In this issue:

FIVE FEATURE ARTICLES, ONE PREMIER INTERVIEW

ARTICLES ON WELL-BEING, HUMOR, PUBLISHING, TECH, & CLASSROOM SEATS

CUE CIRCULAR

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News and articles from the JALT College and University Educators Special Interest Group

Iconic Shoeikan (Important Cultural Property) on Doshisha University campus. Used with permission. Joseph Oliver

CUE Circular back in full force!

After a long break we are very excited to share with you some articles that we believe you will find useful in your career as a teacher. In this issue, contributors share ideas on mental wellbeing as a teacher, using humor in your teaching, how to keep moving forward with publications, implementing technological tools (Etherpad and Vocaroo), and using seating charts. Please enjoy! Also, consider what valuable insights you can provide in our next issue.

This issue of the *CUE Circular* also introduces Joseph Oliver and Kim Bradford-Watts as co-editors, taking over the helm from long-term editor Steve Paton. We are sad to see Steve go, but we are in contact with him to provide us with guidance as we present more articles with a pedagogical bent.

A new feature in CC is premiering here, the Veteran Teacher Voices column as a series of interviews with retired or retiring teachers. Their wisdom and experiences should not be lost, so enjoy our first one about Diane Nagatomo.

Joseph Oliver & Kim Bradford-Watts, Co-editors

Glen Hill, CUE Publications chair

Roundup of CUE activities in 2023.

On May 14, 2023, the PanSIG forum was titled "Grazing the Tertiary English Field - Pathways of Cross-Disciplined Educators" with presentations by **Frederick Bacala, Gavin O'Neill,** and **Parvathy Ramachandran**.

Our 30th anniversary conference was held on September 15-18 at the University of Toyama, in the city where CUE itself was conceived and founded in 1993. We were honored by the presence of founder **Gillian Kay**, who came from London to present and talk to the masses as well as just see how CUE has evolved over the past three decades. Thanks to **Theron Muller**, too, for being a great site chair!

CUE's forum at JALT International was on November 25 with a theme of "The Purpose of Publishing: Getting Back to the Basics". The panel consisted of Programs Chair **Victoria Thomas** hosting, and speakers **Melodie Cook, Joël Laurier, George MacLean, Greg Rouault, and Kinsella Valies**. They spoke on various aspects of getting published, including how to submit, what reviewers and editors think & do, and how to make use of JALT's Writing Peer Support Group.

CUE also held its Annual General Meeting for the first time as an online event without interfering with attendance at JALT International. The newest group of officers was announced as follows:
Coordinator: **Fred Bacala**
Treasurer: **Gavin O'Neill**
Publicity: **Mariana Oana Senda**
Programs: **Tosh Tachino, Joël Laurier**
Publications: **Glen Hill**

Awardees of the 2023 CUE grants were also announced as follows:
Research grant – **Nadiia Zaitseva**
Conference grants – **Joël Laurier, Tosh Tachino**
For more on CUE grants, see the link below or the QR code on the right.
https://jaltcue.org/content/cue-grants-and-awards

Feature articles

Veteran Teacher Voices

We are always looking for some nice photos of college or university campuses, especially for the four seasons, but also if there is some interesting interior features, too. If you or your students have something to submit, please contact us! cuesigcc@gmail.com

Feature articles

Promoting Teacher Well-being: Strategies for a Healthy and Sustainable Workforce

Chiyuki Yanase, Chuo University

Chiyuki has been teaching English for >30 years at various institutions and holds an MSc in TESOL from Aston University. Her research focuses on developing autonomy, creativity, and self-efficacy of learners as well as teacher wellbeing. chiyanase@gmail.com

Have you ever experienced burnout or felt overwhelmed during a hectic semester? If you are an experienced and devoted teacher, your answer might be, "yes!" However, you may reply, "no" if someone asks if you have ever sought any help.

Although teacher well-being is an essential aspect of teaching and learning, it is often overlooked. While our focus is generally on student achievement and language acquisition, the physical and mental health of the teacher plays a significant role in the overall effectiveness of language instruction. We are not only responsible for imparting knowledge and skills to our students, but also for facilitating a positive and supportive learning environment. Research has shown that teacher well-being is directly linked to student achievement and overall classroom effectiveness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Teachers who feel well and fully supported are more likely to be motivating and inspiring in the classroom and facilitate a positive learning environment for their students. Conversely, teachers who are experiencing stress or burnout may struggle to engage with their students and may not be as effective in their teaching.

There are a number of factors that can impact language teacher well-being, including workload, classroom management, and the lack of support from school or district leadership. Teachers may often experience excessive stress due to unprecedented working conditions such as the introduction of Emergency Remote Teaching that occurred in 2020 (Tsang et al., 2022). At that time, many teachers had to deal with anxiety and a sense of hopelessness on their own without sufficient help. The scarcity of support at educational institutions needs to be addressed and revised.

In order to enhance teacher well-being, it is important for educational institutions to develop less stressful working conditions with manageable workloads and sufficient time for teachers to rest and create supportive work environments. Teachers also need to proactively seek practices to boost our positive outlook and motivation. In this article, I suggest a number of activities which promote well-being and incorporate it into our language teaching practice.

One activity for promoting teacher well-being is mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment and paying attention to one's thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way. Research has shown that mindfulness meditation can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being (Hoge et al., 2013). Language teachers can incorporate mindfulness meditation into their daily routine by setting aside a few minutes each day to sit quietly and focus on their breathing before going to work or before a class starts. This can help us to become more aware of our thoughts and emotions and to develop coping strategies

for managing stress.

Another way to promote well-being is physical exercise. Exercise has been shown to have a number of benefits for physical and mental health, including reducing stress and improving mood (Naylor et al., 2016). You can incorporate physical exercise into your daily routine by going for a walk or run, participating in a yoga class, or joining a sports team on weekends. On busy weekdays, walking to the station, cycling to the next station on the way to work, or doing a short workout or yoga for ten minutes can be helpful. Doing physical activities can be a great way for you to relieve stress and improve your well-being.

In addition to mindfulness meditation and physical exercise, you can also promote your well-being by participating in professional development opportunities. Professional development can help us improve our teaching skills and knowledge, which can increase your confidence and overall job satisfaction. You can participate in professional development opportunities by attending workshops or conferences, joining professional organizations, or taking online courses. Such action can also be an opportunity to connect with other teaching professionals to share teaching ideas and approaches.

Finally, seeking support from colleagues and school or district leadership can enhance our well-being. Having a supportive network of colleagues can provide teachers with a sense of community and can help us feel less isolated in our teaching practice. Language teaching can be a stressful and lonesome occupation, so having a community to seek mental, pedagogical, and social support from is crucial. This can be done by having a chat with colleagues during lunch break or participating on a larger scale in professional learning communities such as Online Teaching Japan (OTJ) on Facebook and the Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT). Such personal or professional communities can enhance a compassionate and healthy work culture by providing ongoing support, communication, and resources to help us succeed in our roles.

In conclusion, language teacher well-being is an important factor that impacts the overall effectiveness of language instruction. By incorporating activities that promote well-being into our teaching practice, such as mindfulness meditation, physical exercise, professional development, and seeking support from colleagues or a teaching community, we can improve our overall welfare and create a positive and supportive learning environment for our students.

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Humor in the English Language Classroom: Insights from Learners

John Rucynski, Okayama University

John has been teaching at the university level in Japan for nearly 20 years. His main research interest is the role of humor in language acquisition and cross-cultural communicative competence. rucynsj@okayama-u.ac.jp

English language teachers often have a very simple test for deciding whether humor is effective in the classroom: laughter. But it is an oversimplification to state that laughter means that students appreciate the use of humor, and that silence means that the humor should be abandoned. To get deeper insights into Japanese university students' perceptions of humor in their English classes, we (Neff & Rucynski, 2017) administered a survey to over 900 university students and conducted multiple follow-up interviews. I would like to share four of the most important takeaways from our study.

Humor is not only for advanced proficiency students

Some teachers and researchers warn that humor is too complex and culture-bound and thus should not be introduced until learners reach advanced proficiency. While this may be true of some forms of humor, teachers can easily modify the use of humor–just as they would adjust speaking speed or use of vocabulary–to suit the level of the class. According to our survey results, lower proficiency students embraced humor just as strongly as higher proficiency students. In fact, more than a few survey participants wrote comments such as, "I don't like studying English, so I want the teacher to make the class more interesting." While humor is far from the only tool for making English classes "interesting," it is a powerful one.

Somewhat surprisingly, there was a general consensus among participants I conducted follow-up interviews with that even if they did not understand all the teacher's attempts at humor, they still appreciated how it can contribute to a positive class atmosphere. Nonetheless, humor can be a double-edged sword in the classroom and students are likely to get frustrated if the teacher is constantly making culture-bound jokes that go over their heads. In fact, another lesson is that....

Teachers should not overuse humor

Humor may be one of the most effective tools in the teacher toolbox, but if it is your only tool you will have great limitations as a teacher. While we may prepare for a dinner party with the adage that it is better to have too much food than not enough, we should not necessarily take the same approach to humor in our classes. The consensus among students I interviewed was indeed that humor has diminishing returns if overused. While participants in our survey strongly endorsed the inclusion of humor, there were also numerous comments suggesting the limitations of humor, such as:

- "I want the teacher to use some humor, but it's not the only way to make class interesting."
- "Having a good sense of humor does

not necessarily mean the teacher is effective at actually teaching a second language."

So, while a good sense of humor is a valuable trait for teachers to have, so are compassion, creativity, and kindness, among others. Another lesson, however, is that when you do use humor....

Make a connection with the class content

In one follow-up interview, a student told me the story of a former teacher who sometimes liked to start class with "a joke from his home country." As a strong advocate of humor in the classroom, I can clearly understand the teacher's good intentions of wanting to begin the class on a funny, positive note. According to the student, however, the problem was that "the jokes had nothing to do with the class and we couldn't get them." Humorous resources such as memes, cartoons, and puns can certainly enhance language learning, but they are much more effective (not to mention comprehensible!) when they have a direct connection with the class content and are not just randomly used to (attempt to) get a laugh.

When teaching about the humor of the English-speaking world, it is also important that the type of humor focused on is connected to the curriculum. My colleague and I have conducted studies with the aim of improving learner ability to understand different types of English humor, including satirical news (Prichard & Rucynski, 2019) and verbal irony (Prichard & Rucynski, 2020), but all of our studies have been inspired by learner comments and needs. In several follow-up interviews, participants who had studied abroad made comments about how "it was difficult to understand when the local people are joking, as they use

a lot of sarcasm." While teaching about verbal irony may not be necessary in a basic university English speaking course, it can be very valuable for learners preparing to study abroad. However you incorporate humor into your teaching, just be careful that you...

Don't target students

While this final point should be common sense, the problem is teachers may unintentionally target students, as "good-natured" joking can easily get lost in translation. One complication of verbal irony, for example, is that it is used not only to criticize, but also to praise. Another follow-up interview participant told the story of how she once humbly told a foreign English teacher, "I'm not good at English" and was initially shocked when he replied, "Oh yeah, your English is terrible!" It took some frantic explanation on the teacher's part to explain to her that his true message was, "Don't be silly! You're very good at English."

A teacher friend also told me the unfortunate story of how he was doing an end-of-term quiz game and one student was doing particularly well, prompting him to jokingly ask, "Wow, are you cheating?!?" As she was a good student with strong English skills, he assumed she would get his "obvious" bantering. Unfortunately, she instead came to him after class crying and strongly informed him that "I wasn't cheating!" The lesson learned was that even if we think we have developed a certain camaraderie with a class, we still have to be careful with the target of our humor.

Concluding thoughts

Humor is a powerful tool in the classroom, but how it is used is often based merely on teacher intuition. The four tips explained here are a reminder that our learners can

also teach us important lessons of how and when to use humor in our classes.

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Did you know…?

You don't have to be a CUE member to submit an article to *CUE Circular*.

You can submit a photo for our banner, too, and get credit for it.

There are three new columns in the *CUE Circular*. See the end of this issue for more information!

Interested in writing for the *CUE Circular*?

Articles are only 1.000 words long, written in casual non-academic style, and they do not need extensive references.

Contact the editor by email: cuesigcc@gmail.com

All back issues of *CUE Circular* are available on the CUE SIG website: https://jaltcue.org/cuecircular

Publish or perish? Publish and flourish!

Julia Kimura, Mukogawa Women's University

Julia earned her Ph.D. from Temple University in 2021 and is now a lecturer in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at her university. jkimura@mukogawa-u.ac.jp

Universities in Japan make hiring decisions based in part on candidates' publishing track records. The same holds for adjunct lecturer positions, even though universities provide many contingent faculty members with no support for research in the form of time or money. In this essay, I share ideas about how to find the words, motivation, and opportunities that will help you to publish—with or without institutional support.

Before diving into my favourite tips, I would like to encourage you to start small. For those of us who would like to improve our oral health, BJ Fogg (2020) encourages us to start by flossing just one tooth. Similarly, I enjoy running to manage stress. When I first took up running, on the days I could not find the motivation to head out the door, I started by simply putting on my running shoes. Lacing up is often the hardest part of any run. Similar "gateway habits" (Clear, 2018) include writing a single sentence, for those of us who want to write a book, or just opening your notes, for those of us studying to earn a graduate degree. You get the idea.

Writer's block? Read and think. And relax!

One frustrating phenomenon that some writers claim to experience is the so-called writer's block. I think of writer's block like monsters under the bed—if you believe in them, they exist. I no longer believe that there are monsters under my bed, nor do I believe in writer's block anymore, either.

For those of you who do believe in ~~monsters~~ writer's block, I offer you three potential solutions. First, read more! A serendipitous search in Google Scholar may help you find the article you needed but did not even know that you needed it! Second, I recommend the Zettelkasten method. We all know that brains are a great place for coming up with ideas, but not for storing them. I suggest you take each gem of an idea in your head and store it on a cue card (analogue format) or in some kind of notetaking software, such as Notion (digital format). Then, shuffle your ideas around and consider the relationships among them. You may get more insights or find a way to better organize your thoughts, and in turn, your writing. For more on the Zettelkasten method see Ahrens (2017).

Finally, you might feel like you have been staring at your manuscript until it no longer makes any sense. If this happens, consider turning your attention to another project while your manuscript sits on the backburner and percolates. Looking at what you have written with a fresh pair of eyes later might help you (re)consider your manuscript in a different light.

Motivate this!

Like finding the motivation to put on our running shoes, we need to remember our "why" when it comes to academic writing. Sometimes we are extrinsically motivated, be it by job hunting, or our employer's expectations. You might find that over time, you grow to enjoy writing! Even if you do not come to enjoy it, you might find that writing feels slightly less onerous than it did before. I cannot honestly say I enjoy writing, but to be sure, I find it engaging, albeit occasionally frustrating. On the days that I find writing engaging, I am in a flow state. On the days I cringe at what I have written, I want to scream and set my manuscript on fire.

Finally, if you are plagued with inertia, blocking writing time in your already busy schedule can help make it happen. For those days I do not feel like writing, I have found a solution analogous to putting on my running shoes: Focusmate.com. Focusmate provides virtual body-doubling: a self-help strategy that involves working with another person nearby or online to help improve motivation and focus. This online co-working platform pairs me up with some random stranger on the internet. It is not as weird as it sounds. On a 50-minute call, we work on our tasks, and when the time is up, we update each other on our progress. I have got to know people from around the world, and now I regularly book sessions with people I enjoy working with. When I schedule a session with Maria in Latvia, I feel obligated to boot up my computer so I can get to work because I know she is waiting for me.

Have faith (in yourself)!
People who struggle with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are, in fact, generally held. They feel that they aren't as competent or intelligent as others might think—and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them (Psychology Today, n.d.).

Have you ever been plagued by impostor syndrome? Even successful academics can be plagued with self-doubt. Getting feedback can help us improve our writing skills and perhaps give our confidence a boost. Asking a friend or colleague is one way to solicit feedback, but depending on the person, the quality of the feedback may be dubious.

If you lack confidence in your writing, as a JALT member, you are entitled to contact our expert colleagues in JALT's Writers' Peer Support Group for help (https://jalt-publications.org/psg). The members of this team help writers develop manuscripts for submission to any publication. Additionally, all JALT Special Interest Groups   and many chapters have publications to which you can submit your work. In the unhappy

eventuality that your paper is rejected, you can reassure yourself that you are aiming for a prestigious enough journal. A helpful editor will advise you on what to improve and may also suggest a more suitable venue for your work.

Conclusion
Thanks in part to my publications, I am fortunate to have found a tenured position in a faculty. I worked for a long time as a member of the contingent workforce. Therefore, I will never take my position for granted. However, while working as an adjunct and suffering crippling impostor syndrome, which sometimes still rears its ugly head, I still managed to publish, and I encourage CUE members to give it a try. Even though you might not get support to publish from your employer, you can find several opportunities in JALT to publish and flourish. Good luck!

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Incorporating Technology in our English Classrooms: A Vignette

Theron Muller and Jerry Talandis, Jr., University of Toyama

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Jerry Talandis Jr., professor, is interested in pragmatics, learner autonomy, teacher development, and most recently, applications of generative AI in L2 writing instruction. talandis@gmail.com

At our JALT2022 Technology in Teaching (TnT) workshop, we explained how we use two technology tools in our language classes: Etherpad (https://pad.riseup.net/), a simple document editor, and Vocaroo (https://vocaroo.com/), an online voice recorder. As there are already extensive guides on using technology in the language classroom, such as TESOL's Technology Standards Framework (Healey et al., 2008), here we summarize how we choose tools to use in our classrooms, keeping in mind that our starting point is that they be pedagogically useful. We explain how these two tools are compatible with our thinking about technology use in the classroom and some of the different ways you can incorporate them into your classes,

acknowledging that your imagination is the limit in terms of how they can be used to help your students practice English.

While we want to take advantage of students' devices in the classroom, we're also conscious of the variety of different devices students have and the need for cross-compatibility. Further, we're sensitive to privacy issues and ongoing discussions about the commodification of user data. As such, we look for tools that:

- Don't require users to make an account, as our university already issues students IT accounts. Managing multiple accounts brings with it the need to troubleshoot lost passwords and can create a barrier to getting to the language practice part of activities.
- Don't require installation of software, such as apps. We're interested in tools that can be used via web browsers on phones (and other devices) so that they're cross-platform compatible. Students may have older phones that don't support new software or their storage may already be full, which would create a barrier to quick, efficient participation.
- Improve portability and shareability. Students often already have IC recorders on their phones, but being able to share files is often problematic, especially since our university's learning management system (LMS) has a 10-megabyte upload limit. Thus, we want sites where a text link is sufficient to share data between individuals, without the need to download and send actual files.

The two tools we introduced, Vocaroo and Etherpad, fit all of these criteria. Vocaroo serves as a replacement for students' IC recorder apps on their phones. It allows recording speech via a web browser and sharing links to recorded files. Thus, students can record their conversations (and monologues) and submit them or share them with classmates without worrying about file size limitations or device storage limits. Further, recordings are automatically deleted after 30 days,

meaning students' privacy is somewhat protected.

Etherpad, a simple online text editor, was the basis for Google Documents' simultaneous editing of documents. It is a server-side software that allows anyone with the link to an Etherpad document to edit text. It automatically assigns different colors to different authors, making it easy to track who is writing what in a document (not unlike Google Documents' Suggest Changes function). We feel Etherpad's advantage is simplified user permission management; anyone with the link can edit a document, meaning students can get to writing right away without worrying about account information, login credentials, or file permission settings. Writing about Etherpad may make using it sound a bit intimidating. If you want to see it in action, we've made a how-to video for you here: https://youtu.be/en4Vrhx1zKA

In our presentation, we shared three different activities incorporating these tools in our lessons. The first showcased how students can record a short one-minute introduction on Vocaroo and then share the link to their recording via an Etherpad. Topics could range from simple self-introductions to comments on topics currently being studied. After making and posting their recordings, students listen to their classmates' comments and then use them as a starting point for further discussion.

In the second activity, students first record a short conversation in Vocaroo then transcribe it in Etherpad. They then use a teacher-provided rubric to self-evaluate their performance. Since it takes about ten minutes to transcribe a minute of recorded speech, we ask students to talk for about three minutes. We found a simple rubric worked best, with a few criteria closely tied to course aims, making it easy for students to track and assess. This takes some of the burden of providing feedback from the teacher and shifts autonomy to students to think about their language performance and how they could improve further.

Our third activity involved students preparing model conversations in one class that were then used as jumping off points for a subsequent lesson, where students could practice using those student-generated models to have new conversations with different partners. In the first class, students write dialogs based on pre-assigned topics and provide a few questions that classmates can use to get started. While students work, the teacher can access each separate Pad document and offer assistance as needed. In the next class, students access the models, read through them, then chat about the different topics. This activity is especially useful for review or expansion.

For our workshop, we prepared a handout that goes into detail about incorporating these tools into English lessons that you can see here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15BKnZ6w5iDv-GdCUOmPjodTD3SCcvN8P/

However, this is not an exhaustive list of how these tools can be used in the classroom; the limitations of their application is the teachers' (and students') imagination, as well as our word count limit for this circular.

In conclusion, we believe that online tools should be chosen with care taking into account their pedagogical effectiveness, accessibility, how easily they can be integrated into an existing curriculum, and cost-effectiveness (read: free). The powerful combination of Vocaroo + Etherpad fit all these criteria. We encourage you to check them out for yourself and explore what they can help you and your students accomplish!

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Assigning Seats—Does It Make a Difference?

Ian Willey, Kagawa University

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Lately, I have started to wonder if allowing students to choose their seats was getting in the way of learning. Students sit next to their friends, whom they speak to in Japanese, while those without nearby friends are on their own. The classroom becomes a collection of student islands, each with its distinct dialect and climate, and often not very welcoming to the teacher. Last semester, for the first time in my twenty-plus-year career, I tried to alter the geography of my classes by assigning seats.

Overview

I decided to use seating charts in two classes. The first was a group of first-year Technology majors. The second was comprised of second-year students majoring in Nursing and Psychology (two distinct majors). Table 1 gives the name and focus of each course and a breakdown of students by gender. The Technology students were predominantly male while the Nursing/Psychology majors were mostly female (Table 1). I thought that these two classes would be good choices for this experiment, as I would be able to gauge reactions from two very different groups of students.

Before the first class meeting of each course, I obtained a layout of desks in each classroom and prepared a seating chart using Excel. I had planned to use an online

TABLE 1
Courses Utilizing a Seating Chart by Name, Year, Major, and Gender

Course name & content	Year	Major	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total
Comm Engl. II (TOEIC)	1	Technology	6 (21%)	22 (79%)	28
Comm Engl. IV (Writing)	2	Nursing / Psychology	20 (91%)	2 (9%)	22
		TOTAL	26	24	50

number generator to arrange students randomly but decided instead to adopt a semi-randomized approach. With the male-dominant Technology class, I tried to place female students near each other so that they would not always be grouped or paired with all-male groups. I arranged each chart so that it would be easy to break students into groups of three or four. On the first class meeting, I showed students the seating chart using the overhead projector (displaying only student numbers) and students found their seats.

I quickly found myself wondering why I had never used seating charts before. Preparing the seating charts required about an hour's work but this investment seemed worth it. By printing out the charts and placing them on the podium I was able to memorize students' names more quickly. There was also no need to give students name cards, which often get blocked or fall to the floor. Also, I no longer had groups of silent students sitting in the back, and private chit-chat and smartphone use decreased. These advantages of assigned seating were also observed by Westby (2018).

Most importantly, I felt as though I had a better understanding of the character of each student. I could see which groups of students worked well together and how the arrangement could be improved by moving students around. There was a *sekigae* (seating change) after the mid-terms, and again this was not a random process but rather informed by my observations of how certain students worked with other students. The only problem I encountered

was that one student told me she was deaf in one ear and wanted to sit on the other side of the person next to her; this was easily arranged.

Student Reaction
How did the students feel about the seating charts? To find out, at the end of the semester I prepared a Google Forms questionnaire with two main questions: 1) "How did you feel about assigned seats in class?" and 2) "How many times would you like to change the seating chart?" For 1), responses were on a 6-point Likert scale, with 6 meaning "It is a good idea." For 2), the options were 0, 1, 2, and 3 times or more. Students' responses were remarkably positive. Out of 43 responses, 40 students (over 91%) leaned towards liking the charts (a mean score of 4 or above), while only 3 leaned towards a negative attitude (with a mean of 3 or below). Overall, they preferred changing the seating chart 1.65 times per semester. Tables 2 and 3 show the mean scores divided by major and gender, respectively.

TABLE 2
Attitudes Towards Seating Chart and the Number of Seating Changes (by Major)

Major	Attitude toward Assigned Seats Mean (SD)	No. of seating changes Mean (SD)
Nursing/Psych (*n* = 20)	5.0 (o.65)	1.65 (0.59)
Technology (*n* = 23)	4.7 (1.11)	1.39 (0.84)

TABLE 3
Attitudes Towards Seating Chart and the Number of Seating Changes (by Gender)

Gender	Attitude toward Assigned Seats Mean (SD)	No. of seating changes Mean (SD)
Female (*n* = 23)	4.9 (0.73)	1.7 (0.64)
Male (*n* = 20)	4.7 (1.13)	1.3 (0.80)

T-tests comparing mean scores between the two majors and genders found that the Nursing/Psychology majors had a significantly more positive attitude toward the seating chart than the Technology majors ($t(41) = 1.23$, $p = 0.04$). Also, female students had a more positive attitude than male students ($t(41) = 0.74$, $p = 0.014$). An open-ended item on the survey allowed students to write their opinions freely, in Japanese or English. Several responses are given below, including the one negative comment.
"It's so fun to talk with many people from the same faculty."
"I think seating charts is the good opportunity for us to make new relationships."
ぼっちなので指定席の方が助かります。[I'm a loner, so seating charts are helpful.]
知らない人だと緊張してしまうのでできれば自分で決めたいです。[I get nervous around people I don't know so I'd prefer to decide by myself.]

Conclusion
I am now a believer in the power of seating charts and will continue to use them. Japanese students typically sit in assigned seats their entire elementary and secondary education career, and it should be no surprise that they are mostly comfortable with them. Changing the assigned seats once or twice per semester also helps to keep the atmosphere lively. Thanks to these charts, I feel more in control of my classes. A student-centered approach does not mean that the teacher relinquishes control to students, but rather gives students more opportunities to use a language meaningfully.

References

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Veteran Teacher Voices

Welcome to the premier article of a new column in the *CUE Circular*!

The Veteran Teacher Voices section is intended to interview retired or retiring teachers in the EFL industry. The aims of this section are as follows:

• To celebrate and salute teachers who have had a successful career and made substantial contributions to the field of tertiary education in Japan.

• To record the experience and insight these teachers have before it is lost with them in retirement. CUE thanks Steve Paydon for the idea and first contribution.

Interview with Diane Nagatomo

Diane Nagatomo

Steven Paydon *is an assistant professor in the College of Community and Human Services at Rikkyo University. His research interests have mostly revolved around group dynamics, motivation, and lifelong learning. paydo99@yahoo.com*

Robert Dilenschneider *is an associate professor at Jichi Medical University in Tochigi, Japan. He received an Ed.D. from Temple University, Japan and has taught in Japan for >27 years. His research interests include vocabulary acquisition, computer assisted language learning, lifelong learning, and study abroad programs. bdilenschneider@yahoo.com*

Nationality: American
Years of teaching: 44
Qualifications: BA in Child Development and Education, MA TESOL, PhD Applied Linguistics
Highest position attained: tenured professor
Professional Fields of Interest: CALL, reading, writing, materials development, textbook publishing, teacher identity, beliefs, gender

Steven Paydon: Hi Diane. I want to start by expressing my appreciation that you agreed to this interview. Your story is very interesting for fellow teachers teaching in Japanese universities. So, thank you. Now, I would like to start by asking a very simple but interesting question that a lot of us often talk about together; What drew you into teaching?

Diane Nagatomo: Partly a calling (the teacher gene?), partly an opportunity while travelling, studying, and following a boyfriend to Japan. I came to Japan in 1979, immediately after graduating from college on a tourist visa, answered some job ads in The Japan Times and started teaching lessons for a school. I also met someone on the street and taught at what was then called Chiyoda Business College for a year (a technical school). It was the first time in a real classroom and I didn't have a clue what was I was doing. Most people in Japan then were travelers looking to make some money to continue their travels. I actually had a BA, not a fake one that most had at the time. I stopped the college job to study Japanese and do private teaching. Had a baby in 1982, and started university teaching in 1984, thanks to the introduction of a person who had been teaching at the business college.

Steven Paydon: That's very interesting and reminds me a lot of my own path into teaching.

Diane Nagatomo: What also may be interesting is that I got a tenured position in 1988 with having only a BA. That wasn't so unusual in those days but would be unheard of now. It was

strictly a supply and demand situation. And I was so ignorant back then, I didn't really know what tenured even meant. When I was offered the job, I said I needed to "think it over". The offer came in the middle of taking a year off because of having a second baby. Then I immediately signed up for an online MA program.

Steven Paydon: That's funny (LOL). So, my next question is what kept you in it?

Diane Nagatomo: I liked it. I enjoyed managing people. When teaching at uni, I felt like a professional. I was challenged to keep learning as my positions improved, and I found this personally rewarding. I also enjoyed seeing the light bulb moments occur with students at the lower level but I really began to love teaching when I got higher-level students.

Steven Paydon: What are some of the biggest changes you have experienced over the years?

Diane Nagatomo: The biggest change is the supply and demand for EFL teachers. In the 70s and early 80s, teaching opportunities fell into people's laps. But as programs expanded so did the number of teachers, many of whom started getting MAs and PhDs. An MA will open doors to contracted work but not tenure now. And universities prefer to hire young people at entry level for tenure (unless you are already a famous professor!), so the younger the better. Finishing up a PhD in your early thirties is the smartest thing to do. Starting a PhD in your forties or fifties (like I did) may not be useful for career advancement unless you already have tenure. From my research I've found some gendered concerns when it comes to postgraduate study: many guys (particularly with Japanese spouses) invest money for graduate school because they (and their spouses) see that as a career investment. But for many women (particularly those with Japanese spouses), such a move is not considered an investment but moving financial resources away from children's educational funds. So, if women wait until after

their children are through schooling, it might be too late for an advanced degree to pay off.

Women also get a later start due to family dynamics. So, if they want to develop a career in teaching, there is a need for them to get started earlier.

Steven Paydon: What are some trends or changes that you expect to occur in the future?

Diane Nagatomo: I expect language centers to continue as separate entities as part of the school, taking responsibility for language learning. But as many other researchers have found, teachers in language centers often do not get the same level of respect because they are not members of particular faculties. Also, they are not permanent employees, and they constantly come and go. I also think that more schools are going to rely on dispatch companies to provide them with teachers. It seems that even dispatch companies are sending out qualified EFL teachers with MAs.

Steven Paydon: What is, or what are, your proudest achievements?

Diane Nagatomo: I've had two very proud moments as a teacher recently. One young woman, whom I've supervised ever since she was an undergraduate student has just started a tenured position at a national university. Another former doctoral student has just published her PhD dissertation in a book, and it reached #1 on Amazon in its category. As a researcher, I'm also very proud of the two academic books I have written.

- *Exploring Japanese University English Teachers' Professional Identity* (Multilingual Matters, 2012)
- *Identity, Gender and Teaching English in Japan* (Multilingual Matters, 2019)

Steven Paydon: What advice would you give to a teacher starting their careers now?

Diane Nagatomo: Get an MA in TESOL but do a PhD in a content subject, for example, globalization or something like that. There is going to be a greater need for competent teachers who can teach content. We are moving towards more content teaching.

Another thing is to learn Japanese. This might be the most important thing, maybe more important than anything. People in tenured positions are now expected to do pretty much everything that a Japanese professor would do. Also, it is important to publish and attend conferences. Another thing is to build relationships with Japanese professors. If you are a part-timer and hang out in the part-time teachers' lounge, talk to the Japanese professors there. Build personal connections, do favors, be nice, and it'll come back to you.

Steven Paydon: That's all great information. So, my last question is, what's next for Professor Nagatomo?

Diane Nagatomo: Well, I'm retiring in March 2022, but I'll be as busy as ever teaching part-time at three different universities, and I will probably be doing some non-teaching work for Ochanomizu University. And then, there are my five grandsons that will be taking up a lot of my attention as well.

Steven Paydon: Thank you very much, Diane. I have a lot of respect for you and all that you have achieved. All the best with your part-time jobs and most of all with your grandsons.

Implications of the Interview

There are three major takeaways from the interview with Professor Nagatomo regarding her 42 years of experience of working in Japanese higher education. First, the dynamic of academic qualifications for full-time and tenured positions has dramatically changed. Although it may have been possible to attain a tenured position at Japanese university with a bachelor's degree in the late 1980s, there is now an over-abundance of educators who hold

master's degrees competing for contracted positions. Second, to be an attractive candidate for a tenured position at a Japanese university, it is important to hold a PhD. Ideally, it would be good to pursue this degree while you are young and, because of more emphasis on teaching content than language skills, in a specific subject area. Third, a high level of proficiency in Japanese is very important for a tenured position. Just as publishing and presenting outside the workplace is important for professional development, Japanese ability in the workplace is very important because foreign tenured faculty members are expected to fulfill the same responsibilities as their Japanese colleagues.

Interview by Steven Paydon
Implications section by Robert Dilenschneider

More new things coming your way!

In addition to kicking off the VTV column, CUE is proud to inform readers of two more upcoming sections. One is "ELT 101" and will capsulize research of famous language experts like Krashen, Vygotsky, Nation, etc. as a refresher "course". The other column will offer students the opportunity to author articles. They can write on reflections of courses they took or other language learning experiences. So, if you are interested in writing a VTV interview or an ELT 101 article, or if you have eager students to write for the *CUE Circular*, don't hesitate to contact the co-editors with questions about formatting and content.