre is subsumed by needs. You could have an ESP group of people from vastly different career paths who don't even share a common language as long as they were all united by a common language need, and teach that group more successfully than a group of native speakers with no common agenda.

If our musicians needed 'only' to get through customs, check in and out of hotels, they could for all intents and purposes be hookers or zookeepers. (B.H.)

JK: Speaking for me primarily, and speaking far more generally for other ESP teachers, the instructor ought not pretend he/she is a dummy with regard to potentially relevant material for language training.

BH: Nor would I advocate this -- respect where respect is due, and by all means make use of the resources you have as a person as an instructor. But how many of us are realistically going to make a living teaching ESP for musicologists? We learn onto whatever we teach.... This is probably a big stumbling block for those "communicative methodologists" who don't cross over into ESP -- the preconception that they have to be subject specialists in order to teach ESP.

ESP is need-driven. (B.H.)

JK: All right, so I know a little about musicology, enough at least to get started on a syllabus. I wouldn't assume, however, that my seemingly logical ideas for starting the tutorial are to be imposed willy-nilly on these three people. I would, *sine qua non*, want to converse with them in some detail as to what they have been doing and what they might like to do next. I may find out, for instance, that these three are preparing for graduate study at the New England Conservatory and they want to read texts related to courses they will be taking. Fine with me. Or they plan to tour the UK and want to practice casual chit-chat strategies within a musicology-situated social framework. Not so fine -- sounds like a lot of work to me, for me -- I might refuse the assignment, because I don't know how to "teach" chit-chat!

BH: Again, language needs are situationally derived, and the question is how they are best determined. Language does not have to be technical to be specific, but that which cannot be adequately specified, i.e., chit-chat, falls outside the ken of ESP until such time as someone does a serious empirical analysis of the generic features of that sort of phatic language. In point of fact, there's an important paper lurking in that area along Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson(ian?) lines.

JK: Now consider my assumptions. First, I negotiate a syllabus, not impose one nor have one imposed on me. Second, in order to negotiate, students need to be working at high enough a level (professionally) to express desires (let's set aside whether they express these in L1 or L2). I also assume the teacher has desires as well, desires in the form of content knowledge or, better, access to content knowledge that, minus other learner motives, quite plausibly suggest themselves as suitable points for teaching L2. A final assumption is that some teachers may not be adequately qualified or, indeed, motivated to teach some kinds of ESP.

BH: Agreed on all counts. I approach new

teaching situations without many preconceptions as to what learners need, other than in a general sense. I rely on them for input about course content and structure. You don't have to be a specialist in any subject other than your own, though it certainly can't hurt if you are. I see this preconception that one must be a "specialist" as a major stumbling block to more people getting into ESP -- but if you can't or don't want to carry out the (necessary) analysis of language within your learners' disciplines, you are probably not cut out to teach ESP. But what, if not training students to analyze language, are TESOL programs preparing graduates to do?

JK: When we move into institutional teaching, such as the college classroom, instructor-instructed negotiation is problematized. Presumably the institution has goals and a tradition within which individual courses -- including an ESP course -- must operate and cooperate. For me, the instructor's obligations are increased in that he/she has to take into account students' desires, his/her own desires (that is, desires in the form of access to knowledge, as described above), and a collective of other desires. These would be institutional and more abstract desires or expectations of the profession that students are aiming to join.

There are four kinds of expectation or desire -- learners', teacher's, institution's, profession's.
(J.K.)

Again, for me, it seems nearly axiomatic that institutional ESP needs to take into account all four kinds of desire/expectation -- learners', teacher's, institution's, profession's. If the learners' desires seem less central, I think that is inevitable at least at the undergraduate level.

BH: How then would someone who is not a subject expert go about designing such a course? How would one reasonably predict it will jibe with students' wants? Does the diverse nature of the group's needs and heterogeneity not make this less than "ESP"? Are we back to teacher orientation?

JK: For graduate arts and sciences and professional ESP contexts, assessing students' needs comes into greater play because learners at these levels are presumed to have acquired enough content knowledge (and knowledge of L2) to begin to apprehend what they need to know next. The language trainer would tap into parts of their knowledge at whatever specialized level. I don't think an ESP instructor should have to labor under the obligation of becoming a biochemist or musicologist. But he or she needs to know how to get to know more about the content area in order to teach students of biochemistry or musicology.

BH: All part of the process, I agree...I see our task as helping our learners determine what performative needs they have and satisfying these needs through providing appropriate models, materials & methods. I don't feel they have to replicate their entire body of knowledge in English to begin a course just to be sure of what they already know. You yourself have just said that ESP instructors should not have to become subject specialists - how, if one is not a subject specialist, is he or she going to qualify to teach that content? To test it? We know that students possess certain L1 knowledge, which I have until now quite loosely referred to as "content". Given that in any case learners possess this knowledge, what is at issue here is approach; does one re-teach learners what they already know using a second language, or teach them what they do not know, i.e., how to express themselves in a second language within the confines of either their professional discipline or the situation which has given rise to their needs? OR does one attempt both at the same time?

JALT Debates the JALT Membership Survey

Barfield, Ryan & Snyder share views of "The Interim Report" from the last issue of ON CUE.

**Andy Barfield,
Tsukuba University**

The ON CUE editor contacted me to contribute my thoughts on the JALT survey(s), after I'd posted a message on the <jaltexbo> list, part of a short thread there about strengths and weaknesses of the first survey, and style and content of the interim report in ON CUE. Briefly, this is what I'd like to contribute:

It's important to follow a standard format for future survey reports:

- . background / introduction + gap
- . purpose of present survey in filling that gap
- . method of data collection + sample population
- . results
- . discussion
- . conclusion.

The interim report did not follow this standard format. The authors put back their method of data collection and sample population to the final concluding part of the report. In flouting the discourse expectations of the genre, the authors lent undue authoritativeness to the results of the survey, and downplayed the problems that they had experienced in getting a representative random sample population.

Second, there is a need to discuss what would constitute a representative random

sample population for JALT, and how best to get future respondents to send their completed questionnaires back in.

Do the survey results overlap with our common sense?

Clearly, the move to follow up in the next stage with questionnaires in both Japanese and English is necessary, but the question of representativeness requires some lengthier consideration.

We need to realise there is no objective standard by which representativeness can be ensured - no magic statistical wand to wave and bestow complete authoritativeness for any sample.

Basic rule of thumb: Do the survey results overlap or not with our common sense? If they don't, then it is important to recognise this, state this clearly in the appropriate place, and question further.

What, though, might be a representative sample? Let's imagine, for the sake of simplicity, that JALT has 4000 members. We know that the JALT population is approximately evenly split between Japanese and non-Japanese. We know also that North Americans form approximately 80%+ of the non-Japanese half. So, we can start with the following very rough figures:

. 4000 total members

. 2000 Japanese

. 2000 Non-Japanese,

of which:

. 1600 North American

. 400 other.

What would constitute a representative sample of the '400 other'? 5%? 10%? 25%? Let's imagine we choose the last percentage. We would then need to get responses from 100 non-North American, non-Japanese members of JALT. Applying that ratio to the other two major groups in the general JALT population, the questionnaire would then need to go to 500 Japanese members, and 400 North American members.

Third, how then to get the questionnaires out, and get them back? I think you would need to try a variety of avenues. We've learnt from the first survey those attending the conference and filling in the questionnaire are more likely to be from private sector tertiary education.

We need then to try other means as well: putting the questionnaire up on the JALT webpage in both languages to enable people to return their completed questionnaires electronically would be one possibility; distribution through chapter meetings and regional conferences another; distribution with the The Language Teacher another; mailing out with N-SIG newsletters, too.

Finally, what is the purpose of doing such a survey? What identity are we trying to construct for JALT? What do we want to learn about the organisation that we belong to? Personally, I'd be interested in learning about:

- . work situation / contract / institution type
- . participation in decision-making at work
- . teaching responsibilities
- . teaching areas
- . students taught
- . non-teaching responsibilities
- . in-service development and research
- . teaching needs and pressures
- . degrees (BA through PhD) + field + institution

- . years of teaching
- . length and type of training
- . organizational memberships within JALT
- . expectations and needs as regards JALT (chapter, N-SIG, conferences, publications, computers, etc.)
- . suggestions for the future of JALT, etc.

Such a wish list, though, is a mixture of factual - aka nominal - data, and qualitative data; is way beyond the scope of a single survey. So, whatever the agreed purpose of the survey is (Boost recruitment? Meet members' needs better? Allow for better marketing and commercial sponsorship?), we need to see the survey in at least several main stages: first, a representative sampling of 'the facts' of the general membership; next, a stratification of the general membership into distinct sub-populations based on analysis of the first set of data collected; then, progressive targeting of sub-populations in follow-up surveys.

One way to ease the collection of data might lie in revising the postal 'furikae' form people use to join JALT or renew membership. Perhaps, much information is available in Central Office records.

We need sampling of 'facts'; stratification into sub-populations; then, targeting of these in follow-up surveys.

In considering these starting points, the JALT membership survey may be followed through for the benefit of the organization's future, and its members.

(My thanks go to John Shillaw and Tin Tin Htun for lengthy discussion of the ins and outs of large scale surveys.)

**Stephen M. Ryan,
Osaka Institute of
Technology**

I participated willingly in JALT's first Membership Survey at Hiroshima last year, partly because I thought it a worthwhile project and partly because I do a lot of survey research myself and am eager to help others running surveys.

I was pleased to see an interim report on the survey in the last issue of ON CUE. However, I was a little worried by the way in which "results" were presented. My objection was that summary statistics of responses to the major questions are presented with an air of authority which is inappropriate for a preliminary survey as tentative and flawed as this one. The "results" were followed by a standard disclaimer about dangers of generalising from a self-selected sample. In this case something more than a standard disclaimer was necessary as there were good reasons to suspect the sample.

When I voiced these concerns on <jaltexbo>, I was told, among other things, that the goal of the "Interim Report" was to show what had been learned from the Survey, with a view to conducting a larger, more representative survey of JALT's membership. In that spirit, I offer the following thoughts. It is not my intention to attack the way the first Survey was conducted (my beef is with the way the results were presented) but to contribute to the debate on where the Survey process should go from here.

Why have a survey at all? In metaphysical terms, it is good for an organisation to have an idea of what it is and who its members are. The closer this idea is, the healthier for the organisation. This has been a particular concern of

mine as it seems to me that JALT's North American members are disproportionately vocal within the organisation. This is intended as a comment rather than a criticism. It would be easy for a casual observer of national level meetings or discussions on JALT's various email list to conclude that most members are of North American extraction. If this it is in fact the case, it would be appropriate for JALT to spend most of its time addressing the concerns of North Americans in Japan. A chief goal of a membership survey should be to find an objective basis for deciding such issues.

What questions should it ask? In the first case, basic demographic questions about who the members are, what they do, what professional interests they have in and beyond JALT (probably operationalised as members of NSIGs and other professional organisations).

It may be desirable to find out why people joined JALT, how satisfied they are, and what changes they would like.

The initial survey should be limited to collecting descriptive data. Once we have a clear picture of who the members are, it may be desirable to find out why they joined JALT, how satisfied they are with its various services and what changes they would like to see in the future. Such "opinion"-type questions could be addressed to a smaller sample of members chosen to reflect the diversity of the organisation as a whole. The first priority, though, should be to collect reliable data on our diversity.

Some of this information should be available from forms people fill out when

they join or renew membership. There may be a case for redesigning the forms used, as part of the Membership Survey process. If this does not prove sufficient, a survey of the entire membership will have to be organised.

The basic principle of such a survey is that each person has an equal chance of responding. This means that not only would the survey need to be sent to every member (rather than given to those who attend the Conference) but it would also have to be as user-friendly as possible.

Nobody should be discouraged from answering by the intrusiveness of the questions, the language they are asked in, the time required to fill out the survey form, the difficulty of understanding how to answer or the feeling that response categories do not adequately reflect their own situation.

To construct such a questionnaire will require extensive piloting but the goal of the piloting should be to hone the questionnaire into an effective instrument, rather than produce "preliminary results."

I believe the Membership Survey to be a worthwhile project. Discussion on how best to proceed is an important step. The authors of the "Interim Report" are providing a genuine service to JALT, as are the editors of ON CUE by making these pages available for discussion of these issues.

**Stephen Snyder,
Miyazaki Women's Junior
College**

In preparing the brief article on the JALT membership survey that appeared in the last issue of ON CUE, I and the other authors could have started with

disclaimers and notes on the limitations of the survey, instead we felt that a newsletter forum deserved a less dry approach. Stephen Ryan took issue with the style of presentation and claimed that by foregrounding the results we were using an "authoritative" voice. Mr. Ryan made his concern known in a series of postings to <jaltexbo>, a mailing list which many members of CUE might not have read. The ensuing discussion underlined the need for some further clarification about the survey and the direction that future surveys should take-- these will be the two themes which I will address here. I am indebted to those who have shown interest in both the article and project. I am especially thankful that the discussion sparked by Mr. Ryan's posting has allowed for more discussion of the future of this project.

For those who may not have read the interim report, or for those who have forgotten it, let me begin by describing the survey. The membership survey conducted at the 1996 JALT Annual Convention in Hiroshima was a first attempt by members of JALT at obtaining information on its membership. As this was an initial attempt it was decided that circulating the survey at the national convention would be the most cost effective method of obtaining a wide sample of our membership. Not only would we minimize costs, but we would be collecting information which could be used as a baseline for future surveys. It was also our belief that we might demonstrate the value of regularly obtaining information on the membership.

Due to the pilot nature of this survey, the survey committee chose to use a fairly long form to collect data-- there were 70 questions on the survey. This large number of questions gave a broad picture of the JALT population at the convention

and taught us a great deal about the design of questions.

The original project design was for the survey to be conducted as part of the registration process at the convention, which would have ensured the highest possible number of respondents.

However, a number of factors made this method of soliciting respondents impossible, resulting in the survey merely being distributed at registration; therefore we received only voluntary respondents. This resulted not only in a smaller sample size, but it also meant that respondents would be self-selected, a potentially invalidating factor-- something clearly noted in the report. The self-selecting of respondents meant that the data we collected was merely suggestive.

In the ON CUE article "The JALT Survey: An Interim Report" our intent was to present our preliminary findings in an interesting way. A newsletter such as ON CUE is not a formal venue and it was thought at the time that it would be inappropriate to use an academic journal style. A newsletter format does not recommend a strict adherence to any particular style of presentation. It was suggested in <jaltexbo> postings that the interim report violated some standard method of giving reports-- whether there is an orthodox manner of writing reports is debatable, that the style of our report was without precedence is false. The foregrounding of the results seemed logical at the time and no one involved had any intention of taking an authoritative tone. There was also no intention of directing attention away from the limitations of the survey.

The article contained numerous qualifiers throughout. We were careful to use terms such as "interim," "preliminary," "initial attempt" and "pilot" in describing the survey. I quote at

length: "Surveys of this kind are helpful, but they only give us a general picture and we should be very careful in drawing conclusions, especially from an interim report. Please keep in mind that this was a pilot study and that respondents were self-selected, a potentially invalidating factor...The self-selecting of respondents means that the data we have reported here are suggestive. The method of data collection was chosen to save costs and to efficiently create an initial body of information. Our goal was to seek a rather modest level of precision... due to the method of our soliciting respondents, the results of this survey may be generally applied to only the population of persons who were actual attendees of the conference. From the foregoing report it should be clear, then, that the majority of respondents comes from the university and junior college constituency. For this reason, the preliminary results as they appear here are perhaps more generalizable to populations such as CUE than they are for the general population of JALT as whole."

This is not evasive language and placing it at the end (where some would argue that it has a more powerful effect) was not an attempt to mislead, but a stylistic choice for a newsletter report.

More volunteers from the JALT membership need to conduct the membership survey.

Although I personally find journalese pretentious, Stephen Ryan's objection to the tone of our article does make us aware that some readers expect uniformity. It is ironic that in attempting to avoid the unfriendly, authoritative tone of so many journal articles, we inadvertently conveyed such a tone to some readers.

Several postings defended the report and found its qualifications adequate. However, that any readers should have detected an authoritarian voice is unfortunate and we regret that anyone felt this way. Please be assured that any in future reports we will avoid such errors.

Two deeper questions which entered the discussion were whether or not we should have produced an interim report and whether the conference was a representative sample. Some 250 JALT members gave their time to fill out the rather long questionnaires and some JALT funding had been used, so everyone involved with the project felt the results, though interim, should be made public. We also hoped that an interim report would stimulate some discussion and possibly more interest in the project.

As stated in the report, we were looking for baseline data at only a modest level of precision with the intention of further study. We were not just collecting demographic data, but also looking for areas which might be of interest for future studies. By doing a survey of conferees we thought there was a chance of uncovering interesting relationships -- we did indeed learn things about conferees. With limited resources, the conference was a reasonable choice. Perhaps these items should have been addressed in the interim report, but given space restrictions they were not.

It has been suggested that the next survey should be mailed to all JALT members, or that we could require members to fill-out the survey when they re-new their membership. To get a representative survey the sample should not be self-selected, which eliminates the first suggestion. Requiring members to fill-out forms may have validity problems. Also, these methods are relatively expensive both in terms of mailing and time. If

there were wide support for such surveying, whole population methods such as these might be justified.

The next logical step is a random sample survey.

I think that the next logical step, given our resources, is to conduct a random sample survey. Such a survey would have modest costs, be manageable, and would provide reliable data without inconveniencing everyone in JALT.

Having completed the pilot survey, we have now tested questions and discovered ways to refine our investigation -- we are now in a position to conduct a much more effective survey than would have been possible without the pilot project and with significant saving to JALT members. Future surveys, of course, will be in both Japanese and English languages and the forms will be simpler and shorter.

I would like to end by addressing who should be involved in future surveys. It is in the interest of JALT that more volunteer members of JALT conduct the membership survey. A peer committee taking an active role in designing and executing studies of JALT is desirable.

When Stanley Davies first attempted to recruit me for this project I was resistant. At that time the project appeared to me profoundly dull and difficult. As the project grew, I saw potential -- it's a changing time in Japan and in our profession; quantitative and qualitative information about us and employment conditions are invaluable. We need information like this. And we need a diversified and creative committee. Finally, may I suggest to those interested in joining this project to write me at this email address: <tomobear@m-surf.or.jp>.

Who is eligible for permanent visas?

A personal case.

Jacqueline D. Beebe

The July 1996 ON CUE reprinted an advice column from the May 25th The Daily Yomiuri on how to obtain a permanent residence "eijuken" visa. That article accurately reflected what you'll be told on going to immigration but it doesn't accurately reflect what really happens in many cases. The article says that "spouses and children of Japanese nationals or foreigners who have permanent visas usually must live in Japan at least five years to obtain the visa. Others must have resided in Japan at least 20 years."

This is not true; you have no right to get a visa sooner than that, in fact after 20 years you still don't have a right; they can turn you down if they want, but it's possible to get a visa sooner than after 20 years -- I did and so have others. (Perhaps even after 8 or 10 years; I don't remember others' cases exactly. I'd been here about 17 years when I got it.)

I have several tips based on my own and others' successes.

A) They seem to like to turn you down the first time, so wait a year or two and do the huge amount of paperwork again; I and several others got it the second time, perhaps because we'd demonstrated our sincerity through persistence.

B) You needn't say you don't believe them, but don't. The first time I asked for the papers after maybe 14 years they gave me the "20 year" schpiel and refused to give me the papers. They told me I

should try to get a long-term visa (3-year) instead so I did. A couple of years later they told me the same thing, I said I understood, but I wanted the papers anyway. This time they said I would be turned down but I could try, and they gave me the papers. I was turned down. The next time I was also told I'd almost certainly be turned down but could try, and that time I got it.

C) If you're going to try, start telling everyone you know anywhere in Japan about your campaign and ask them if they know anyone who could act as a connection. (Your school/s will also probably be impressed by the fact that you plan to stay in Japan forever and it will save the General Affairs section the trouble they go to, constantly renewing your visas and in my case, my contracts, since although I've always had tenure they said they can now give me an open-ended contract like the Japanese.)

String-pulling appears to be the key.

String-pulling appears to be the key success factor for many applicants, so try to find someone with connections. After you turn in your papers you'll get a postcard saying your application is under consideration, and it will normally take a year to hear their decision. But that postcard will have your application number stamped on it. Get your string-puller to make a phone call to immigration quoting your name and application number and asking that your case be given special attention.

The first time I tried, I was a sennin koshi (lecturer) and used a full professor at my school as a guarantor (they have to submit their tax records, etc.). The second time I was a jokyoju (associate professor) and used the same guarantor

but I also got my university's president to sign a letter recommending me. (I was taken into his office for about 10 seconds by the letter-writer, a powerful professor at my college of the university who also works at the head administration building. Our school has many campuses so I'd never met the president before.) It was also my second try, so all of those factors might have done the trick on their own. BUT an English professor at my school told the administrator in charge of the employment placement office about my campaign and he is friends with a law professor at the College of Law who also does consulting work for the LDP. So I don't even know the name of the politician who made the phone call for me (which is nice since I always root against the LDP!) but I was told that a phone call had been made, but a decision might still take 6 months. Instead, the postcard saying I 'd been approved was in my mailbox three days later.

D) You have to submit a letter explaining why you want permanent residence. I thought that meant what it said, and in my first draft I wrote about conveniences and securities, being able to live here after retirement and being able to get loans for buying a condo. Good thing I needed help getting it translated into Japanese. My Japanese friends all agreed that you're really supposed to write about what a wonderful person you are and how you contribute to your community, profession, internationalization, etc. and want to continue to do so.

E) Remember it's a very fluky process and you just may luck out and get it easily for no obvious reason. One lecturer at my school got the papers after fewer than ten years at a rural immigration office. When he submitted them he was told it was a mistake and he shouldn't have been given papers. He said, "You're telling me that after all the trouble my school's

president went to write a recommendation?!" He apparently embarrassed them into giving him the visa.

CUE Annual Meeting Agenda

Oct. 11, 16:15-17:00, Okura ACT Hotel Hamamatsu, SE-37.

• Intro to officers

• Review of essential functions that NSIG must fulfill:

- Monthly treasurer's report
- Yearly Treasurer's Report
- Yearly Coordinator's Report
- Coordinator/Programme Chair:

communicates with the Conference committee and the Central Office for the conference (next year in Omiya) for facilities and equipment for presentation/workshop/ roundtable, recruiting table and AGM.

- Publish three newsletters/year

• Announce vacancies

Co-coordinator
Treasurer
Newsletter Distributor
Additional Editorial staff

• Call for volunteers

• Announce candidates for vacancies

1. Steven Snyder -- Treasurer (Currently Membership)
2. Daniel M. Walsh -- Distribution

• Take nominations

• Vote on contested positions (acclamation if none contested)

• Wrap up