

In this issue:

CUE AT PANSIG 2018

ARTICLES BY JAMES PORCARO, DANIEL  
NEWBURY, AND RAB PATERSON



# CUE CIRCULAR

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



International Christian University, in Mikata, Tokyo

Photo by Tetsuya Fukuda

## Enjoy the summer break

Welcome to our sixth issue, rounding out two full years of publication.

In this issue you'll read about the SIG's activities at this year's PanSIG Conference in Tokyo and find three feature articles on an interesting range of topics. James Porcaro addresses the concerns of teachers nearing (or beyond!) retirement age, Daniel Newbury shares a system of student to student feedback that he developed, and Rab Paterson discusses the need for 21st-century skills to be a focus of any university's reform program. The regular CUE Careers column is taking a break this issue and will be back for our November edition with pertinent career advice that connects to this year's JALT 2018 conference theme.

As this edition goes out to members, we're likely all on summer break. What an ideal opportunity to pen an article for a future edition of *CUE Circular*! What comes to mind



as you reflect on the first semester of this year? What worked? What didn't? What did you try, notice, or create? Well-written, practical, down-to-earth articles about the day-to-day realities of teaching in our sector is what *CUE Circular* is all about. Your fellow CUE SIG members would love to read about your experiences, ideas, and observations.

In the meantime, please enjoy this issue of *CUE Circular*.

*Steve Paton, Editor*

### **CUE SIG at PanSIG 2018**

CUE's main event at the 2018 PanSIG Conference was our forum, titled "*Integrating non-textbook tools into the classroom: What do you use? How do you use it?*"



As in previous years, we had several presenters give twenty-minute presentations on interesting classroom-related topics. Daniel Teuber presented on *Role play using graded readers and movies*, Daniel Velasco showed a unique activity for *Using TV commercials to promote critical thinking and cultural understanding*, Kazumi Kato described her project-based activity for using *iPad video materials for teaching English group discussions*, and Justin Pool presented about *Menus, movie clips, and online review websites: Exploring authentic materials via a restaurant unit*. All four presenters showed the audience innovative ways to supplement their syllabus or textbook activities using original materials that engage the students, get them to think critically about their language learning, and help them become active learners.



*The CUE forum at PanSIG 2018.*

The forum was well attended with around thirty participants who eagerly listened to the presentations, asked thought-provoking questions, and offered useful insights. Altogether,



this year's PanSIG forum was a tremendous success for presenters and audience members alike.

CUE's table in the SIG tables room also saw a lot of activity with members stopping by to chat, other conference attendees seeking information about the SIG, and discussion about how we can continue to provide support for our members.

Overall, the 2018 PanSIG Conference was a huge success both for the PanSIG Conference planning committee and for CUE. We hope to continue our tradition of offering insightful forum presentations at our 2019 PanSIG forum, which will be held at Konan University in Nishinomiya. Please look for our call for presenters in late fall.

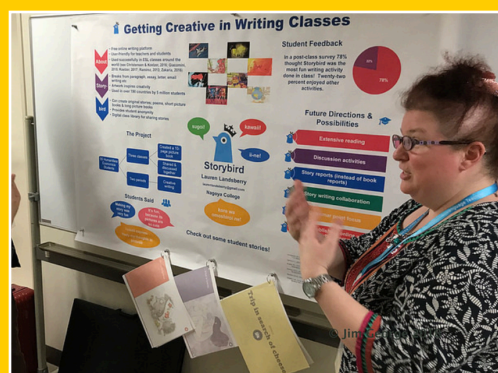
*Wendy M. Gough, JALT CUE SIG Coordinator*

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*PanSIG Conference photos by  
Jim George  
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## Feature articles

### Teaching into one's seventies

**James W. Porcaro, Toyama Kokusai Gakuen**



James Porcaro started teaching 50 years ago in Uganda. He taught ESL in the USA for many years and has worked in Japan since 1985. [porcaro@pa.ctt.ne.jp](mailto:porcaro@pa.ctt.ne.jp)

Now three years after the publication of my article, “The age factor: Teaching in later years”, in the *OnCue Journal*, I would like to revisit that theme as I continue my classroom teaching this year (from April 2018) at the age of 73, almost as actively as three years ago. Despite having been forced to retire from my university professorship at 65, I still teach as a part-timer at a university, a junior college, a high school, and a company.

Indeed, I have been lucky to be able to do so. However, there is much truth in the adage “luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” Therefore, for those teachers who want to continue teaching at the chalkface beyond the usual age of (forced) retirement, I would like to offer the following ten preparation tips that may help you to successfully meet the opportunity to do so.

1. Love what you do. That is to say, love teaching students in a classroom. This

should go without saying. If you feel otherwise, if you lack passion, retire. Now. Please.

2. Stay healthy and keep fit at normal weight. Dress well and groom well. Look professional. In your later years especially, it is simply a fact of school life that your physical appearance must be appealing, one of vigor, not of a tired, washed out graybeard. Speaking for men, be clean shaven, and if you still have hair on your head, keep it cut short and neat. Please believe me: these points about your appearance and recognized level of vitality are very important in school officials’ consideration of offering to extend your part-time contract beyond the usual retirement age.

3. Make the courses you teach unique and irreplaceable. To do so, throw away any textbooks you may be using and create and develop all your materials and syllabi. Own all your courses. Younger, part-time, cookie-cutter English teachers following a textbook unit by unit are a dime a dozen, and most school administrators care little more than to have a warm body in the classroom. You need to be very special and make sure everyone knows it.

4. Seek and foster support from school administrators (deans, principals, head teachers) who will decide to extend your contract or not, or who will appeal on your behalf to higher school officials to let you continue teaching at their school. Be sure they know your unique syllabi and



materials, the exceptional way you instruct in the classroom, and your high ratings from students on course questionnaires. Invite them into your classroom, or literally pull them into it (as I have done) if there is an opportunity, to observe your lessons.

5. Continue to publish, particularly about your special course work, so that you can demonstrate to your school administrators (principals, head teachers, deans) that what you are doing is recognized as exemplary within the professional teaching community.

6. Do ongoing narrative reflection to stay mentally sharp and acutely aware of what you are doing and why you are doing it. Stay highly motivated to achieve your aims and purposes, and be able to articulate to school administrators very simply, clearly, and convincingly your claim to be permitted to continue teaching.

7. Learn from skilled workers in other fields. Look outside the classroom confines for a broader view and inspiration. From time to time, for example, I check my brother's woodworking blog (<http://www.rpwoodwork.com>). He is an ophthalmologist by trade and a master wood craftsman by avocation. In a recent blog he asked his readers, "Who's learning?" which led me to ask myself, "What have I recently learned in my practice?" As one of the blog respondents bluntly put it, "When you know it all it is time to quit because you are too dumb to know how dumb you are."

8. Seek and accept any offer to teach anything. I have been happily teaching at a couple of places whose offers I could have declined with good reason (scheduling inconvenience, or unfamiliar course content requiring a great amount of preparation and effort). Having accepted the jobs, though, these are now long-standing, ongoing, and very successful and rewarding parts of my teaching work.

9. Participate in events and projects at the institution. Do faculty development seminars and high school lectures, lessons, or presentations as a representative of your college or university. Show school officials not only your commitment to the school but also your invaluable contribution to it.

10. Value every lesson you give and your interaction with every class and with every student. This is what it is all about. As you approach mid-70s, there will not be many more years left for these privileged experiences. Build a bank full of them to enjoy now and cherish forever.

Good luck!

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# Peer feedback through video, LINE, and a rubric

***Daniel Newbury, Fuji University***



Daniel Newbury's research interests are integrating technology with language learning and designing tasks that balance fluency and accuracy.

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In class I often use discussion questions, presentations, debates, and other kinds of open tasks (those with no predetermined language goals) so that students have the opportunity to use language in realistic ways. When carrying out these tasks, students are free to focus on meaning, with accuracy often becoming an afterthought (Lynch, 2001). This kind of less-structured approach may result in language that is representative of students' true abilities, and with a process that draws attention to accuracy, provides a holistic approach to language learning. On the other hand, not attending to accuracy in open tasks may fossilize incorrect language structures, as mistakes may go unnoticed and students incorporate these malformed structures into their language repertoire for future use (Skehan, 1996).

I've asked other teachers about how they find a balance between fluency and accuracy. One response I thought might be effective is, during small-group activities, to have one member act as a

moderator who focuses on the other students' output and provides relevant feedback. In many cases this may be sufficient, and it is an option worth trying.

I would like to introduce a method here that works on similar principles and may be more reliable in helping students catch more errors in each other's speaking. This is accomplished by supporting the process with smartphone technology and a rubric.

## **Rubric-guided peer feedback activity**

Rubric-guided peer feedback, based on Lynch's "proof-listening" activity (2001), is a framework that attempts to harness our learners' "book" or declarative knowledge of English and, through peer assessment, use that knowledge to provide classmates with improvement-focused feedback. Three tools support this process: a paper-based rubric, a smartphone equipped with a camera, and the popular social networking and messaging application LINE. The rubric focuses on grammar structures that are difficult for Japanese learners to master, as described in previous documentation (Swan & Smith, 2010). The students' smartphones are used to capture their output, offering the advantages of multiple playback and pausing abilities. LINE is utilized to send other students text messages, share videos, and other files. One benefit of LINE is that private groups can be created quickly, and with a simple invitation, the teacher can join the group and monitor its progress.



### **Prerequisite student role changes**

The success of this kind of activity relies on students putting forth an honest effort to listen to one another's output and accept peer review as directed by the rubric. To increase the likelihood of students doing this, I investigated research on increasing learner motivation to engage in small-group activities and found a short, accessible write-up by David Gann (2014). He outlines a set of factors that affect student engagement in group activities:

- 1) the concept of interlanguage,
- 2) the relationship between language competence and performance,
- 3) cognizance and multiple communication strategies, and
- 4) the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Of these, supporting students' mentor role in the ZPD context is most applicable. The role of the teacher is to provide the students with the tools that they can use to step into the the position of "expert". The students' promotion to becoming an expert/mentor whose job is to focus critically on a classmate's language can be tenuous if the proper tools are not used to scaffold the process. The rubric equips the students with an authority to point out their peers' grammatical errors.

### **Preparation**

Prior to the first speaking task, students made small groups in LINE and invited me to join their group. Next, we carried out an activity for learning how to use the rubric for peer assessment. For this, I made a video containing intentional

errors in which I talked about my hometown. The video was shown one time in class after I had provided the students with a partially completed rubric to guide them in focusing on specific errors. I gave them a short explanation on how to use the rubric, covering its contents and how to use the error coding system that it includes. I shared the video to every LINE group, and for homework students watched my video and recorded the errors using the rubric and the grammar codes. In the next class, students compared results with each other, followed by me providing them with a list of the errors that I had made.

### **Students' turn**

Students were asked to describe something about Japanese culture that they had knowledge of and personal experience with. They prepared a short script (100-word maximum) and practiced reading it aloud. Next, they recorded themselves presenting the information in the scripts, and, since this was the first time doing this activity, I allowed them to use the script (look but not read) when making their videos. Once the students had checked their video and were satisfied with things like pronunciation, intonation, and general speed, it was time to upload it to their small LINE group for the assessment task, which was done as homework. The one-minute time limit was set because this is the video file upload limit of some versions of LINE.

### **Outcomes**

Success in finding each other's errors varied widely. I gauged this by comparing

their rubrics with the errors that I personally documented from watching the videos. As a follow-up activity, students reviewed the rubrics that assessed their own videos and then re-recorded with the goal of improving upon the initial attempt. The students watched this final recording and transcribed it so that I could get an informal reading on whether the activity had had the desired effect. Finally, because the error-detection exercise produced mixed results, I took some of the errors that the students didn't identify and made an error-detection worksheet as a follow-up activity. The success rate in this activity was quite good and is worthy of future investigation.

Overall, although this activity takes some preparation, it encourages the students to consider accuracy using the teacher-designed rubric and is well supported by readily available technology.

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# An e-Vangelical approach to professional development and 21st-century teaching

**Rab Paterson, Toyo University**



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In the past few years many language teaching departments at Japanese universities have been reforming their programs. An analysis of the background to and reasons for these reforms, and the reasons why they are needed, is outwith the scope of this paper. However, there is a lack of consensus when it comes to defining and understanding professionalism in teaching and in the way teaching should be approached in the 21st century.

The definition of what constitutes professionalism in teaching is certainly not standardised as it is in other professional industries, such as banking and medicine. This lack of agreement among teachers becomes further complicated when the teachers concerned are from different cultural, educational, and generational backgrounds, as is the case in the university sector in Japan.



This diversity in Japanese universities has many benefits, such as exposing students to different views of the world. However, in terms of teachers' self image as professionals, along with the diverse opinions they hold towards professionalism in general, in many ways this diversity actually hinders rather than helps the efficient teaching of languages in Japan, particularly if some of those views of teaching are from a bygone age.

This suggests a need for teachers to radically re-examine their roles as professionals and to develop an understanding of professionalism that embraces 21st-century teaching methods. This means developing a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) approach to teaching that reflects advances in digital literacy, digital pedagogy (Paterson, 2014), teaching best practices, and 21st-century learning skills.

The role of digital literacy and digital pedagogy in language teaching curriculums may be contentious for certain old-style / old-school teachers. University teachers in Japan (and indeed elsewhere) are not equally well versed in digital and information literacy and how best to leverage those competencies in their classrooms. On the one hand, there are quite a few teachers that are very digitally literate and very proficient at using information technology and teaching information literacy skills in their language classes. These teachers are keeping up with evolving trends in technology as they relate to education in general and to language learning specifically. These instructors are regularly incorporating new techniques

and technology into their teaching. On the other hand, there are also teachers that are capable of little more than sending and receiving emails. The majority of teachers, however, exist somewhere between these two extremes.

Those teachers in the first, very digitally proficient group can be further divided into two groups. The first are those teachers referred to in the title of this article as *e-Vangelical* professionals, as these teachers not only possess these 21st-century skills but openly preach the utility and desirability of all teachers and students possessing them. These teachers can be seen as being on the cutting edge as they are educational innovators on the *Categories of Innovativeness* scale (Rogers & Rogers, 2003), shown in Figure 1.

These teachers strongly argue that their universities' educational reforms should include the provision of classes to teach these skills to students. Members of this group are usually those that organise official and unofficial training workshops and seminars on the theory and practice of digital literacy tools and techniques in education. In some respects, these *e-Vangelical* professionals are similar to activist professionals (Sachs, 2003) albeit

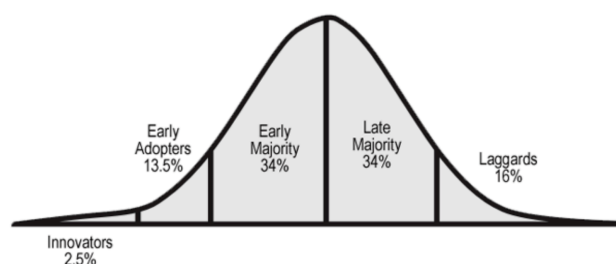


Figure 1: *Categories of Innovativeness* (Rogers & Rogers, 2003)

in a more narrowly focussed way. Their activism tends to promote digital and information literacy, with these instructors claiming these areas as part of their professional responsibility.

The second half of the very digitally proficient group, which might be referred to as the *e-Volutionary* professionals, do not argue quite as strongly for the inclusion of digital literacy-based classes, nor do they set up seminars and workshops, unlike their *e-Vangelical* brethren. However, these teachers are using many of the digital literacy tools and techniques when appropriate in their classes, irrespective of the fact that these tools and techniques are not on any official curriculum. In this respect, they have seen the nature of society, teaching, and students evolving in response to the forces of technological change, and have adapted their teaching accordingly. Those in this group can be equated to early adopters depicted in Figure 1.

Those teachers at the laggards end of the scale have taken a very different professional approach than the *e-Vangelicals* and *e-Volutionaries*. They have more or less refused to evolve their teaching methodology and are still teaching more or less the same way they have been teaching for the duration of their careers. Members of this group are showing a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2007) rather than the growth mindset of the other teachers mentioned above, as they are continuing to teach the way they have always done.

This stuck-in-the-past approach not only seems very conservative to me, but also seems very unprofessional in the extreme, as no other profession comes to mind that would tolerate the application of out-of-date methodologies and practices by its practitioners, especially when these are at odds with current best practices. For example, it is hard to imagine athletes not using advances in sports science to improve their performance, scientists refusing to account for advances in the hard sciences, and computer programmers or technicians still using machines and equipment from a bygone age. Yet in language teaching, this stuck-in-the-past approach is evident with some teachers and universities using materials and approaches that are older than the students they teach. Furthermore, teachers with this old-school approach are doing a real disservice to their current students, as these past-based teaching approaches are inadequately preparing students for their future. It does not seem a logical nor progressive way forward for professional development in the teaching profession.

This short article is a push for more professionalism in teaching in Japan's universities via the adoption of current best practices in digital pedagogy by those educators not yet maximising the potential of what modern 21st-century technology has to offer.

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## Submit an article!

What's happening in your teaching?  
What obstacles have you overcome, and how?  
What ideas or opinions do you have that others might be interested to read?  
What have you read, heard, or seen recently that's changed your approach to teaching, either in or out of the classroom?

CUE Circular aims to publish quality, interesting, practical articles about the day-to-day nature of teaching in our sector.

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