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

ON CUE
Edited by Jack Kimball, <kimball@post.miyazaki-med.ac.jp>
Vol. 5, No. 3, December 1997

Visit CUE Online: <http://interserver.miyazaki-med.ac.jp/~cue/1.html>

DISTINCTIVE TEACHING:

Comparative Cultures

Can film bridge cultures *and* reach students of mixed proficiency? Case in point.

Charles Jannuzi,
Fukui University

Name of Course: Comparative Cultures / Hikaku Bunka. **Time**: 90-minute classes, once a week. **Average Number of Students and Level**: 25-35 students, 2nd to 4th year Japanese university students; a few older non-traditional students (auditors). **Actual English Level**: Although mostly English, Communications (Shakai Joho), and other Education majors, assessed levels range from near beginner to false beginner to lower intermediate, with only a few advanced proficiency students.

Traditionally, this course has been taught one of two ways: (1) by Japanese professors as a conventional (certainly the approach is well-precedented) lecture and reading course, with a crosslingual and crosscultural focus (i.e., the target language -- invariably English -- only means something if the teacher can render it into Japanese, and the foreign culture -- most likely either America's or Britain's -- is only interesting so long as it deviates significantly from Japan's. Or (2), by foreign lecturers as a content-based EFL course (likely a mix of lectures, readings, some video, and some group discussion activities, with at least the foreign lecturer communicating in English).

Traditional Approaches

First, I am not a Japanese professor prepared to lecture extensively in Japanese. Although some students and colleagues may have their doubts, I don't think it is too much to ask that some university English classes (Hikaku Bunka being a sort of content-based English class) be taught mostly in English. Students, after all, who feel somehow overwhelmed by the fact that there are other languages used for communication outside of Japanese and its regional dialects can return to the Japanese-speaking world when class is over.

Second, I have found that most of the textbooks that are supposed to support cultural studies are not very useful for my purposes. In my opinion, many of the texts on culture offered by both major Japanese and western publishers are banal. They are often an incoherent, failed compromise between a textbook that is supposed to deliver real content and one that is supposed to provide some sort of language learning or practice. Moreover, the few interesting ones are beyond my students.

Third, even if I had liked the textbooks available, after teaching the hikaku bunka class for the first time three years ago, I soon realized that though students had not studied western culture or history, I was expected to remediate this lack while giving useful language practice in all of 15 weeks. Also, after one semester at Fukui University, as a foreign English teacher who had already been in Japan for over 5 years, I was soon weary of the idea that "comparative cultures" should be limited to (1) studying foreigners' views of Japan and why Japanese can't communicate with Americans and (2) (mis)interpreting possibly insignificant, arbitrary cultural differences as revealing something very important about either Japan or the West. I certainly don't care to pontificate on such matters in either English or Japanese in front of the class.

Finally, to experience a foreign culture,

suspending pre-knowledge -- getting oneself to a state of willful unknowing, especially when pre-knowledge borders on stereotypes -- is the best way to revise one's understanding of that culture. But the dilemma for the native-speaker EFL teacher is, while she or he may be experiencing profound culture shock and an accompanying overturning of beliefs about both native and foreign cultures, students may not be experiencing much of anything at all. For students, English and culture classes are but an ebb and flow of mostly finite, interrupted attention spans during one 90-minute period once a week. After each class students are soon back in the world of the university in late 20th century Japan.

Alternative Materials and Syllabus

After the first term of teaching the class, a plan for doing something totally different began forming in my mind. During the first course I had run, I experimented with group discussion, project work, and film. The group discussion activities were extremely time-consuming and of limited use for language practice. Students' lack of background knowledge and desire NOT to say anything that someone else might misunderstand or have reason to disagree with guaranteed that discussions were not very interesting. This wouldn't have been so bad had most students had the motivation and language ability to keep the discussion in English, but they hadn't and they didn't. The project work -- probably unprecedented for most students -- required so much time and effort from me to manage that I decided it was unrealistic to fit it into an already busy and brief semester.

The movie and the response it evoked from students, however, held promise. I showed Gallipoli, an early film by Peter Weir (the Australian director and screenwriter), starring Mel Gibson. (Gallipoli is a place in Turkey where in World War I, as the Australians say, British officers fought bravely to the last Australian.) This movie proved an excellent way to get students to experience (and this is the special representational and emotional power of film narrative, is it not?) an important period of world history (WW I) as seen through the eyes of the young Australians whose lives are shattered. After seeing the film, students were able to make better conjectures -- at least in written journals -- about Australian geography history, national character, culture, attitudes toward nationalism and republicanism, etc., as well as to develop better ideas about Australia vis-a-vis Japan (beyond koala bears and kangaroos). Many, interestingly enough, were shocked to find out that Japan had fought on the same side as the UK and the US (something I'm sure many Americans don't know either).

Why Gallipoli you might ask? At the time the textbook we were supposed to be reading (a veritable Cook's tour of the English-speaking world) had a unit on Australia. So the film fit nicely with the unit. Also, the film was available at a local video store in a version subtitled in Japanese. And the film starred a western actor who is very popular in Japan. Finally, I chose the film because it is in my opinion one of the best films produced in Australia during the 1980s (and that is saying a lot because there were quite few truly great Australians films made during this period).

The Current Course

I teach the Comparative Cultures course once a year (there are two terms per year at Fukui University), and evaluation and revision of the course is ongoing. Still, the course is now set in the following pattern: I select five to six films that I think dramatize and illustrate a broad

range of facts, personages, conflicts, issues, and themes appropriate to the course syllabus (a syllabus, I confess with joy, that I was allowed to construct on my own without any guidelines, criticisms, or feedback from my department). In case you are worried, like some of my colleagues and students, that without overly difficult "reading" there is no learning, I also assign a textbook to supplement what has basically evolved into a film course.

Before Viewing the Film

I construct and distribute information prints and conduct mini-lectures -- both in English -- to introduce the background to each film. I then set pre-viewing questions that students are asked, either individually or in small groups, to brainstorm answers to. I may or may not collect results of this brainstorming session for part of the classroom participation grade, but I assess how students are doing at this stage by having them share responses with the class.

Discussion in English with an entire class has never been very successful for me even after over eight years of trying with Japanese EFL students, so I often ask students to write their answers on the board. At this pre-viewing stage, I should add, I always emphasize that I am not looking for right or wrong answers. Rather, I want to see what students think and know about some of the film's subject matter and themes and to help them express and share some of it in English with their classmates. Then we watch the film together as an entire class.

After

After we watch the film I have the students complete very structured response journals to the film. These consist of a series of questions about the content, theme, and possible viewers' responses to the film. These response journals accumulate over the term to form portfolios, and these are then used to determine grades (usually an A, B, or C, as few students fail to turn in most of the work). After doing the first journal, most students are disabused of the idea that a film is only for fun and that they only have to be there and watch.

Some Criticisms and Problems

First, there is the problem that many university students only view movies as entertainment, not education in general or language study/practice specifically. Some of my colleagues, no doubt, feel this way, too. I counter such objections with the assertion that serious film can be tackled as serious literature, history, and cultural studies (and it does not have to be experimental film to qualify). The response journals I assign foster a serious but not pedantic reflection on the movie.

Film is more difficult to interpret and respond to than a short story or novel.

In some ways film is more difficult to interpret and respond to than a short story or novel. It is more likely the viewer's ability to make even immediate sense of a film can be overwhelmed by its pace, sound and visuals, and there is usually no written text to re-read and review (though the amount of screenplays now out and scattered on the Web does holds that tantalizing possibility).

Second, a critical reader might say that I have pretty much overlooked FLL with this course. I counter this by pointing out that if we always just read a text or watch and listen to a film or program because "target" language is the goal, then no communication in English takes place; and it is just this attitude that makes EFL in Japan yet another moribund and

stultifying school subject for students.

I teach the course entirely in English when I am communicating with the whole class (the short lectures, the notes on the board, the structured response journals, etc.), and most students eventually come to understand things they thought would require long-winded explanations in Japanese. Although the movies I use are typically western films with Japanese subtitles, I aver (counterintuitively?) that for a higher-level student they are suitable for English listening practice as well.

Serious film can be tackled as serious literature.

Japanese in the subtitles does not necessarily stop serious language learners from monitoring the English for meaning (and it should be emphasized here, FOR MEANING, not for isolating grammar or answering language-cued questions).

Since most feature-length films have drawn-out narratives that compete with any possible language focus, narratives that are often too difficult linguistically, this type of film would not be a great FL tool for teaching beginning and lower-intermediate students. Slowing the pace, repeating snatches, and annotating with bilingual and cloze scripts for classroom study disrupt the narrative drive and renders film tedious. But I do think more linguistically advanced students will listen and try to actively comprehend the spoken English in a movie, even if there are Japanese subtitles.

Another problem: a film's treatment of sex and violence can be too graphic for some students. Consider the films I used last term: The Mission (violence), Revolution (violence, profanity), The Broke Chain (violence), Picture Bride (brief nudity), Come See the Paradise (nudity, sexual situations, profanity).

I had considered using a recent film by David Cronenberg (director of the very recent and controversial Crash), M. Butterfly, starring John Lone and Jeremy Irons, but I hesitated because of one scene of female frontal nudity (a scene that just a few years ago in Japan would have been "blobbed out" by censors) and several scenes of homoeroticism. I like this film because of its thoroughly post-modern treatment of how westerners "construct" the Orient to suit their fancies and in particular how some western men become part of the "Pinkerton Syndrome" -- western male fetishization of Asian women as sex objects. However, I have decided that some of my students may not appreciate being required to watch such a film, so I am still considering how best to teach it. Perhaps, along with other more sophisticated, experimental films like Peter Greenaway's recent Pillowbook, a modified approach is necessary.

This course is evolving. No doubt writing this report will help me to evaluate future improvements and refinements. Other issues include: (1) difficult logistics of putting together such a course; (2) availability of less commercial, more challenging movies with Japanese subtitles; (3) copyright laws, infringement and "copy-proof" tapes; (4) fine tuning the course for more language practice; (5) use of films and film reviews in composition class, and so on. But this is only an interim report on one course that, while I am still not fully satisfied with it, brings me more personal satisfaction than most. It may be tangential to mainstream ELT and "English education" in Japan, but it is a tangent I intend to explore further because I feel that both my students and I enjoy and learn from where it is taking us.

DISTINCTIVE TEACHING: Shall We *Chansu*?

Weekend immersion.

Jonathan B. Britten,
Nakamura Gakuen University

In the popular recent movie *Shall We Dansu?* an inhibited Japanese salaryman finds personal freedom in the arms of his dance instructor. On the studio floor, he is utterly transformed by dancing. Good English language instructors are always trying to create similar, albeit less dramatic, transformations in their inhibited learners. Like the dancing salaryman, most language learners want to be freed from deeply ingrained habits: reticence, embarrassment, and fear of failure.

The big problem in Japanese universities today, unfortunately, is the classroom. The *teacher* stands up front and the *students* sit clustered together at their little desks with years of grammar rules and vocabulary rules locked up in their heads. How unlike the dancing salaryman these students are! He has found freedom in dance. Studying English in their well-practiced role as *students*, most young men and women in university will never have such a chance.

The analogy holds up to close examination. By mastering the necessary dance steps -- in this analogy, the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of dance -- the salaryman can move in a new way that liberates his soul. Studying a new set of rules leads to freedom on the dance floor. Conversely, English language students in Japan have mastered steps, but never have a chance to dance to the music.

Thousands of college students I have met over the past seven years have been acutely aware of this. They know they have never had enough opportunities to practice speaking the living language, and sum this up in a phrase: *chansu ga nai*. With the current structure of language education in Japan, it is extremely difficult for any classroom instructor to give them that chance.

Colleges and university administrators seeking to improve their English language curricula must create new programs that offer chances to use the living language. One simple, effective way to improve English language education in universities is to offer regular immersion sessions at university seminar facilities. Such programs offered regularly, as part of the overall curriculum, would be a crucial supplement to classroom study. Such classroom study currently exposes learners to English for less than one percent of their waking week. Obviously, such limited study by itself is of little use. In addition to mandatory, self-study time outside the classroom, regular, supervised immersion sessions could significantly raise the exposure time.

Programs offered as part of the overall curriculum would be a crucial supplement to classroom study.

Moreover, such programs could complement -- or even substitute for -- expensive study abroad programs. These programs -- especially summer vacation sessions featuring limited classroom time and lots of tourism and shopping -- are not very useful for language learning. And such programs are not affordable to many students. In any case, educators can offer students wonderful chances to learn without leaving Japan.

Suppose, for example, that university English teachers work together to create a series of regular weekend workshops as well as even longer sessions during vacations.

By making use of seminar facilities, students could check in on Friday evening for a Shall We *Chansu?* session, and immerse themselves in English until Sunday night. Offered at modest cost using regular faculty or part-time specialists, such a program could in many ways be superior to overseas travel.

There is really no reason for Japanese students to travel abroad, at considerable cost, in order to have a chansu.

Overseas study programs can actually be counterproductive. Such trips, usually to Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand or the United States, tend to reinforce a pervasive and counter-productive attitude among Japanese students: that English language skills are for use only in native speaker countries. This mentality consigns English to a role as a performance skill. English is to be dusted off on those occasions when one meets the natives. Afterwards, the language goes back into the closet upon with those dusty old textbooks and tapes.

This is a serious and very limiting misunderstanding. English has indisputably become the international second language -- a fact that has frankly astonished me. Over the past fifteen years, I have traveled widely in Asia, and lived in Japan for about half that time. Here in Japan, I regularly meet men and women from all over the world, and almost all speak English without hesitation or evident discomfort.

I have thus learned -- to my surprise -- that English has become Worldish -- a term I created to try to change the mind-set of language learners here in Japan. Again, then, there is really no reason for Japanese students to travel abroad, at considerable cost, in order to have a *chansu*. They can do quite well by studying in Japan, in generally underutilized university facilities, and at the same time, they can break away from the unhealthy native speaker model. One good idea is to invite at least a few of the many international residents of Japan to be guests as these *chansu* sessions. But in any event, it is sufficient that Japanese language learners get together and talk to each other.

Such language learners can also find a wonderful *chansu* if they are offered a special dormitory -- or even a section of a dormitory -- reserved for those who wish to practice the living language. Living in the Worldish House would be a special level of education reserved for serious learners.

Such language houses are not uncommon on American campuses -- my undergraduate university, for example, had a popular French House, in which perhaps a few dozen students lived and took their meals, using only the French language. Sadly, dormitories like this are uncommon in Japan. This can change quickly. The facilities already exist, and the rules for residents are quite simple: once in the house, one speaks only the target language. (Talking to outsiders on the dormitory telephone should be the only exception.)

Residents of a Worldish House dormitory, of course, are likely to be a special breed, already highly motivated. What about activities for less serious learners who nevertheless want to have an opportunity to use the living language? Choices are innumerable, but the main point is that learners need some structure, but also need to make their own choices as much as possible; the range of activities should be very wide.

Let's return to our analogy of the repressed salaryman who finds freedom in dancing. Again, by mastering the dance steps -- the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of dance -- he enters into a new world of selfexpression. Language learners in Japan, on the other hand, are like someone who has mastered all

the steps, but have never had a chance to dance to music. We must change this, but we still must have some ground rules for *chansu* sessions -- a kind of choreography, if you will. Instructors -- who are transformed into facilitators, whose purpose is to help rather than to teach -- will carefully inform learners about the session rules well in advance. For their part, learners must understand their responsibilities clearly.

For example, learners must agree to strictly limit Japanese conversation, since speaking Worldish is their purpose in attending. Learners must arrive at the site equipped with any necessary materials -- dictionaries, Walkman-style tape players, notebooks, and so on. Learners who won't dance to the music and end up stepping on everyone's toes will not be invited to return.

Once all the oughts and musts are out of the way -- these may be introduced in writing, in the Japanese language -- learners may at last be able to undergo a kind of transformation. The challenge for the facilitator is to create a sense of excitement and fun while managing simultaneously to promote learning. There are many ways a facilitator can help do this.

One effective ice-breaker is to give students packets of self-adhesive labels. Some would have English words written on them; others would be blank. The students would have to go about the facilities and affix printed labels to their corresponding objects. Some of the printed labels could be quite challenging. For example, a learner might struggle to place the word reflection, and finally settle upon a mirror in the bathroom. Still more challenging would be hand-printing an allotment of blank labels, and identifying some objects on one's own.

When meal times come around, learners could be given menus in the target language, and the opportunity to choose between two or more courses. During meals and at other times, English-language background music could be playing. Special presentations using English-language films linked to English-language closed-captioned videos could introduce students to a wonderful and inexpensive technology many have never had a *chansu* to use.

Facilitators could also introduce other media, such as short-wave radio shows. The Voice of America's special English series is one useful example. NHK offers several effective Eikaiwa courses on television and on radio. Facilitators could offer handouts listing the times of various television and radio language study programs. Learners need to be aware of the wonderfully wide range of language learning materials that are available. By the end of a good *chansu* session, learners will have incorporated many new learning strategies. In other words, they will have learned how to learn more. I can imagine them dancing all the way home.

CHECK OUT THE CUE WEBSITE!

<http://interserver.miyazaki-med.ac.jp/~cue/1.html>

(ALSO ACCESSIBLE FROM JALT'S HOMEPAGE)

- CUE'S MISSION STATEMENTS
- ARCHIVES OF ON CUE
- LINKS TO OFFICERS' E-MAIL ADDRESSES

ESP: What does it mean?

Why is ESP different?

Laurence Anthony,
Okayama University of Science

From the early 1960s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of EFL teaching today. Its development is reflected in the increasing number of universities offering an MA in ESP (e.g. University of Birmingham, Aston University) and in the number of ESP courses for overseas students in English speaking countries. There is now a well-established journal dedicated to ESP discussion, *English for Specific Purposes: An International Journal,* and ESP SIG groups of the IATEFL and TESOL are active at their national conferences. In Japan too, the ESP movement has shown slow but definite growth over the past few years.

Interest has been spurred by Mombusho's decision in 1994 to largely hand over control of university curriculums to the universities themselves. This has led to rapid growth in English courses aimed at specific disciplines, e.g. English for Chemists, in place of 'general English' courses. Japan's ESP community has also become more defined, with the JACET ESP-SIG set up in 1996 (currently with 28 members) and the JALT N-SIG forthcoming. Finally, on November 8th this year the ESP community came together as a whole at the first Japan Conference on ESP held at Aizu University.

Japan's ESP community has become more defined.

ESP has had a relatively long time to mature and so we would expect the ESP community to have a clear idea about what ESP means. Strangely, however, this does not seem to be the case. In October this year, for example, a very heated debate took place on the TESP-L e-mail list about whether or not English for Academic Purposes (EAP) could be considered part of ESP in general.

At the Japan Conference on ESP, there were clear differences in how people interpreted ESP. Some described ESP as teaching English for any purpose that could be specified. Others described it as English teaching for academic or professional purposes. Conference main speaker, Tony Dudley-Evans, is aware of current confusion amongst the ESP community in Japan, and set out to clarify the meaning of ESP, giving extended definitions of ESP's 'absolute' and 'variable' characteristics.

ESP's Absolute Characteristics:
ESP, according to Dudley-Evans (1997), 1) meets specific needs of learners; 2) makes use of methods and activities of disciplines it serves; 3) centers on the language appropriate to these activities re: grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, genre.

Variable Characteristics:
ESP may 1) be related to or designed for specific disciplines; 2) use a different methodology from that of general English; 3) be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary levels or in a professional work situation (but can be adapted at secondary levels, too); 4) be designed for intermediate or advanced students; 5) assume basic knowledge of language systems.

Dudley-Evans' definitions are influenced by Stevens (1988), though Dudley-Evans removes the absolute characteristic that ESP is "in contrast with 'General English'" (Johns et al., 1991: 298), and includes more variables. Division of ESP into absolute and variable characteristics is helpful in resolving arguments about what is and is not ESP. From the above, we see ESP can be but is not necessarily concerned with a specific discipline, nor does it have to be aimed at a

certain age group or ability range. ESP should be seen as an 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans describes as an 'attitude of mind'.

Materials writers think about learners' goals.

If we agree with this definition, we begin to see how broad ESP is. In fact, one asks 'What is the difference between the ESP and general English approach?' Hutchinson et al. (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "in theory nothing, in practise a great deal". In 1987, of course, the last statement was quite true. At the time, teachers of general English courses, while acknowledging that students had a specific purpose for studying English, would rarely conduct a needs analysis to find out what was necessary to achieve it. Teachers nowadays, however, are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials writers think very carefully about learners' goals at all stages of materials production. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general. The line between where general English courses stop and ESP courses start has become vague indeed. Ironically, while many general English teachers can be described as using an ESP approach, basing syllabi on a learner needs analysis and their own specialist knowledge of using English for real communication, many so-called ESP teachers use an approach furthest from that described above. Instead of conducting interviews with field specialists, analyzing the language required in the profession, or analyzing students' needs, many ESP teachers are slaves to textbooks, unable to evaluate texts' suitability, and unwilling to do the necessary analysis of difficult specialist texts to verify their contents. If the ESP community hopes to flourish, it is vital we understand what ESP actually represents. In Japan ESP is still in its infancy and so now is the ideal time to form such a consensus.

References

Dudley-Evans, T. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes.* Cambridge University Press.

Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes.* Cambridge University Press.

Johns, A. M. & Dudley-Evans, T. (1991). English for Specific Purposes. *TESOL Quarterly* 25:2, 297-314.

Stevens, P. (1988). ESP after twenty years: A re-appraisal. In M. Tickoo (Ed.), *ESP: State of the art* (1-13). SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

ESP: Japan's First Conference on English for Specific Purposes

A report from the conference chair.

Thomas Orr,
University of Aizu

On November 8, 1997, roughly 70 participants from all over Japan gathered at the University of Aizu in Fukushima Prefecture for Japan's first major conference devoted solely to ESP. Working under the conference theme "English for Specific Purposes: Present Circumstances, Future Needs," participants listened to speeches and presentations, questioned panelists, and discussed issues of concern with each other in an attempt to better understand ESP and consider how it might be applied more effectively in Japan. Presentations addressed ESP education at universities and in the workplace in medicine, engineering, art history, computer science, political science, sociology, and business.

The plenary was given by Tony Dudley-Evans, Editor of *English for Specific Purposes: An International Journal* and a popular thesis advisor for teachers working toward master or doctoral degrees in ESP from the University of Birmingham, England. The focus of the speech was directed at defining ESP for participants and describing activities that characterize the work of ESP. Morijiro Shibayama, who directs JACET's ESP SIG, followed Dudley-Evans with a presentation on the growth of interest and research in ESP within the JACET organization; and then Kin'ei Yoshida, a sophomore at the University of Aizu, spoke on preliminary results from his research into university student recommendations for effective ESP in programs designed for computer scientists and software/hardware engineers.

Two major goals for the conference were to advance professional networking among ESP specialists in Japan and to provide direction for the ESP movement that is just beginning to gain momentum. Both goals were achieved, and as a result, many conference participants are actively debating options for ESP development in this country via e-mail. Among possibilities considered are an independent professional organization, a new refereed journal, and annual conferences or seminars.

Papers and presentations from this first ESP conference in Aizu will be published in the conference proceedings ready for distribution to conference participants, and for sale to others who are interested, in January of 1998. Further information about the conference or the purchase of the conference proceedings can be found at <http://www.u-aizu.ac.jp/~t-orr/J-ESP-Conference.html> or sent via e-mail to those without WWW by contacting the conference chair at <t-orr@u-aizu.ac.jp>.

Two major goals were achieved: to advance professional networking among ESP specialists in Japan and to provide direction for the ESP movement.

The Japan Conference on English for Specific Purposes appears to have been a success, and requests for another conference have prompted some colleagues in the ESP community to consider organizing a gathering next year in the Hokuriku region. Present circumstances of ESP in Japan seem bright, but future prospects appear even brighter.

ESP: Brave New World?

Dissenting opinion.

Neil McClelland

Considering the laborious nature of foreign language learning, it is necessary to question the teaching methods we routinely inflict on students. While there is clearly a need to seek professional development through experimentation with alternative approaches, it is equally important to carefully weigh the pros and cons of innovations before adopting them into our classroom repertoires. Due to the vogue for short, intensive language courses, it seems appropriate to evaluate the relevance of the influential ESP paradigm of the mid-80s with regard to the specific context of EFL learning in Japan.

It is important to clarify exactly what is meant by the term ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is often used as an antonym to 'general English'. At its most facetious level, ESP appeals to assumed vocational needs, and focuses exclusively on perceived end-uses of foreign languages. This interpretation prescribes; "American Medical English" (AME) for doctors, "Car Mechanic English" (CME) for car mechanics, and "Station Master English" (SME) for station masters. Such an Orwellian paradigm has been criticised by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), who re-interpret ESP as a process rather than product approach to syllabus design. In practical terms this involves starting with initial needs-analysis, followed by negotiation of the syllabus and teaching methodology as the course progresses.

Unfortunately, like so many other good ideas, the practice of ESP is often far removed from the theory, a prognosis that seems particularly inevitable in the context of Japan. Whether viewed from the perspective of the learners, the teacher, or the syllabus designer, the ESP approach can be shown to be inappropriate to all forms of English education in Japan, but most especially to the teaching of college students.

In order to pertinently view the ESP-oriented teacher from the standpoint of most Japanese EFL learners, it is important to consider the wider context of the typical employment conditions prevailing in Japan. The majority of professional staff have little control over even their geographical location, never mind the nature of their work. As a consequence, incentives verge towards the extrinsic, and it seems likely that many EFL learners are seeking diversion from their working lives rather than some kind of incessant continuation. Even without regard to the crass insensitivity of teaching vocationally specific English to people who may have failed to realise better jobs, it appears fallacious to assume that motivation will be enhanced through an occupation-restricted focus on language. The interpretation by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), that course design should be based on needs-analysis questionnaires, proves equally unhelpful, as it seems inevitable learners will opt for conversation skills, leaving teachers back at square-one teaching general English.

It seems inevitable learners will opt for conversation skills, leaving teachers back at square-one teaching general English.

In the same way that most Japanese company employees are typically faced with Hobson's choice, college students have only very limited options regarding their major on matriculation, and parallels are inescapable. Further, students' expectations are naturally molded by realities of future work. For the vast majority, this means induction into a company and allocation of an occupation with

little regard to their personal inclinations. The simple consequence is Japanese college students have no idea of their future job prospects, nor the associated requirements for English. This is no less true for the elite, such as medical students, who invariably have yet to decide future specialties, but are likely to require social skills should they eventually deal with English speakers. The only thing we can be sure of is needs analyses will most likely result in requests for general conversational English.

From the point of view of teachers working in highly vocationally oriented contexts, occupation-specific materials have the immediate attraction of direct correlation to the demands of sponsors and institutions. A secondary appeal is that learners will probably overcome affective oppositions on the principle that at least they are learning vocabulary that may be relevant to their possible future vocational needs. Teachers have to live with the students, and it is thus only natural that their day-to-day decisions may sometimes be tempered by expediency.

One such instance of pragmatism is the inclusion of vocation specific vocabulary as a simple short-cut to gaining the students' consent regarding materials. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, it bears no relation to the process oriented ESP approach advocated by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), and in fact more resembles general English under another name. A useful illustration can be gained by considering a typical medical English course that presents doctor-patient dialogues, including vocabulary of diagnosis and prescription. A moment' s reflection suggests that this language is not exclusive to doctors, but could also easily be a matter of life and death for potential patients - meaning everybody.

A similar argument can be applied to estate agent English, police officer English, or any English variety we care to mention. On the other hand, doctors travelling to the US for training in specialist therapeutic techniques are likely to most need a mastery of everyday English if they are to be accepted as team-members by their American colleagues.

That English for No Specific Purpose is an impropriety leads us to question priorities of an impoverished profession.

It might be argued that knowledge of technical vocabulary is more important to practitioners of particular professions than to the public at large, however the relevance of this to general education can be countered by pointing out the natural tendency of people to acquire the vocabulary of their own specialty through self study. Even less diligent students likely learn the technical vocabulary of their vocation simply due to a relatively higher occurrence within the language input received. Hence, by viewing the teaching of English as ESP through the eyes of the working teacher, we are again confronted by the overriding importance of everyday conversational strategies over any form of "special" English.

The third perspective is that of applied linguistics which is presumably closest to the knowledge base of the syllabus designer. Ironically, the most damning evidence comes from ESP researchers. In a study of categories of lexis to reading English for special purposes, Cohen et al. (1979) found general, rather than technical, vocabulary was most problematical for learners. While technical vocabulary is essential to vocational language use, it is not the major problem for most non-native speakers.

This is further supported by Anderson & Lynch (1988), who point out that formality can not be equated with difficulty, and that it is 'simple' everyday expression that usually

causes the most significant comprehension problems for second language speakers. Thus it again becomes clear that ESP methodology can only have the single outcome of emphasizing that everyday conversational English is best, a conclusion no less true for college students. While the above discussion separates the viewpoints of learners, teachers, and syllabus designers, it must be remembered that the interests of these three groups are united by the single goal of facilitating effective language learning. Analysis of the realities of the situation, however, shows that such a goal is not necessarily facilitated by the coining of acronyms such as EST (English for Science and Technology), which may be counterproductive to good EFL practice.

Indeed the generally held, but rather absurd, notion that ENSP (English for No Specific Purpose) is some kind of impropriety, can only lead us to question the priorities of an impoverished profession. Surely it is the very grammar, idiom, and literature which the ESP paradigm seeks to eliminate, that represents the true value and interest of learning a foreign language. From a social, intellectual, and communicative perspective, the restriction of language to occupational criteria can only be seen as a disservice to learners. The irony behind original use of the phrase "the brave new world of ESP" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987:1) seems as poignant and relevant today as ten years ago.

References

Anderson & Lynch (1988). Listening, in C.N. Chandlin & H.G. Widdowson (eds), *Language Teaching: A scheme for teacher education*. Oxford: OUP.

Cohen, A.D. , B. Glasman, P.R. Rosenbaum-Cohen, J. Ferrara, & J. Fine (1979). Reading English for Specialized Purposes: discourse analysis and the use of student informants, *TESOL Quarterly* 13, 551-64.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) *English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: CUP.

Internationalizing Teacher Connections

Musings on trans-organizational & trans-national links.

Greg Matheson, Soonchunhyang University, Korea

[Editorial note: This fall a number of JALT members sailed or flew across the Japan Sea to participate in the annual conference of KOTESOL. Greg Matheson, conference organizer, comments on the upshot of such crossfertilization.]

I was asked to share a few words on international connections among EFL/ESL organizations representing teachers around the world and I think this means critiquing the activities of the small number of people in these organizations who are trying to bring the groups together. What can I say? The words "walking on water" are the first which come to mind. With or without a constituency these leaders represent their groups internationally, and their acts are miraculous. The only response possible is laughter or incredulity. It's not whether things are done well or not, but that people make the effort despite an apparently almost-complete lack of interest or support from most teachers.

Like students in my classes who can't understand what I'm doing, we may scoff. This would be a mistake. How do teachers learn? The same way students do, from their teachers. And students are to teachers as teachers are to leaders of teachers' organizations. Our leaders are crying in the wilderness, perhaps, trying to get teachers to communicate, but just as students must look outward, so must teachers start to think globally. The world is getting smaller and the global village is at hand.

CUE Looks Forward

Meet the new Executive Board.

Steven Snyder, Treasurer & Membership Chair

E-mail: tomobear@m-surf.or.jp

CUE is the largest NSIG and the largest defined group within JALT. Yet CUE has tremendous growth potential -- both in terms of membership and service to members. As membership chair I will do everything I can to help the NSIG attain that growth potential. Like others, I joined CUE to know more about college teaching in Japan, working conditions, and other issues we face. I had anticipated when I joined that there would be interest-based networking lists, resources and information on employment conditions and work laws, and access or indexes to research specific to teaching in universities in Japan. Many of these items may have been attempted in the past -- my goal is to work toward getting these resources available to our members. We desperately need an accurate e-mail list of the membership and I will be asking for your cooperation in developing it. Please send me a quick message and I will add you to our e-mail list. The role of treasurer fits well with that of membership chair, in many respects the jobs overlap. Lastly, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have concerns, complaints or questions.

Daniel Walsh, Distribution & Programme Chair

E-mail: walsh@hagoromo.ac.jp

Since I have not yet held office in this NSIG, I feel fortunate working with some incumbents. We are actively planning CUE events for JALT 98 to meet a deadline early in the new year. Recently, in my work as college professor, I have become sensitive to the increasing necessity to communicate, outside the classroom, in Japanese where appropriate. I wonder if other expatriate faculty share this concern and what programmes CUE may offer to help meet such a challenge confidently and constructively. Conversely, I have begun to consider more deeply what professional challenges Japanese colleagues might face in interacting with expatriate teachers and how CUE might best address those needs. I would appreciate hearing members' ideas for interesting and purposeful programmes. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time, either in English or in Japanese, via e-mail (see above) or fax: 0722-65-7005.

Hugh Nicoll, Co-coordinator & Secretary

E-mail: hnicoll@miyazaki-mu.ac.jp

Greetings. I have joined with Jack Kimball in becoming one of the two new co-coordinators of CUE and will also function as the recording secretary. My main concern as I contemplate the future of our SIG is to help facilitate our collective ability to achieve what I consider our most fundamental purposes: professional development and college-oriented teaching and research issues. Reaching out to our allied constituencies within and without JALT is a natural course for us to take for growing the SIG and achieving these goals. I am particularly interested in increasing collaborative relationships with other professional associations of Japanese university professors and increasing dialog with our colleagues in secondary education.

Jack Kimball, Co-coordinator & Editor, *On Cue*

E-mail: kimball@post.miyazaki-med.ac.jp

Two goals: help promulgate an inclusive, professional CUE culture, and help make members' investment in CUE as rewarding as it should be.

"Let's Make a Discrimination-free Town!"

Progress report on a campaign by foreign teachers at Prefectural University of Kumamoto.

Farrell Cleary

[The author is a foreign teacher at the Prefectural University of Kumamoto and member of the Kumamoto General Union, affiliated with the National Union of General Workers. This article is a personal account and should not be taken as an expression of the views of the union, much less those of the University.]

On July 11, 1997, a group of foreign English teachers at Prefectural University of Kumamoto (PUK) formed the Kumamoto General Union, affiliated with the National Union of General Workers -- National Council. Several days later, they submitted claims to the university asking for, among other things, an end to discrimination on the basis of nationality. They also asked that the so-called 'foreign teachers' at the university be given contracts which reflected their full-time jobs in place of the present, 'special, irregular, part-time' one-year contracts. Negotiations based on these claims began on October 3. No settlement was reached and they resumed on November 7. In the meantime, on October 21, a group of PUK teachers held a press conference which led to wide coverage of the claims both in the regional press and on television.

The initial group of foreign teachers were joined at the press conference by other foreign teachers at the university who have contracts similar to those of their Japanese colleagues, except for a discriminatory three-year limit on their term of employment. This article will provide a brief account of the on-going negotiations. It is perhaps unavoidably partisan as the writer participated on the side of the union. At the November 7 session, the union was represented by Mr. Tadashi Okabe from The National Union of General Workers, the seven Foreign Teachers who are members of the union executive, and by foreign colleagues on three-year contracts who acted as advisers. The University/Prefecture was represented by two senior professors, four senior members of the University Administration and one official from the Prefectural Office. University negotiators arrived without an interpreter, as they had on October 3. They were well aware that interpretation would be necessary if there was to be satisfactory communication between the parties.

Knowledge of Japanese has never been a requirement for foreign teachers being employed either on regular or irregular contracts.

The university's top administrator repeated his assertion from October 3: 'This is Japan so negotiations should take place in Japanese.' (Knowledge of Japanese has never been a requirement for foreign teachers being employed either on regular or irregular contracts at the PUK and there are varied levels of Japanese competence. It was precisely in

order that negotiations could take place in Japanese that the union had been asking for a qualified interpreter since the preliminary negotiations in August.) An additional reason given for the failure to provide an interpreter was the fact that negotiations were taking place at the union's request.

Further evidence of the university's attitude to the new union was provided when its negotiators announced that they were considering docking the pay of the two teachers attending the talks as advisers because they had not asked permission, and the talks were beginning three-quarters of an hour before the end of the working day. The university side had itself agreed to the 4:30 p.m. start.

There were tortured explanations of the difference between classes taught by foreign teachers and those taught by Japanese teachers.

Finally the talks turned to the issue of substance, the reason for the employment of the foreign teachers on one-year, irregular contracts (and other non-Japanese teachers on three-year regular contracts) while none of the Japanese teachers had anything other than regular, unlimited contracts. In their written answers to the union's claims the university had explained the difference, not by nationality, but by the fact that the foreign teachers taught 'practical English' (jissen eigo).

On October 3, the union had pointed out that foreign teachers have always had responsibility for a range of classes, many of them (like writing classes and general education classes) being taught by Japanese as well as foreign teachers. While foreign teachers hoped they taught in a 'practical' way, they could not understand why they should be treated worse than those who taught in other, unspecified ways.

On November 7, there were tortured explanations of the difference between English classes taught by the foreign teachers ('the natives') and those taught by Japanese teachers. Reference was made by the union team to a statement by a university spokesman in the Kumamoto Nichi Nichi Shinbun (22 Oct. 1997) which explained that the foreign teachers had been appointed 'to improve English education [at the University] through teaching mainly English conversation.' The main university negotiator, an administrator, said that he was the spokesman quoted in the newspaper, and, while failing to explain why those who improve English education should be penalised, did throw some light on the differences between the Japanese English teachers and the 'natives'. He did not dispute that there was no subject called English conversation at the university but said that the use of English (he imagined it would be mixed with Japanese) in classes taught by the 'native' teachers meant that English conversation was being taught. He agreed that Japanese teachers who used English in the class room could also be said to be teaching English conversation, but said there was a qualitative difference between the English spoken by Japanese teachers and that spoken by native teachers.

The university explained that the foreign teachers taught 'practical English'.

For 'native' teachers, 'listening' was important. Students responded to 'natives' differently. He admitted that these ideas were all suppositions and that he had little idea of what actually happened in class. He was unable to explain how the imagined differences in pedagogical practice justified contractual discrimination against the 'natives'.

The union explored the relationship between nationality and 'nativeness'.

Since the university was adamant that employment of foreign teachers had nothing to do with nationality, the union explored the relationship between nationality and 'nativeness'. When asked about the nationality of the 'native' teachers (those whose English is their 'mother tongue'), the university team provided glimpses into the minds behind the contracts:

Union: In this university, what nationality do the 'native' teachers have?

University: I don't know what nationality they have.

Union: Are we Japanese?

University: Looking at you, it's obvious (..miru wakaru desu ne) .... We know by looking at you that you're not Japanese.

Union: When you look at Lopez [a player in the Japanese national soccer team], do you know his nationality?

University: Yes I do.

Union: What nationality is he?

University: I don't remember clearly.

Union: In fact he's Japanese.

University: Ah.

University 2: One can understand [from looking at him] that he's not racially Japanese. [Jinshuteki ni nihonjin de wa nai to iu koto wakaru.] .... Looking at someone's appearance, can't anyone tell whether a person is Japanese or not? .... You can tell whether Mr. Cleary is a Westerner or an Easterner.

This conversation opened up vistas of racial interpretations of the title 'foreign teacher' which were not explored. The discussion culminated with the university team (a) denying that nationality was a factor in hiring foreign teachers as irregulars and (b) admitting no Japanese teachers were employed as irregulars since there had been no necessity to do so.

Negotiations will continue on November 20. One can only wonder what could make the university team recognize that when they employed foreign teachers they were employing teachers who were indeed foreign; or what could induce them to admit that there is something strange about employing eight full-time teachers (sennin kyouin) on part-time (hijoukin) contracts; or how they could be made to admit that giving teachers inferior contracts because of accents and teaching styles is just as offensive as giving inferior contracts on the basis of nationality.

Meantime, a billboard erected outside the Prefectural Office still proclaims the Prefectural administration's fight against discrimination: "Let's make a discrimination-free town, a gentle Kumamoto."

Oral English in College Entrance Exams

The "alternate" route to college.

Samantha Vanderford, Kyushu International University Girls' High School

High school students in Japan can enter university or junior college through one of two ways: 1) a general entrance examination (GEE) or 2) a recommended entrance examination (REE). A great deal of research has been done on the educational and societal effects of GEE entrance into public and private Japanese universities. Content, reliability, validity, and lack of accountability of these examinations has been extensively criticized (Brown, 1995-6, Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Kimura & Visgatis, 1996; Ito, 1996; Simmons, 1996). However, there is little research on REEs. This is interesting in that 1) the Ministry of Education allows universities to allocate up to 30% of their places to REE entrants and allow junior colleges up to 50%, and 2) the REE usually contains an interview in which, for Foreign Language Departments, oral English is sometimes involved.

The Entrance System

Traditionally, general entrance selection has been based on academic scores on the test from the National Center for University Entrance Examination (NCUEE-Test or "Toitsu shiken"), and/or individual institutions' screening tests. Recently, some institutions have begun selecting GEE entrants by using not only these academic scores, but an interview or short essay as well. The Ministry of Education-allotted percentage for high school REE entrants (not including returnees or automatic entrants from attached high schools) is usually separated into three categories:

1) Designated School Recommendation: for applicants from designated high schools (individually determined by each college) provided they meet the institution's requirements for this particular recommendation.

2) General Recommendation: for applicants from any high school provided they meet the institution's requirements for this particular recommendation.

3) Self Recommendation: for applicants from any high school with special skills, abilities, experience, or extracurricular activities, provided they meet the institution's requirements for this particular recommendation.

Since interviews are used more, a significant proportion of high school students are preparing for this type of examination.

Although each university and junior college designs its own requirements and criteria for the REE selection processes, they have traditionally been based on a combination of an interview and/or short essay with high school grades and recommendation forms filled out by the applicants' high school teacher. Since interviews are now used not only in the REE selection processes but in the GEE selection process as well, an even more significant proportion of high school students are preparing for this type of examination. For this reason university educators, high school educators and students need to familiarize themselves

with the interview portion of the examination, as well as understand its purposes and consequences.

The Interview Portion of the Examination

In an attempt to shed light on the usually "secret" interview portion of the examination, the National High School Association for Career Counseling (NHSACC) produced an unprecedented video this year. Most universities and junior colleges usually do not give out information regarding the interview portion so this video, "The Entrance Interview: Aims, Content and Evaluation Points", provides applicants with a very general idea of what to focus on in their preparation. In the video, university professors discuss 1) the purpose of the interview, 2) the criteria for evaluation, 3) the evaluation, and 4) often-asked questions. What follows has been culled from this Japanese-language video.

Purpose of the Interview Examination

The REE is based on the principle that the evaluation and selection are not based on academic ability. The purpose of the interview is to get information that cannot be derived from the traditional, academic written examinations. The interview is an opportunity to look at applicants' personality, non-academic skills and abilities, motivation for wanting to attend that particular university or study a particular subject, aspirations upon entering the department, plans for the future, and ability to express themselves clearly and logically.

Having this type of entrance test which does not focus on academic ability, allows the university to diversify its student population. Another reason for conducting the interviews is to check the information on the applicants' application and recommendation forms or in their short essays. For the departments such as Science, Medicine and Education, the interview examination is used in the GEE as well to determine the applicants' suitability for careers in such fields. Some institutions also use the interview to try to determine whether the applicants will finish university in four years and not prolong their stay.

Evaluation Criteria

Interviewers generally base their criteria on areas that cannot be seen in academic results, such as:

- personality
- "genkisa" (enthusiasm, positiveness, outgoingness)
- motivation to attend the institution and study the subject
- interest in and suitability for the department or subject
- how much the applicant already knows about the institution, department or subject
- ability to understand what is being said to them
- ability to express what they want to say logically
- eagerness to communicate
- content of their answers

Generally speaking, applicants who pass the interview are able to look the interviewers in the eyes and answer the questions with determination, warmth and feeling using their own words. They answer logically and explain the reasoning behind their answers. Applicants who fail the interview are generally unable to express themselves clearly or they do not communicate well.

Evaluation

Each institution has its own system for grading applicants. One professor says, "We don't give detailed grades, like 3 out of 5 on the correctness of what they are saying, or 4 out of 5 on how good they

will be for society, then add them up. It's an overall grade. Then after, we might go back and look at some of the detailed points." The vagueness of some explanations given here are cause for concern as the evaluation is the most crucial part of the test.

Questions

Given the interview's purpose and criteria for its evaluation, the questions accordingly are about the applicants' high school life, extra-curricular activities, abilities, skills, motivation and future plans in order to determine their personality and non-academic skills.

To determine non-academic skills, abilities and extracurricular activities, interviewers ask questions such as:

- What stands out in your memories of high school?
- Tell us about your high school.
- What are your extracurricular activities?

To determine motivation, they ask:

- Why did you choose this university / this department?
- After you enter this university, what do you plan to do / study here?
- If you fail, will you apply next year?
- Which school would you most like to attend?
- What work do you want in the future?
- Why do you want to be a [teacher]?
- What made you want to be a [lawyer]?
- How can you contribute to society?

These are only sample questions. One professor in the video exclaims, "It's not like there is a manual for which questions we are going to ask. When an applicant says something, right there, we ask about that. It's not something we prepare for." Though not the case for all universities and junior colleges, this explicit acknowledgement that there is no standard process brings into question the validity and reliability of these interview examinations.

The Role of English in the Interview Examination

The NHSACC video states that in the attempt to determine the applicants' level of interest in and suitability for the subject for which they are applying, interviewers use oral English. In order to clarify the context, examples of questions asked or actual performance requested in the subject matter from various departments are given first.

- History Department: "Which interests you more, Eastern or Western History?"
- Law Department: "What recent or historical event / incident has made an impression on you?"
- Medical Department: "What do you think about death? What is it to you?"
- Science Department: "Explain the difference between AM and FM." Or the applicants are asked to perform an experiment or solve an equation.
- Foreign Language Department: "Please read this passage in English aloud." Or the applicants are given a passage in English which they read, then applicants are asked questions about it in English by a native speaker and applicants are to reply in English, similar to the [old] Eiken test.

The role of oral English is to determine applicants' interest and suitability.

According to the NHSACC video, the role of oral English in the interview

examination is to determine applicants' interest in and suitability for pursuing studies in the Foreign Language Department by having them read a passage out loud or read a passage and answer questions about it from a native speaker in English. This means, basically, if the applicant can read the English passage out loud, or can read the English passage and answer the native speaker's questions about it in English, then they are interested in and suitable for pursuing studies in the Foreign Language Department. This implies some relation between performance on this test and the applicant's interest and suitability.

However, many interviews do not contain such a passage. In a survey I administered to the English Department staff of universities and junior colleges (Vanderford, 1997, unpublished), I found only seven out of twenty-eight institutions used passages or pictures with questions regarding content. The remaining institutions asked questions about applicants' motivation for wanting to enter that institution, plans for the future, school life, hobbies and family.

The views expressed in the video and the data from my survey lead me to conclude that the use of English in the form of question / answer to determine motivation, personality, interest, or anything other than oral English ability is not fair, reliable or valid. Asking questions in English does not necessarily provide information about the applicants' motivation to study, their personality or their interest. It tells us their English ability and that is an academic skill. The purpose of the interview (a non-academic evaluation) and the method for carrying it out (using the academic skill of English) are mismatched. "This point is crucial because language tests should measure language abilities, and nothing else" (Nakamura, 1995).

Implications on English Language Education in Japan

The use of oral English in the entrance examination interviews does, however, seem to signal that this is the beginning of the transition in university and junior college entrance examinations toward the evaluation of oral English ability. In order to increase oral English ability in Japan, and be responsive to changes in the field (Gruba cited in McClean, 1995), an oral English portion of the junior college and university entrance examinations is necessary, but not in the form of an interview designed to determine interest and suitability within a larger interview which attempts to evaluate personality and motivation.

The use of English to determine motivation, personality, interest, or anything other than oral English ability is not fair, reliable or valid.

Although Law (1995) has found that it takes time for high school student and teacher study habits to change due to the strong entrance examination preparation mind set, the effects of the greater presence of listening portions on entrance examinations are beginning to show in high school teaching and learning. Oral examinations could potentially have an even stronger and more positive washback effect on high school study. At present, high school Oral Communication A, B and C classes are 'fun', yet students often do not see the 'point' and some "resent doing class work which they see as irrelevant to improving their test (university entrance examinations) performance" (Gates, 1995).

Were there a valid oral test, teachers would follow suit by teaching in a more communicative way.

Consequently, Japanese teachers of English and some native-English speaking teachers of English focus on the content and style of the entrance examinations and design their use of the lesson, textbook and supplementary materials to this end. If the content and style of university entrance exams incorporate a reliable and valid test of oral English, I believe teachers and students will follow suit by teaching and studying English in a more communicative way.

There is, however, a most perplexing argument often raised by Japanese and some native-English speaking junior college and university entrance examination creators. They say the applicants' level of oral English is not high enough so they cannot include an oral English portion on the entrance examination (Vanderford, 1997, unpublished). Yet, entrance exams, at all levels, tend to dictate curricula of the institutions that lead up to them.

It is the goal of the Japanese Ministry of Education to increase the level of aural / oral English ability. This is precisely the reason the subjects Oral Communication (OC)A, B and C were introduced into the high school curriculum. However, neither these subjects, nor any specific English subject, are necessary to graduate from high school. These subjects are, rather, necessary to gain entrance into universities. A quick perusal of the yearly university guide book "Introduction to Universities (Daigaku naiyo shoukai)", gives a listing of the high school subjects that appear on the entrance examination. The yearly entrance examination guidebook, "Guide to University Exams (Daigaku juken annai)" also gives details of the entrance examination contents. The mere choice on the part of the high school administration of whether or not to include subjects like OCA, B and C, in the curriculum is often contingent upon the content of junior college and university entrance examinations.

Many of the junior colleges and universities list OCA and/or B as being on their entrance examination for Foreign Language Departments. If such subject matter is to be tested in a valid and reliable way, it is inappropriate to continue to use indirect testing techniques, e.g. written examinations or personality assessment interviews, to test oral English ability (McClean, 1995). Interviews are becoming a larger part of the Japanese junior college and university entrance examination process in an attempt to diversify admission procedures (Yoshida, 1997). Greater oral English ability is a goal of the Japanese Ministry of Education. However, mixing goals and methods leads to an unreliable concoction. Oral English must be evaluated by a well-defined, systematic oral test based on the curriculum of OCA, B and C, administered by properly trained raters in order to lessen problems of reliability, fairness, accountability and logistics.

Two main issues that require further research are 1) the entrance interview itself, and 2) the use of oral English in entrance examinations. Major concerns for both of these areas are: validity, reliability, and accountability. Information that allows us to test reliability and validity of entrance examinations in Japan, especially interviews, is difficult to obtain and this paper does not even begin to discuss issues of content validity, rater reliability or practicality that are crucial to oral skills

assessment. The same issues Brown raises regarding written exams apply to the entrance interview and use of oral English in entrance exams: "openness, test development standards, professional development and scrutiny, and the need for much more research" (Brown, 1995).

References

Brindley, G. (1997). Assessment and the Language Teacher: Trends and Transitions. *The Language Teacher*, 21(9), 39.

Brown, J.D. (1995a). English Language Entrance Examinations in Japan: Problems and Solutions. *JALT95 Conference Proceedings*, 273-283.

Brown, J.D., et al. (1995b). *Language Testing in Japan*. JALT Applied Materials, 5-10.

Brown, J.D. (1995c). A Gaijin Teacher's Guide to the Vocabulary of Entrance Exams. *The Language Teacher*, 19(12), 25.

Brown, J.D. & Yamashita, S.O. (1995). English Language Entrance Examinations at Japanese Universities: What do we know about them?*JALT Journal*, 17, 7-30.

Gakkuen (1996). Daigaku juken annai 97. [Guide to College Exams '97]. Tokyo: Gakushu Kenkyusha.

Gakkuen (1996). Daigaku naiyou shoukai 97. [Introduction to Universities '97]. Tokyo: Gakushu Kenkyusha.

Gates, S. (1995). Exploiting Washback from Standardized Tests. In Brown, J. & Yamashita, S. (Eds.), *Language Testing in Japan*, JALT, 101-106.

Gorsuch, G.J. (1997). Test Purposes. *The Language Teacher*, 21 (1), 20-23.

Gruba, P. (1993). *Student assessment final report.* Chiba: Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages.

Ito, A. (1996). Testing English Tests. *JALT Journal*, 18, 183-196.

Kimura, S. & Visgatis, B. (1996). High School English Textbooks and College Entrance Examinations. *JALT Journal*, 18, 81-95.

Kay, G.S. (1995). English Language Entrance Examinations at Japanese Universities: Interview with James Dean Brown. *The Language Teacher*, 19(11), 7-11.

Law, G. (1995). Ideologies of English Language Education in Japan. *JALT Journal*, 17, 213-23.

McClean, J. (1995). Negotiating a Spoken-English Scheme with Japanese University Students. In Brown, J. & Yamashita, S. (Eds.), *Language Testing in Japan*, JALT, 136-148.

McNamara, T. (1997). Measuring performance in second language oral tests. Presentation at JALT97 International Conference. Hamamatsu.

Ministry of Education. (1991). Koto gakko gakushu shido yoryo. [Course of Study for senior high school]. Tokyo: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education. (1997). Monbusho koutou kyouiku kyokuchou tsutatsu- Daigaku nyuugakusha senbatsu jisshi youkou [Bureau of Higher Education Notification : Outline on university entrance examination candidate selection procedures]. (Notice #178). Tokyo: Ministry of Education.

Nakamura, Y. (1995) Making Speaking Test Valid: Practical Considerations in a Classroom Setting. In Brown, J. & Yamashita, S. (Eds.), *Language Testing in Japan*, JALT, 126-133.

National High School Association for Career Counseling (Zenkoku kotogakko shinro shido kyogikai). (1997). Video: Shingaku mensetsu: sono nerai to naiyo, hyouka no pointo [The Entrance Interview: its aims, content and evaluation points]. Tokyo: Jitsumu Kyoiku Shuppan.

Simmons, T. (Ed.) (1996). Academic Debate on Language Testing. *ONCUE* Vol. 4 No. 2, 7-22.

Vanderford, S. (1997). Survey on Entrance Examination Interviews in English (unpublished).

Yoshida, K. (1997). Effects of Ministry of Education Initiatives to Change English Education. Testing NSIG Roundtable at JALT97 International Conference. Hamamatsu, Japan.