

The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

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From the Coordinator

Friends and Colleagues,

This is the second issue of the 2013 Journal of Literature in Language Teaching. This journal is a peer reviewed publication of the JALT Special Interest Group (SIG) Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT).

In this issue focusing on literature and language teaching in Japan we have Featured Articles on a range of topics. **Neil Addison** discusses the value of Shakespeare in the language classroom in his article **Teaching Ideas in Shakespeare**. Next, two pieces on creative writing explore issues of creativity in literature. **Clay Bussinger** wrote a description of this process in **Creative Writing in ELT: Organically Grown Stories**. Next, **John Wolfgang Roberts** writes about **Theorizing on the advantages of the fiction writing workshop in the EFL classroom**. His topic may well be explored in further detail in the future also. As well as these three feature articles, **Jane Joritz-Nakagawa** writes about different literature-themed groups in Japan. The journal also contains two conference reports from LiLT presenters who attended and participated in JALT National (Kobe) and the Japan Writer's Conference (Okinawa).

As always, we very much welcome member contributions. If you have some ideas you would like to share, please do get in touch. We would like to extend our thanks to the contributors and to those who have taken the time out of their busy schedules to help in editing and proofreading. Thank you!

Tara McIlroy
Co-Coordinator

About the Literature in Language Teaching Special Interest Group

Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) is a Special Interest Group (SIG) within the NPO JALT. We established this group in 2011 to encourage and promote the use of literature within language classes. The group coordinates with other groups to hold events, publishes an annual peer-reviewed Journal and publishes several newsletters per year. Join us!

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Teaching Ideas in Shakespeare

Neil Matthew Addison

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This paper notes that whilst there are some problematic factors that teachers need to consider when contemplating introducing the works of William Shakespeare into Japanese tertiary reading classes, this need not prevent them from doing so. Indeed, despite possessing antiquated language and idioms that our students may not be familiar with, Shakespeare's plays contain poetic ideas and themes that are universal to the human experience. This study recommends three approaches that have been utilized with sophomore university English students to teach key ideas in the plays *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*. It argues that, when they are explicated, realizing these ideas can equip our students with insights additional to language or cultural acquisition, because such literature contains ideas that are part of the shared human condition.

この論文はウィリアム・シェークスピアの作品を日本の大学のリーディングクラスで紹介する際、教師はいくつかの問題があるという事を考慮する必要があるありますが、これらの問題は彼の作品を教えることを妨げる理由ではないという事を言及しています。シェークスピアの古典は古い書体と慣用語句の為、生徒には馴染みがないかも知れませんが、全ての人々が共有する詩的な見解とテーマを含んでいます。この論文はマクベス、ロミオ&ジュリエット、ハムレットの演劇の重要なテーマを教える際に使用した3つのアプローチ方法をお薦めしています。これらのテーマが生徒に平易に教えられる時、文学は外国の文化や知識、私達がいつの時代であっても共有してきた考え方を含み、学ぶことができるという事を論じています。

Shakespeare and Japanese students

When considering introducing selections of authentic literature, such as works by Shakespeare, into Japanese tertiary English reading classes, there are several problems for teachers to consider. Although Brumfit (2001) informs us that classic literature can afford students the chance to understand foreign cultures at a deeper, more satisfyingly complex level others note with concern the difficulties that Japanese students of English face whilst studying such authentic texts in the classroom (Waring, 2006). Many EFL students experience reading comprehension problems when moving from basic decoding to reading with

fluency. This is often the result of a number of obstacles, including limited vocabulary and lack of textual background knowledge. Practitioners seeking to teach authentic literature must find ways to contend with these reading comprehension problems, and two important criteria to consider are the appropriateness of textual length and of theme. Instead of attempting to read several Shakespeare plays over the course of a semester, it might be more advantageous for students to read shorter, thematically relevant selections of poetry or texts that can be specifically adapted to weekly cultural topics discussed in class. Although there may be cultural or

lexical difficulties in comprehending classic literature such as Shakespeare, if the teacher focuses on the relevance of such writers to students' life experiences, rather than any perceived historical worth, such obstacles can be overcome.

Idealizing the real

The works of Shakespeare enjoy and retain a particularly strong cultural caché around the world, and encompass a notable constituent part of the Western literary canon. As Brumfit notes (2001, p. 88), however, the canon has begun to come under increasing attack from those concerned about its role being specifiable to power; it can be read as a social construct, or doxa, whose power is naturalized and unquestionable (Eagleton, 1996, p. 157). These concerns have led some to argue that practitioners should avoid introducing authentic culture into the English language classroom due to its perceived hegemonic properties.

Yet for those students hoping to attain fluency in English, Shakespeare's influence is difficult to wholly avoid, either culturally or linguistically, whether his works are read by students or not. Shakespearean language has had an impact on the English lexicon, and Crystal observes that the two most important influences on the development of the language during the final decades of the Renaissance are the works of Shakespeare and the King James Bible of 1611 (1996, p.62). Hundreds of new words, which appeared in print for the first time in Shakespeare's plays, are reflected in our usage today, from lexical firsts such as 'obscene', 'accommodation', 'barefaced' and 'eventful' to idiomatic expressions such as 'love is blind', 'cold comfort', 'salad days' and 'forgone conclusion' (Crystal, 1996, p. 63). Shakespearean phrases are often used and repeated by native speakers of English in regular spoken conversation, and can even be employed by those with no working knowledge of Shakespeare's works. Students engaging regularly with contemporary English print culture such as magazines and newspapers are likely to see him cited or referred to in some capacity, such as in a recent U.K Guardian environmental article which ends with an extended quotation from *The Tempest*

(Monbiot, 2012).

Long before Japanese English students reach advanced levels of reading fluency, however, they are also likely to encounter the image of Shakespeare in university textbooks and study abroad texts. The continuing cultural caché of Shakespeare has seen his image employed by organizations like the British Council to represent the cultural face of the United Kingdom. His image is also employed in ELT textbooks such as *English File: Student's Book Upper Intermediate* (Oxenden, 2001, p. 112), and information about his life is used for gap-fill writing exercises in *New Headway Beginner Workbook* (Falla, Soars & Soars, 2002, p. 51). Shakespeare is often juxtaposed in textbooks alongside simplified, stereotypical examples of British culture such as pubs and tea, and, when used in this way, becomes exploited as a symbol of Britain. Shakespeare's image is thus presented as an idealized, stereotypical exemplar of genius, as recognizable to Japanese English students as a Nike swoosh. For teachers who care about the importance of literature in the classroom, however, it should be of concern that Shakespeare is presented to students in such a fashion without necessarily being read; the specific reasons for Shakespeare's greatness, and the potential insights his works can offer students, will remain unpacked and elusive unless students are led to engage critically with his works. To teach a more complete understanding of Shakespeare entails leading students to recognize some of the key ideas in his works, rather than simply idealizing his image.

Realizing the idea

Teaching Shakespeare to Japanese university students should entail illustrating what makes him unique in the Western cultural and intellectual tradition, and yet also teaching what makes him perfectly suited to our own modern era, and, indeed, to any culture. Shakespeare is historically connected to the Protestantism of Martin Luther and the pessimistic honesty of Montaigne; in his freedom of mind and in his ambiguous absence of dogma, he marks the end of the heroic Catholic spirit of the Renaissance. Whilst during the 15th century, Italian Renaissance man was perceived as a god and as the

measure of all things, by the dawn of the 17th century in Protestant England, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicted man as "this quintessence of dust . . . man delights not me" (1623/1966, p. 883). Works such as *Hamlet* and *King Lear* grapple with complexity without resorting to dogmatic answers; this idea that literature should function as a vehicle for contemplation rather than logical utility or religious morality, later defined by Keats as "negative capability" which "Shakespeare possessed so enormously" (1848/1996, p. 1015), added something almost completely new to literature.

Yet while Shakespeare can be considered a linear product of the Protestant Reformation, he was, as Ben Jonson wrote in tribute, "not of an age, but for all time" (Burgess, 1970, p. 261). His works chime just as well with our modern age due to the ambiguity of his philosophy, his knowledge of the human heart, his deep sensibility for what it is to be human, and for his handling of complexity. His works refuse to oversimplify or idealize, instead contributing to our understanding of the human condition, and in doing so, fulfilling what many argue to be the criteria of classic literature (Brumfit, 2001, p. 91). Such literature contains written ideas that may echo sentiments shared by all; feelings or impressions that people may implicitly sense without necessarily expressing them in language. In these instances, reading Shakespeare may make us feel that our own thoughts "come back to us with a certain alienated majesty." (Emerson, 1841/1980, p. 300). This universality makes Shakespeare's works just as suited to our students' era as any other.

Teaching such classic literature to Japanese students is fraught with potential problems, however. The teaching of such cultural skills or thinking skills in ELT is often sacrificed to meet immediate utilitarian needs such as language acquisition, so that English teaching is likely to exclude "cultural values and identities, or expressive and aesthetic characteristics" (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 357). ELT can therefore be seen to exclude such skills, instead often placing the emphasis in textbooks on specific brands and products such as Coca-Cola, Rolex, Nokia, Mercedes and KFC (Cunningham, Moor & Comyns, 2005, p. 107), and advocating

specific vocational roles (Gray, 2010, p. 21) whilst ignoring the economic, political and social problems that underlie students' educational needs (Tollefson, 1991, p. 101). In an age where students face many psychological pressures to achieve grades, obtain jobs and fulfil lifestyle goals, studying literature, which contains expressive and aesthetic characteristics, may yield benefits that, while difficult to quantify objectively or summatively, can gift students with the broader perspective needed to help them place their goals and aspirations within a richer context.

In reading Shakespeare, students are not just learning English or studying foreign culture, they are also learning that there are specific universal experiences that all humans share across cultures, which can be expressed, transmitted and obtained through the power of the human creative imagination. In the following sections I will detail how short selections of Shakespearean speeches and poetry were taught to sophomore English reading students at a Japanese university for the purpose of achieving these ends. These extracts were introduced into classes at selected times during the academic year, and, as the students were not familiar with reading Shakespeare, this meant that the selection of texts had to be both tailored to students' language abilities and also, if possible, thematically connected to their specific experiences and interests. Although, due to time constraints, attempting complete coverage of Shakespeare's plays would have been difficult, short sections of speeches and soliloquies from *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet* were used in reading classes to attempt to illustrate Shakespearean themes. It was hoped that these ideas would resonate with students, giving them cause to access deeper channels of perception and to consider thoughts beyond the scope of most English classes. Ideas in these short pieces of literature were explicated through the use of three different methods: comparisons with other short examples of poetry, comparisons with excerpts from graded readers, and utilization of audio-visual materials.

Comparing ideas in poetic language

Literary language can realize ideas through

grammatical imagery such as using metaphor and simile to encapsulate complex themes in concrete terms. To illustrate this, I chose to teach my reading students the famous soliloquy from *Macbeth* Act 5, scene 5 (Shakespeare, 1623/1966, p. 867), in which Macbeth realizes, upon his wife's death, the futility of ambition in the face of death, and I compared this with a short example of poetry by the present-day beat poet and lyricist John Cooper-Clarke. Material by Cooper-Clarke was chosen due to the simplicity of its style and its contemporary subject matter, which, it was felt, would be more accessible for students than Shakespearean texts, while also providing a useful comparison between similar ideas in older and modern poetry. First, the focus of the class centered on the mechanics of language, and I taught the structural differences between metaphor (a thing regarded as symbolic of something else which uses words such as 'is', 'was' and 'but') and simile (a comparison of one thing for another which uses words such as 'like' and 'as'). Students performed a series of grammar exercises where they inserted the above words into simile and metaphor sentence gaps, and were then expected to compose their own similes and metaphors to describe things related to their lives, such as friends, home, music, and television programs. After exchanging these ideas with their classmates, students were given the line, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more," (1623/1966, p. 867) from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to read; as well as a line from Cooper-Clarke's poem *Twat*, "Like a nightclub in the morning, you're the bitter end" (Cooper-Clarke, 1979). The students' first task was to discuss and identify which one was an example of simile and which an example of metaphor.

Moving beyond grammar analysis, I then advised the students that both excerpts were pejorative, and used imagery to deal with negative themes, and I asked students to list and discuss things that they felt negative about in their lives. From their conversationally generated ideas, I wrote a number of words on the board that they might feel negative about, such as friends, co-workers, family members, and life. Using words from this written selection,

the class was required to guess which idea each poem described negatively. The students identified that while Cooper-Clarke's lines focused on an unnamed person, Shakespeare's lines centered on human existence. The students' next task was to identify how these things were described. To achieve this, I asked students to list forms of entertainment which they might participate in or attend during an evening, and from their generated ideas, I wrote on the board places such as restaurant, bar, cinema, nightclub, theatre, and so forth. The students once again decided which words fitted with each poem, and whilst nightclub was easily matched with Cooper-Clarke's poem, theatre was eventually connected to the player in Shakespeare's speech. At this point the students were able to identify the type of metaphorical imagery that Shakespeare uses to describe the insignificance of ambition in the face of the inevitability of death, denoting human life symbolically as a theatre actor who briefly "struts and frets his hour upon the stage", "full of sound and fury" (1623/1966, p. 868), but who must then ultimately disappear, "signifying nothing" (p. 868). The students also realized that the use of metaphor (as opposed to simile) in this soliloquy makes the meaning of Macbeth's speech more powerful, bitter and resonant; rendering a poor actor and human existence exactly like for like. Post-reading conversation then centered on students' various ambitions, and following this, a discussion was held on the importance of pursuing one's goals whilst still attempting to hold a self-aware and realistic approach to life.

Using graded readers

When reading Shakespeare, short comparison extracts from graded readers can greatly aid students' appreciation of key lines, and can also clarify the meaning of scenes. Graded readers have been advocated by a number of scholars (Krashen, 1993; Waring 2006) for extensive reading purposes, but short sentences from graded readers can also be used in class alongside truncated sections of authentic texts for comparative micro-reading exercises. I used such micro-reading examples when teaching students Juliet's famous balcony speech from *Romeo*

and *Juliet*, Act II, Scene II, first showing the students the authentic text, and then inviting them to discuss what was happening in the scene, and what the main point of Juliet's speech was. Many students already seemed very visually familiar with this balcony scene through imagery they had encountered in films and animation, and most answered that Juliet appeared to be searching for Romeo from her balcony. This perception was further enforced by Juliet's famous line "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" (Shakespeare, 1623/1966, p. 772). However, the students were then shown the graded reader version of the scene, leading them to understand that Juliet's speech focuses on the arbitrary nature of language, names and titles, as she asks, apropos of no-one, "why are you called Romeo?" (Collins, 2002, p12) This in turn also led students to understand that the original meaning of 'wherefore' was 'why.' I then asked the students to discuss various flowers they liked, and, giving them a selection of alternative words, asked them whether they would look as beautiful or smell as fresh with these different names. Having undertaken this discussion, the focus then once again returned to the authentic text of Juliet's speech, and the students debated the relevance of the succeeding lines "what's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet" (Shakespeare, 1623/1966, p772). The students were able to perceive that the rose, a symbol of beauty, passion and romance, is subverted by Shakespeare and is instead used as a symbol for making a point about language not resembling the thing it describes. By combining these sentences with earlier examples from the graded reader, I was able to scaffold the overall meaning of Juliet's speech about language not being nomenclatural. Whilst most students seem to be familiar with the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, and are aware that it ends tragically, an understanding of the ideas expressed in Juliet's speech allows students to understand this tragedy more profoundly; as members of opposing families, Romeo and Juliet ultimately fail to realize their pure love due to the influence of arbitrary names, titles and status. Having considered such an idea, the class discussion then concluded by focusing on how the influence of language, names,

and titles influenced the students' lives in subtle but profound ways.

Using audio-visuals

In addition to using comparative examples from poetry and graded readers, audio and visual media can also be employed in a similar vein. Such media can scaffold student comprehension of textual content (Lonergan, 1984, p. 80), and are suited to the purpose of aiding student realization of ideas in Shakespeare. I used images from Western art and carefully selected video clips to explicate one of the key ideas in *Hamlet*; the reductive circle of life speech recited by Hamlet in the churchyard in Act V, Scene I. To elevate students to a position where they could understand the ideas encapsulated in this monologue, it was necessary to compare and contrast the depiction of Hamlet as a protagonist with a number of figures from Western culture preceding him. I began by exploring with students the heroic tradition in Western art. The students were shown the *Mosaic of the Battle of Issus* (100BC), which depicts Alexander of Macedonia heroically in his battle with Darius the Persian King. The students were subsequently shown examples of Western art from the Renaissance, viewing photos of Michaelangelo's *David*, figures from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and Raphael's frescos. Having viewed these heroic depictions of historical figures, the students discussed their opinions regarding what, in their opinion, constituted heroism, and they debated the potential good and bad points of such emphasis on heroic depiction in art, literature, comics and movies.

Students then engaged with a short extract from *Hamlet*, and by comparing the aforementioned examples of heroic art with Kenneth Branagh's (2007) film version of *Hamlet* I was able to illustrate how Shakespeare's protagonist differs from the Renaissance heroic tradition which preceded him. Students first watched a short movie sequence containing the famous graveyard speech, where Hamlet encounters Yorick's skull, and subsequently discussed their opinions regarding the meaning of the soliloquy. Since Hamlet was mourning the death of an old childhood friend, the meaning of the

speech was deepened through distributing handouts of the written text. The handouts also contained an accompanying sequence of numbered pictures that corresponded with lines in the text to help clarify the meaning of the speech. Whilst artists within the heroic tradition had idealized the real, Shakespeare uses Hamlet's graveyard speech to fund and energize a powerful philosophical idea; the reductive cycle of life returning all, including even the most glamorous, beautiful and heroically depicted, to the ignominy of base matter. In specific relation to Alexander the Great, Hamlet notes that "Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust" (Shakespeare, 1623/1966, p. 902), and to emphasize this point, the Alexander mosaic picture was placed at the start of the sequence of images I showed to students, followed by a picture of a dusty grave. To explain Hamlet's observation that "the dust is earth; of earth we make loam" (*ibid.*, p. 902), the next picture in the sequence was a photograph of a clay ball, while the lines "and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?" (*ibid.*, p. 902) were scaffolded by inserting a picture of a barrel hole as the last picture within the sequence of images. Having read the speech in tandem with viewing these sequential images, the students discussed what differentiated *Hamlet* from classic artistic works or contemporary literary or visual characters, and finally debated whether placing importance upon appearance and imagery was a worthwhile exercise in life.

Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested the importance of teaching short selections of Shakespeare to Japanese university English students, and have argued that through using various techniques authentic literature and complex ideas can be rendered comprehensible and accessible. Others, however, may well question whether English teachers should devote their time to striving to explicate such texts, and, in doing so, whether such ideas will chime with students' interests

or vocational pursuits. Students are becoming more accustomed to simplified, idealized, image-based depictions of the world around them, largely through an increasing amount of time spent online. Research by neuroscientist Gary Small (as cited in Carr, 2011, p. 120) has illustrated how digital technology can effect rapid and profound alterations to our brains, and has revealed key differences in brain activity between book readers and experienced Internet users. An ostensible lack of student interest in reading complex literature in the face of increasing Internet use has been compounded by a growing emphasis on utility in modern education; students are encouraged to acquire languages such as English that suit economic and vocational necessities, with many arguing that the teaching of classic literature is now merely surplus to requirements. However, in an age of rapidly increasing social distraction, where more and more of our students' time is being occupied with abundant forms of idealized fantasy in movies, Web 2.0 applications, comic books and branded commercials, teaching the ideas found in Shakespeare is perhaps now more important than ever.

Perhaps no other writer has so clearly realized in literature what it is to be human; the compulsion to strive and fight to live one's life even in the face of the sheer meaninglessness of the human condition. Through scaffolding ideas in Shakespeare, students can learn to consider (and hopefully place in perspective, in the face of human transience) the ultimate importance of man-made beliefs and cultural ideas that subliminally shape the direction of their lives, but yet create many explicitly social and unconsciously personal problems. Such literature can yield up to our students profound new insights, gifting them with new methods for developing fortitude when dealing with life's problems and stresses as they move forward from university examinations to job interviews, from graduation to the grave. Shakespeare's literature needs only to be unpacked and explicated so that students can access and realize these ideas.

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Author's Bio

Neil Addison was born in England and is now vocationally based in the Kanto region of Japan, where he works as a university lecturer. Having read English literature at the University of Kent, and studied a Masters in Linguistics at Southampton University, his research interests reflect his passion for using literature in the language classroom to improve students' holistic reading skills and critical thinking abilities. He is currently undertaking his PhD in linguistics at Birmingham University, and his research thesis is entitled literary narrative analysis and EL2 reading proficiency.

Creative writing in ELT: Organically grown stories

Clarence Ray Bussinger
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Many EFL/ESL students do not experience the benefits of practicing creative writing in English, which include expanding knowledge of literature, and using classroom language skills, learning new language structures and vocabulary. Students are motivated to learn English by engaging in creative writing exercises in English language teaching classes. Despite not having the luxury of a creative writing course, it is possible to include such a component in various ESL classes. Following a short discussion of the nature of creative writing and an overview of the relevant research, this article outlines one method of having students produce stories that grow in scaffolded stages, from concept, to words, to lines, then to story. Students report the process to be interesting and non-threatening, and report gains of confidence through sharing their stories.

多くのEFL/ESLの学生は英語による物語作りの便益を経験していない。その便益とは、文学の知識が広がること、言語スキルを活用すること、新たな言語の構造や語彙を学習することである。本論文では、概念から始まり、言葉、数行、物語へと段階的に発展する物語を学生がつくる方法の一つについての概要を示す。学生はこのプロセスを興味深く、無理のないものであると思い、物語りを共有する楽しみをもつことになる。

Keywords: creative writing, ESL, EFL, literature, process, scaffolding, stories

Introduction

In his article, “Creative Writing for Students and Teachers” Maley (2012) asks a question many of us have been asking for years, “Why is it that most institutional systems of education develop such narrow and unadventurous teaching procedures?” (para.1). It is rare to find creative writing (CW) in ELT, even in small doses. He goes on to state that a lack of imaginative language teaching often leads students to “develop a lifelong aversion to the language” (para. 1). Like Maley, more and more ELT educators are calling for an increased use of CW in ELT. Having students write stories in English gives them more insight into the art of fiction, gives them an opportunity to use the language skills they possess, and encourages them to explore vocabulary and grammar that they might not consider otherwise. As Smith (2013) points out in his experience of teaching

CW in ELT, “I have found that the vocabulary use in fiction writing appears to be more varied and of higher quality than academic writing produced by the same students,” (p.15).

In addition, students writing stories to be shared tend to use natural language forms and to develop a more natural, albeit EFL, voice. Having students produce writing that has come from their feelings and ideas gives them self-confidence, allowing them to mature as writers and English speakers: “Self esteem along with confidence in the language, grows as students are encouraged to break out of the text-book style of learning by repetition” (Rowlands, 2012, para. 6). Students are very happy to take a break from textbooks and formal writing, and explore personal reflection and creative endeavor. Thus the benefits of creative writing are many, including vocabulary building (Ying, 2008), and engaging in language

play to “express uniquely personal meanings” (Maley, 2009, para. 3).

In her review of *Writing Poems and Writing Stories* (Maley & Mukundan, 2011), Lima (2013) outlines the recent trend to include CW in ELT (see also Frank & Rinvoluceri, 2007; Wright and Hill, 2008). Indeed, creative writing is taking a more prominent position in ELT, with schools offering full semester EFL/ESL courses in creative writing. CW is also shown to transfer learned skills to academic writing, increasing writers’ competence and confidence. In an ESL CW program at a large mid-western university in the U.S., “all of the students felt that their academic writing had improved” (Ostrow and Chang, 2012, p.48).

Different from the academic prose English language students usually write in their university classes, creative writing more overtly attempts to aesthetically engage both the reader, as well as the writer. Although some educators may be resistant to including creative writing in language classes, there has been a “revival” of CW (Maley, 2012, p.561), with many educators understanding that “creativity is a fundamental aspect of education and should be promoted accordingly” (Stillar, 2013, citing Engle, 1999, p. 165). While many educators demonstrate the value of CW in ELT (Franz, 2005, p.17; Keplinger, 2001), more and more educators (Apple, 2004; Holthouse and Marlowe, 2013; Sano, 2004) simply choose to presuppose the value of CW in ELT, eschewing the process of initially defending the use of CW, and directly address techniques.

Creative writing is often thought of as hair-wrenching exercises, undertaken by driven solitary writers; however, in a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere, English language learners can smoothly produce poems, stories and dialogues. The words creative writing may connote stories and poems, however dialogues, journals, web texts, and so forth could also be included. Having very limited time for creative writing in my class, I employed a step-by-step method for creative writing which could be finished in short periods of time in class, with some writing, and reading of original texts, done as homework.

Although this exercise was conducted in a small

sophomore seminar (Japanese ‘*zemi*’) majoring in English and American studies, it could readily be applied to larger classes and all grades levels, with learners at most levels of language competence. These seminar students were of varied ability from basic to pre-intermediate level. Having students of very different skill levels is a common situation at smaller colleges and universities, and is often viewed as a problem. However, in this CW exercise, I found the differing levels posed no problems. Ross (2007) came to the same conclusion: “while students come to class with various levels of language proficiency, creative writing offers an avenue for all students to improve their English writing skills” (p.14). The seminar focuses on literature and culture in Anglophone countries. It is fortunately scheduled in a CALL lab, and meets once a week, across a 15-week semester. In our department, there are no classes in creative writing or drama. Classes are overwhelmingly focused primarily on academic studies, and students rarely if ever have opportunities to explore the world in creative ways. However, it is usually possible, with some effort, to shoehorn such classes into the curriculum, or at least a unit or two, as in this case.

Overview of the writing process

This genre-approach exercise was completed over a four-week period, using between 10-20 minutes of each class, with homework assigned for each class. The initial instructions for each step were very general, and simple in form, and students were simply asked to write. Overall, the focus was on content rather than form. For the initial steps in this process, there was little correction or revision, a strategy also followed by the Hong Kong teachers (Burton 2010, p. 502) and by Zemach (2008). Each step was designed to allow students the freedom to explore, and to find their own voice, an important aspect of CW for the EFL writer (Stewart, 2010, p.270). The discrete steps involved were as follows:

- a. hold a conversation on personal topics;
- b. choose one meaningful word;
- c. write lines from this word;
- d. write a story from the lines;
- e. expand the story using sensory details;

f. expand further using dialogue.

As part of this writing exercise, the class examined poetry, myth, story and drama from our class textbook, *Voices in Literature* (McCloskey and Stack, 1993). The process began with conversation in English, which led to simple words written down. Each word produced more words. These words became free verse, which then became a (very) short story. The story was then fleshed out, adding sensory details and dialogue. At each stage of the process, students read their writing aloud in a group.

The process begins with rather casual conversation in English, students talking about what they experienced during the week, in order to elicit events, places, and people that they care about. The next step is to have them choose a word that describes something important to them. This could be something like their workplace, a hobby, an important personal article, and so forth. Students wrote down their interests—fashion, coffee, driving, apple pie, Rock City (a workplace). Having students simply write or type (some students were using MS Word) a single word allows them to overcome an often difficult hurdle—“perhaps the biggest challenge any writer has to overcome: the blank page” (Lima, 2013, p. 148). Once students have begun the process of CW, they can continue the process through a series of scaffolding techniques.

Expanding From letters, to words and lines

In each stage of the process, the instructor provided examples of how the students could proceed. At the first stage, the discussion in English, they discovered the instructor liked bluegrass music. The instructor then wrote the primary word *bluegrass* vertically on the paper, and added words associated with bluegrass:

B bass
L laugh
U upbeat
E energetic
G gritty
R raucous
A alive

S simple

S solid

This technique of writing words, then lines from a topic word has been a common technique at least since this writer was in graduate school in the 1970's, later rather dubiously christened “acrostic poem writing,” and is still current, described by Holmes and Moulton (2001) and utilized by teacher X as a “a form students could easily handle” (Burton, 2010, p. 500). Using the term “line” instead of “sentence,” releases the students from any preconceived or pre-taught forms, and allows them to freely write in word groups and phrases, avoiding (at least for the moment) the problem of form (see also Duppenthaler, 2006, p.19). Writing lines that contain these words relevant to the topic is the next step in the process. During each class in the process, students were reading poems and songs from the textbook, for example. “Here Comes the Sun,” by George Harrison (p. 17), “There Are No People Song,” Navajo Chant (p. 43). They were not asked to model their lines after anything they read, but were only exposed to a poetic ambience in the classroom.

Having the teacher write together with students is instructive and important (Maley, 2012), therefore I wrote example lines from *bluegrass*, shown on the center computer displays:

The sound of **blue**grass guitar or banjo, mandolin,
bass or fiddle
Leaves me laughing, or deep in thought
The **u**pbeat melodies cut through smoke and
noise
Each player is in full **e**nergetic mode
The notes are pure, yet **g**ritty, like the earth
The night turns **r**aucous, people are moving
I feel I'm becoming more **a**live, more awake
The melodies are **s**imple, yet deep
Bluegrass, with that **s**olid foundation, soars so
high

While this may or may not be considered ‘poetry’, it is evocative and meaningful for the writer, and students see clearly how it may be possible to write

lines from their words. Although these lines formed sentences, students were instructed to simply write, in phrases or sentences.

With their associative words, students immediately constructed lines, with most students writing directly on the computer. They wrote quickly and easily, as if they already had conceived the lines, even as they were asked to write. This took approximately ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the length of the primary word of each student. One student, having spoken about her interest in fashion, wrote on that topic:

Fashion

I like **f**ashion.

Armani is a famous men's brand.

I have never taken a **s**nap.

I often wear **h**igh heels because it makes my legs slimmer.

Fashion shows my individuality.

Ortega design is popular in winter.

When I was a junior high school student, I wanted to be a **n**ail artist.

Marcus (2011) and others use similar techniques of writing lines from pre-selected words, seemingly chosen at random; however, I find the exercise works especially well when the words are not just plucked out of the air, but have a deeper meaning for the students, having arisen from their personal interest.

Mapping a story

With these lines in hand, students were given a homework assignment to map out a story from their writing on the associative words. In a previous class, students had mapped out a completed story "The Earth on Turtle's Back," retold by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (p. 49), from an exercise in our textbook, (McCloskey and Stack, p. 55). The textbook exercise was to identify major elements of a story—characters, setting, initial event, reaction, goal-setting, attempt to reach goal. In this writing exercise, on the other hand, they were asked to map out a story prior to writing it, rather like making an outline. One student had recently received her

driver's license, and mapped her story on buying a new car and beginning to drive:

Characters: self, father, grandmother, father

Setting: driving school, a used-car shop

Initial event: attending a driving school

Reaction: received a driver's license

Goal setting: to drive from hometown to a town 50 kilometers away

Attempt to reach goal: grandmother bought her car, in cash

Outcomes: I drive the 50-kilometer trip

Resolution: I'm living a happy driving life now.

Her story written later from this map was non-fiction, and she proudly read it to a group she was assigned to.

Writing a story

From this map/outline, students wrote their stories. Here is a resultant story from a student of lower-intermediate English ability, apparently an apple pie aficionado:

Apple Pie

Long, long ago in a certain place, there was a small village. The villagers lived in poverty. One day, a boy named Jack was walking around in the woods near the village. He searched for food. His family was hungry and was waiting for him to come back. There were just the trees and the leaves. He got tired because he was walking around all day. He leaned against the soft grass. After a while, he fell asleep from exhaustion.

He heard a loud cry. He stood up and saw the birds pecking at an apple with their beaks. He takes a good look at the looks of it.

"Help me!" the apple was crying.

Jack ran up to the apple's tree. He pelted the birds with lumpy stones and brandished a long branch. The birds flew away.

"Thank you" the apple said. "I want to return a favor."

"I'm hungry." Jack said.

Then the apple fell into his hands. It was

damaged.

“Eat me!” The apple said.

“Is that a good idea? But my family is also hungry.” Jack said.

“How about making an apple pie?” The apple said.

“Sounds good! What shall I do?” Jack said.

“Look!” The apple said.

Jack suddenly noticed that there was a small house behind the apple tree. He opened a door. A bright light escaped from its interior.

Jack awoke from a dream. He smelled apple pie and looked round. There was fresh-baked an apple pie. He took it home and ate with his family. It was great apple pie!

The final step in the CW process was to flesh out their stories with sensory details and dialogue, as assigned homework. In the class, students had read, discussed, and written about O Henry’s “Gift of the Magi,” in Draper (2006), and Alfred Uhry’s, *Driving Miss Daisy*, in McCloskey and Stack (1993, p.87). In the exercises, the students were instructed on the importance of sensory detail and the form of dialogue. Aside from a general tendency to clump their sensory details together and to put all the dialogue in one place, students handily completed the assignments. In the final class in this CW process, students read their stories aloud, and subsequently reported that they enjoyed this CW exercise. As Wood (2011) points out, using narratives from the personal ethos of the student is an effective way “to create an engaging, productive classroom experience” (p.239). In Lima’s review, she emphasizes that encountering CW in non-threatening way in language classes provides “a much more enjoyable, personalized, and productive learning experience” (p.147). Using this type of process as a bridge between the student and the literature made the textbook more understandable, and made the words flow easily throughout the entire writing process. Integrating the reading of literature, connecting it to the student on a personal level, then

having students write pieces influenced by the literary forms they have read has been described as a “staged model of the creative process” (Burton, 2010, p. 500). Through these pieces, students explored poetry, myth, sensory detail, story, character and dialogue. At the same time, they enjoyed writing poetry, prose and drama. As Maley (2012) points out, the benefits to CW in ELT are numerous, and CW could be a valuable component within any ELT program.

Selected internet sources for creative writing exercises

Creative writing for EFL/ESL: many websites have exercises for creative writing, usually targeted at younger students. However, many of these exercises also work very well with adult students. Here is a short list of selected web sources.

<bogglesworldesl.com/creativewriting.htm>

<eslpartyland.com/creative-writing-esl-student>

<examiner.com/article/the-stories-of-our-lives-esl-writing-tips-for-the-new-year>

<busyteacher.org/classroom_activities-writing/esl-creative-writing-prompts-worksheets/>

<eslsite.com/resources/pages/Resources_and_Teaching_Ideas/Writing/index.html>

<eslcafe.com/idea/index.cgi?Writing>

<squidoo.com/eslstorywriting>

Endnote

1. CW at Monticello Trails Middle School, Kansas, meets every other day for an entire semester. (<www.usd232.org/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=35321&>)

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Theorizing on the Advantages of the Fiction Writing Workshop in the EFL Classroom, Part I

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The topic of creative writing in the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has been gaining popularity especially amongst literary-minded teachers and researchers of second language acquisition. While most creative writing studies in the EFL context have centered on the use of poetry and drama writing courses, little has been written on fiction writing, let alone on fiction workshops. This study aims to theorize upon the potential fiction writing workshops have on creative and critical faculties of thought, and how this applies in the acquisition of a second language.

多くのEFL/ESLの学生は英語による物語作りの便益を経験していない。その便益とは、文学の知識が広がること、言語スキルを活用すること、新たな言語の構造や語彙を学習することである。本論文では、概念から始まり、言葉、数行、物語へと段階的に発展する物語を学生がつくる方法の一つについての概要を示す。学生はこのプロセスを興味深く、無理のないものであると思ひ、物語りを共有する楽しみをもつことになる。

Keywords: creative writing, ESL, EFL, literature, process, scaffolding, stories

Theorizing on the advantages of the fiction writing workshop in the EFL classroom, Part I

This study is a theoretical analysis of the class format and the student feedback in relation to student L2 acquisition and utilization. Points will be discussed which suggest a cooperative workshop format in fiction can help strengthen the L2 in learners. Fiction workshops make use of basic human behaviours in respect to storytelling and communication. Workshops are creative and critical cognitive exercises in the craft of writing and theory; language learning and socialization.

In the creative writing fiction workshop, students not only study and practice writing fiction, but also engage in critical discussion on each other's stories. At a minimum, students are involved in a sort of New Critical textual analysis as they question and provoke thought as to the logical use of fictional elements such as setting, character, and plot (to name a few), to

those creative works. Essentially, they are engaged in discussion on the successful or not-so-successful use of literary elements within the text. During critical discussions, opinions are shared, perspectives are debated, new words are sought out to express more abstract thoughts, and authors and classmates take co-creative roles in shaping each others' stories.

What is unique to the fiction workshop is that it takes advantage of the natural human need to create stories, and can contribute toward community building and socialization. In the creative writing workshop, this occurs through creating, sharing, discussing and re-creating stories; arguably the same narrative progression as in oral and print cultures, ancient and modern.

On a linguistic level, the fiction workshop involves utilizing the L2 to create stories and discuss them in English. Students use descriptive and emotional vocabulary in order to communicate nuanced meanings (Smith, 2013) essential to the

“spirit” of the work. In my own class questionnaires, the results of which will be discussed later in this essay, I asked students, “Overall, how do you feel writing fiction helped you with your English skills?”. The most common response related to vocabulary and expression usage. Essentially, creative fiction writing had an impact in targeting my students’ need to convey more precise abstract thoughts.

On a social level, the workshop format provided ample opportunity for discussion. Students also remarked on the importance of opinion sharing. Answers ranged from being appreciative of taking conversation skills beyond mere “chatting”, to a more logical and precise direction, to the importance of expressing and sharing opinions for the development of student English skills and story development.

One of the benefits of creative writing workshops, over a more literary course that involves critical discussion, is the “conversation” between the author and the reader. At work is a more primitive relationship, harkening back to the proverbial campfire, where questions and opinions are vocalized in response to the story. L2 student writers are able to “visualize” their English, not only in the context of their own imagination, but also in the imagination of the reader.

Another comment was that the student was able to see, through discussion, what he or she didn’t know they had written. In other words, the authors had revelatory moments when peer interpretations and critiques revealed unintentional elements (or a lack of certain elements) in the story. If the catalyst to any story is the reader’s imagination (Gotschall, 2012), then the reader’s imagination is the potential catalyst for the author’s re-imagination. As any writer can attest: there is value in an extra set of eyes to the critical and creative rethinking of a narrative. The writing workshop is a cooperative act between the author and the reader in narratological play.

Methodology

The context of this study is a creative writing class consisting of six university students from different majors and different years. All students were within the intermediate range of English ability (as evaluated

by the author), and were able to express themselves on deeper abstract topics. Two students were second year students, two students were third years, and two students were fourth years. The objective of the class was to compose fiction and hold workshops for students’ fiction discussion and revision.

In the class, students wrote various freewriters. Freewrites are timed writing exercises where students are tasked with writing continuously on paper without worrying about content or grammar. The objective of the freewriting exercise here is to tap into the subconscious and see what interesting motifs or images appear. These motifs or images can later be used as starting points to begin new stories. Students in my course also wrote short exercises relating to fictional elements such as setting, character, plot, and point of view, then selected the exercise they liked most and revised it into a larger short story of approximately four hundred words. Students were encouraged to utilize the freewrites as starting points for their stories, however, considering the private and personal nature the freewrites tend to carry, I respected students’ privacy and did not require freewrites to be used or shared with classmates. This decision was made in the spirit of fostering a sense of safety in a course that has the potential to be a nerve-racking experience.

Before workshops were held, certain readings of flash fiction, or short-short fiction, which usually are narratives under 1000 words (though definitions vary), were assigned for homework and discussed in class the following week. This served to set the tone for future workshops. The emphasis of discussion on these published stories (the flash fictions) were focused on class lectures, i.e. mainly on setting, or character description. While these discussions were more literary (focusing on published works), they were not unlike the workshops that were held later in the course. All discussions focused on a textual analysis of the fictional elements as they applied to each student’s story or assigned text.

In discussions, students were provided with discussion questions. The questions were answered as homework in order to prepare for the following week’s discussion. In the case of workshops, they were

led by a Discussion Leader, a position which was re-assigned every week.

After each lecture, students were given several prompts to choose from and they wrote a short story of about 100-150 words, focusing on that fictional element covered in the lecture. During the weeks of these lectures, small workshops, in the form of groups of three, were held to help build confidence in the workshop format. One benefit was that the writers could get used to submitting their creative works to classmates, and readers could further practice critiquing, face to face with the author, and offer their opinions constructively.

After the phase of lectures and small group workshops, students were asked to select the exercise they were proudest of (or write something completely new) and revise it into a more developed short story of approximately 400 words. These stories were workshopped by the entire class, including myself, then re-written and submitted by the authors. Students re-wrote their stories one last time to polish their grammar, and the class concluded with a live reading of their finished stories. Questionnaires were then given to the students to complete regarding the class structure and their thoughts on how the writing and workshop format affected their English skills.

The workshop

The methodological approach to the class workshops was more in line with traditional L1 beginner level creative writing classes rather than L2 writing classes. Since students had been lectured in the first half of the semester on various fictional elements, and produced short writing exercises from a prompt to help develop that fictional element, this approach was more abstract rather than linguistic. That is, the prompts I gave did not task students to make sentences on worksheets, where the sentences could be combined and arranged to form a story, but rather, I provided a task that required deeper inner exploration in order to elicit the vocabulary and grammar associated with the students' thoughts.

A note on the prompts

One example of this approach was a prompt at the beginning of the semester, after a short lecture on setting. This prompt was an option out of three different prompts I selected from *Fiction Writer's Workshop* (1995) by Josip Novakovich. I asked for students to describe the town they grew up in. They had to think about such things as "streets, shops, schools, churches, rivers, bridges" (Novakovich, 1993). They had to focus on describing their hometown without letting their emotions into the writing. Students could choose any location and try to tell a little story that happened there, focusing mainly on the description of setting. I modified the prompt slightly from the original so that instead of it being a 2-page exercise, students only had to write between 100 and 150 words.

Most studies on fictional creative writing in the L2 have suggested that fictional writing exercises should not be conducted through writing prompts, which require a larger view of the topic and content. Instead, different forms of task-based worksheets are used that ask the student to focus, more narrowly by answering specific questions or focusing directly on the language of a prepared text. As in one case, mentioned by Simpson (1997), the sentences of a short story were jumbled up and groups of students were tasked with putting the sentences back together again, thus creating a new story. These student versions were "new" in the sense that none of the groups' stories were identical to each other or to the original text. In Simpson's case, this was a short vignette by Ernest Hemingway that the students were re-creating. This structured approach to creative writing is no doubt valuable to students and researchers. It provides a path towards a more quantitative analysis in stylistics as patterns can more easily be discerned (see Simpson's analysis on the Hemingway story).

In contrast, the use of introspective prompts, without the linguistic parameters to begin from, provides a platform for the students to utilize the L2 and immediately begin to construct creative connections (or imaginary worlds) from it. This is not to say that the more structured tasks are not valuable, but that the more abstract prompt requires another

aspect and skill of language learning that brings the student towards fluency. And for the researcher, provides ground for future qualitative research in the form of freer language use which brings together the creative and critical faculties. Furthermore, through a larger analysis of a larger group of writing workshop students, stylistic data can be interpreted by examining the patterns in these more “introspective” stories. The objective of the workshop class format, with its focus on abstract language usage, creative construction and critical investigation, is not to implant a specific track towards story and language into the student, but instead have the student work from a deeper space within, through minimal parameters, on a path towards discovery in the L2.

Questionnaires

Students were given a questionnaire to collect their thoughts on the creative writing fiction workshop approach. In the questionnaire, six questions were asked that were directly or indirectly associated with the workshop. Part I of this essay is immediately concerned with the first three questions as they deal directly with the students’ English skill. Part II will focus on d-f, but the questions are provided here as an overview of the range of topics that will be theorized upon in relation to the workshop format. Part II will more closely cover class management indirectly associated with the workshop. These questions were (in no particular order of importance):

Overall, how do you feel writing fiction helped you with your English skills? Do you feel stronger in some areas? Weaker? Explain.

Were the workshops useful in helping you rewrite your story? Why?

Were the workshops useful in practicing your English discussion skills?

What would you change about this class?

Do you prefer a more formal class with a textbook? Or did you find the format of this class valuable? Explain.

Did you like the student-controlled discussions

(workshops), or do you prefer teacher-controlled lectures? Why?

These questions were asked with the intention of finding out what the students felt were the good and/or poor results of the workshop format. What effect did the workshop format have on the student’s English acquisition? What did the students learn about their English abilities? And what were their opinions on a more liberal, student-centered approach to English learning (Part II)?

Results and discussion

In student responses to the first three questions of the questionnaire, many similarities emerged that addressed my own questions regarding the effectiveness of the fiction workshop. As alluded to in the introduction, question ‘a’ had 5 out of 6 similar responses (83%) regarding the acquisition and use of expressions and vocabulary. It is worth noting that the one student that didn’t address the change on their vocabulary and expression skills, addressed a different sort of effect; the way in which fiction helped with their creativity. The student writes, “By writing fiction story, I could imagine some situation. In fiction story, we can do anything” (student response). This I believe echoes Iida’s comment, when discussing writing within the L2, that most universities teach academic writing and expect students to write with grammatical accuracy rather than creativity (Iida, 2013).

The rigidity of academic writing often leaves little room for the playfulness of student language. Though students of the workshop must write with a level of accuracy in the form of spelling and sentence structure, fiction writing leaves room to use expressive, nuanced, non-core vocabulary (Carter, 1998; Smith, 2013). Non-core vocabulary being the nuanced variants of a core word which lacks emotional expression. Smith’s example would be for the core word, “look” and the non-core variants, “stared,” “gazed,” “glared,” “glanced” etc. However, in an academic setting, where the usage of these non-core words would be “wrong” depending on context, in fiction writing they can be quite memorable;

enriching to the text and experience of reading as non-clichéd language. One example, from a story by a student entitled “The Memory of a Car” (printed in a vanity publication I created for my students, 2013), in which an old museum-bound race car remembers the good times with its driver. The car narrates, “He was stoic for races but often wondered about me” (pg. 8). The driver, Peter from Germany, was “dedicated” to his races, but despite that, loved and took care of his car. In any other academic setting, “stoic” would be considered wrong as it is used in this sentence. However in fiction, it’s an interesting and memorable use of the word, and for fluent speakers, it can be a playful use of sarcasm or even over/understatement depending on context.

What fiction writing shows, in the way of creativity, vocabulary and expression usage, is that playing with the language is fine. In fact playing with language in the fictional medium may be closer to more fluent communication rather than stagnating at “academic accuracy,” which does not cover the spectrum of language as a whole, within its tight boundaries.

Question ‘b’ asks whether the workshops were useful in helping to rewrite the story. Students here answered positively, 6 out of 6 (100%). All answers touched on a common aspect of the workshop, and that was the cooperative relationship between the author and the reader(s). One student summed this up succinctly. The student wrote, “Yes. writer and reader is quite different. If I understand one thing as a writer, sometimes readers don’t understand. In workshops, I can find such things” (student response). In the workshop, the writer is allowed the chance to have a deeper discussion with peers about their own writing.

The effect of this advantage is further reflected in the additional comments students had in response to this question. One student specifically touched upon the aspect of constructive criticism. The student writes, “...Everyone gave me good advices. It was freely sensitivity” (student response). Constructive criticism is the ability to give advice in a way that is meant to help the person advance in their craft without being belittled by the giver of criticism.

The spirit in which constructive criticism is given, is in a way that is sensitive to the frame of mind and approach towards artistic or creative creation. The practice of constructive criticism in the workshop not only has the advantage of helping the writer re-imagine their story, or helping the reader develop skills of expression, but is also an exercise in cooperative community building. Albeit at a micro and fictional level, the workshop format has the added benefit of socializing the students in the L2 through discussion, and to some extent debate, on the elements of the fiction.

Cooperation and constructive criticism are building blocks to communal problem-solving. As Brian Boyd, literary evolutionary theorist states, “Fictions foster cooperation by engaging and attuning our social and moral emotions and values, and creativity by enticing us to think beyond the immediate in a way our minds are most naturally disposed—in terms of social actions” (Boyd, 2009, p.383). Boyd’s context is on storytelling in general; the teller and listener, writer and reader. However, I argue that the co-creative relationship in the form of discussion, and to some extent negotiation, between the art of the writer and the constructive criticism of the reader, goes beyond the realm of mere cooperation. I will say that an intrinsic socializing value to the fiction workshop is precisely in this “meta” spirit of blurred boundaries between the author and reader as co-creators. The workshop contains “meta” value, because like metafiction which engages the reader as an active participant in the text through self-referencing, the workshop too brings the creator and observer together in an active way, promoting communication, negotiation, and re-creation. The idea of the self-referencing of a text is important in metafiction because the text does not “pretend” to be real. Its fictionality has been revealed to the reader in the sense that the reader can see clearly that the text contains in its writing the knowledge that it is merely a text and isn’t presenting itself as truth. In much the same way, in the workshop as in metafiction, the text is presented without the illusion of realness by the author. That is, the author has invited the reader to a dialogue to help shape the story, and this simple

act serves to unmask the façade of realness within the fiction.

Metafiction is not so much a literary genre, but a literary tendency (Waugh, 1984) that among many boundary (and binary) subverting capabilities, often subverts or blurs the boundary between author and reader. This co-creative dialogue is in fact a dialogic act, in the Bakhtinian sense, in that the workshop “assimilates a variety of discourses (representations of speech, forms of narrative)—discourses that always to some extent question and revitalize each other’s authority” (Waugh, 1984, p. 6). Waugh here speaks of the novel, but it is easily re-contextualized to the workshop format as the metafictional element doesn’t change. In the workshop, the story is revitalized (or enlivened) through the narratological discussion; the dialogue about the text. It is this redistribution of creative authority to the group, if only for a moment, in re-imagining the fictional world of that momentarily live, breathing text, which hones the socializing cooperative/co-creative skills.

To further expand on student responses to question “b”, in the light of our metafictional discussion, are two similar student answers. One student writes, “At first, I couldn’t understand how I write a story. But, gradually, I could understand it” (student response). Another student writes, “The workshop tell me that what luck is it in my story. I realized my advantage and disadvantage of my story” (student response). This shows precisely the re-imaginative quality of the workshops. For the writers, they were able to understand how to better craft their story through form as well as content.

Question ‘c’ closely relates to questions “a” and “b,” and in some ways unites them. The question asked whether the workshops helped the student in practicing their discussion skills. All six students (100%) answered that the discussion format of the workshop was helpful. The importance of the student feedback for question ‘c’ however, is in the elaboration they provided.

Four students, (60%) mentioned the advantages in helping express their opinion. Of these four students, two of them hinted at an important issue in language learning: confidence. Both aspects, opinions

and confidence are important to this study.

In respect to the use of literature in the L2 classroom, Gillian Lazar, 1993, makes a “Methodological Assumption” (p.24), for literature as a path towards personal enrichment. She states in this assumption that literature helps students “draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions” (P.24). That they are intellectually and emotionally engaged with the material, helping with acquisition; an “excellent stimulus for group work” (Lazar, 1993, p. 24).

This assumption is only one out of three that she makes. Next she gives some advantages and disadvantages, some of which deal directly with the assumption above. An advantage given, closely resembling the argument so far, is that literature students examine the linguistic element in the text, that they reach their own interpretations, may have to re-think their vocabulary and grammar in new contexts, and that this improves their overall knowledge of the language. In the fiction workshop, I believe, these advantages hold since the discursive component of the course is essentially a literary one.

Lazar (1993) cautions about asking for “[a] personal response from students without providing sufficient guidance in coping with the linguistic intricacies of the text. Some texts may be so remote from the students’ own experience that they are unable to respond meaningfully to them” (Lazar, 1993, p.25). This disadvantage is a valid concern when dealing with a literary format, and for good reason, since it requires opinions to be given about the text. However, this concern is somewhat alleviated in the fiction workshop, since students are in fact given the guidance and critical vocabularies necessary to express their critical opinions. The vocabularies centered around setting, character, point of view, and plot, amongst others are not only provided through lectures, but practiced directly by the student through informed creative writing and guided critical discussion.

The workshop then directly addresses the connection between confidence and involvement through student discussions. Although students expressed difficulties in stating their opinions (as

Lazar predicts), all expressed a recognition of the importance to state opinions during discussion. One student said it was difficult to do, yet “it was good training” (student response). Another student echoed that sentiment in stating that in giving opinions, though difficult, was helpful in helping them create their own stories (student response).

In addition, students expressed another valuable sentiment in regard to discussions, and that was the value of having dedicated discussion time. Discussion times averaged at about 45 minutes. One student remarked that the workshops gave a lot of time to speak and improve (student response). And another stated that they were able to think about what they wanted to say slowly and carefully. The dedicated time to discussion in the workshop format allowed for students to dig deeper, gather their thoughts, express themselves and gain confidence through these points as they contributed to an ongoing discourse.

Conclusion

The creative writing fiction workshop has added benefits for the EFL literature class. On the one hand it maintains the critical discussion and abstract thinking that is necessary in improving L2 fluency. On the other hand, the workshop format addresses many of the concerns that are associated with the literature class.

The workshop establishes the tools necessary to begin crafting creative stories and discuss them critically. Students are provided with the questions and vocabularies necessary to explore the text. Creative writing in fiction not only allows the student to imagine situations related to the fictional elements and create stories, but also provides the foundation for formulating opinions on how classmates’ fictions utilize those elements. In other words, the workshop format promotes creative and critical thought processes and output, at the student level, and socialization, co-creation, and constructive teamwork at the group level.

In many ways, the fiction workshop, or literary workshop for that matter, can provide a balance and an approach worth experimenting with to address the concerns associated with the literary EFL classroom.

Though creative writing in EFL is not new, and many teachers enjoy providing activities that serve to stretch students’ creative horizons through creative tasks, the workshop format of discussing those creative texts provides an avenue for formulating and sharing peer and self assessment of creative output. And it is this sharing that socializes the students in the L2. They are in essence involved with re-imagining a world through dialogue, and this is perhaps the greatest addition to the literature class; they are involved with a “breathing” text that has not been finalized and canonized, but has yet to be fully realized and has been presented to the class because their opinions matter.

Future research

The objective of this study is to create a dialogue as to the value of a fiction workshop in a second language classroom. The workshop format goes beyond mere creative writing, and goes beyond mere literary criticism in that the two disciplines are combined. This approach serves to hone writing and discussion skills, cognitive and social skills. It seems then that in an intermediate L2 classroom, the fiction workshop would provide an enriched experience in developing fluency. However, there is little research conducted on creative writing and much less on workshop approaches.

This study is focused on the experiences of 6 students. Perhaps this is not enough to analyze quantitatively, but as the volume of future research increases, it would be interesting to monitor and analyze the effects on student progress (immediate and lasting) on their L2 journey. What are the added benefits to a format that blends creative and critical thinking and output? What do students learn about themselves and their environment through such practices? What is the lasting impression on a student that is asked to co-create, construct, imagine and re-imagine in a foreign language? Is there divergence in the student levels from creative/critical backgrounds than a more traditional background through grammar and practice? The hope is that others will be curious enough to take on such approaches in larger classes and provide the data for larger analyses.

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Author's Bio

John Wolfgang Roberts has a background in literature and creative writing, and is interested in their function in second language acquisition.

Literature In Japan: Groups And Conferences

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa
LiLT Publicity Co-Chair

In this brief article I will provide information to LiLT Journal readers about literary groups and conferences in Japan. The information below will unfortunately not comprise a complete list due to space limitations. However if there is a group or conference you'd like to me to write about next time, please contact me at janenakagawa@yahoo.com and I will make an effort to include the information in a future LiLT Journal or newsletter.

Website URLs and/or contact person email addresses for the groups mentioned appear throughout the article, as well as in an alphabetical list for easy reference at the end.

Academic groups and conferences in Japan

There are many literary groups in Japan, some of which operate a little bit like secret societies where the groups are not openly advertised and new members are referred to the group by existing members only (those won't be mentioned here). However, there are also some large organizations open to anybody in Japan. Most of the Japanese organizations provide journals, newsletters and conferences entirely or primarily in the Japanese language but some are bilingual or host some English language presentations at their conferences or publish at least a limited number of English language papers.

ELSJ – The English Literary Society of Japan (日本英文学会):

ELSJ hosts an annual conference as well as regional chapter conferences and annual publications which include some presentations and articles in

English as well as Japanese. I've attended Chubu area ELSJ conferences and found the presentations (in Japanese) were a good way to learn what Japanese educators think about English literature. I also presented a paper about the poetry of Sylvia Plath for this organization (the paper and various offshoots of it are still in progress!). <www.elsj.org/>

ALSJ - The American Literature Society of Japan (日本アメリカ文学会):

Like ELSJ, this society hosts an annual conference as well as regional meetings. While I am currently only a paper member of the group, the conference presentations announced in schedules appear quite interesting. As with ELSJ however, most presentations are in Japanese. Unlike ELSJ however, this group has an exclusive focus on American literature. <alsj.org/>

ASLE Japan - The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (文学—環境学会):

This is the Japan branch of a group founded to promote discussion of literature and the environment. ASLE-Japan holds an annual conference, publishes an annual journal, and will host the 2014 East Asian Symposium on Literature and Environment: <www.asle-japan.org/english/>

JCLA – the Japan Comparative Literature Association (日本比較文学会):

This group hosts Japanese language conferences and promotes research in comparative literature. As a panelist at a JCLA conference held in Nagoya, I focused on poetry and feminism; some information about that presentation appears in the inaugural LiLT Journal. <www.nihon-hikaku.org/index-e.html>

**IASIL Japan - the Japan branch of the
International Association for the Study of Irish
Literatures:**

I've just given a paper on feminism in contemporary avant-garde poetry by women for the October IASIL Japan conference, which had the overall theme "Connections: Ireland in the World." Unlike most Japanese academic groups, IASIL Japan's conference is English language presentations only. This year's conference featured Irish poet Gerard Fanning as well as many papers and symposia by various literary scholars. <iasil.jp/>.

The Liberlit conference:

This is an annual conference devoted to presentations on teaching literature in Japan. While Liberlit may be familiar to some LiLT members, I only learned about it last year and attended and presented at it (on poetry with global issues content for language learners) for the first time in February 2013. The next conference will be in Tokyo in February 2014. <www.liberlit.com>

**Groups and conferences for writers in
Japan**

There are numerous writers organizations in Japan. If you don't write in Japanese the Japanese groups will perhaps be of limited use, but one example is the Japan Poets Association (日本現代詩人) <www.japan-poets-association.com/>

However, expat writers have started many groups throughout Japan, some of which still continue today and which focus entirely or mostly/significantly on English language writing and/or Japanese writing in translation.

**The East Japan Poetry Association (東日本国際
詩学会)**

This is a new group. An event being planned now is poetry readings followed by discussion at Toyo University's Hakusan campus in central Tokyo on the afternoon of Saturday March 15, 2014. To learn more about this group you can contact me: <janenakagawa@yahoo.com>.

The Japan Writers Conference:

With the help of Diane Nagatomo, Colleen Sheils and Noemi Hiraishi, I founded this group and helped organize the inaugural conference in 2007 in Tokyo at Ochanomizu University which included presentations on cross-genre writing, travel writing, writing and publishing poetry and fiction, and using poetry in the ELT classroom. Now in its seventh year, this year's conference was held in Okinawa. This conference is now under different leadership and includes writing workshops, lectures on getting published, as well as presentations by LiLT members and others.

**JIPS - The Japan International Poetry Society
(JIPS / 日本国際詩歌研究会):**

JIPS, a group I'm honored to have help co-found, was launched in 2009 and has held many poetry readings and discussions in the past several years featuring well known poets from abroad such as Jerome Rothenberg and Bill Berkson, bilingual and Japanese language only events, and readings by many local and visiting poets. Its main event for 2013 was a bilingual reading and discussion on September 28th in conjunction with '100,000 Poets for Change', a worldwide event launched by American poet Michael Rothenberg. The event featured five Japanese and five non-Japanese poets (including myself) reading their work in Kyoto followed by a bilingual discussion with the audience. For JIPS meetings, which thus far have always been held in Kansai, readers have been asked to provide the audience with their work in paper handout form whether in English or Japanese or both; this helps to make it easier for the audience to follow the readings no matter their native language background or degree of familiarity with poetry. Contact: janenakagawa@yahoo.com for more information. (For those in the Tokyo area, see the East Japan Poetry Association, above.)

Four Stories:

A popular prose reading series founded by Kansai and U.S. resident Tracy Slater. Tracy divides her time between the U.S. and Japan, and her Four Stories events are held in Boston as well as Osaka and Tokyo. <www.fourstories.org/>

SWET - The Society of Writers, Editors, and Translators:

This society has Kansai and Kanto chapters, formerly published newsletters and now communicates mostly via online publications, and holds meetings in Tokyo and Kansai. I highly recommend this excellent group. <www.swet.jp/>

SCBWI Japan - The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators:

This society has a Japan chapter which hosts meetings in Tokyo. <www.scbwi.jp>

For LiLT members who write fiction and poetry in addition to teaching it, and who would like feedback on their work in progress, there are numerous feedback groups such as the **Toyohashi Writers Group**, **Nagoya Writes**, **Tokyo Writers Workshop**, and **Tokyo Writers Salon**, to name a few. Please see the list of contacts/URLs at the end of this short article if you'd like to get in touch with any of these groups.

I have been running an online support group for foreign female writers in Japan for approximately eight years; if you are a **foreign female writer in Japan** and would like information about the group, please contact me via janenakagawa@yahoo.com.

Other literature-friendly groups and conferences

The groups I will mention below are not literary groups or conferences per se, but are very literature-friendly.

PGL - Peace as a Global Language:

This is a conference I co-founded many years ago which continues under different rotating leadership. PGL began as a consortium between various special interest groups of JALT (before there was ever a PAN-SIG conference), non-JALT teacher organizations and other kinds of NGOs/NPOs, and had its first conference soon after 9-11. Although not a literary or writers conference, PGL has always featured presentations which highlight literature and other art so long as it displays a connection to peace and global issues. <pgljapan.org/>

WELL - Women Educators and Language Learners:

This is a bilingual group with a bilingual annual retreat open only to women. As with PGL, the group is very literature-friendly. In addition to often featuring presentations related to literature, WELL hosts an annual talent show that includes literary readings by women as part of its annual retreat. <welljapan.org/>

AFWJ - Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese:

The female-only AFWJ is also not a literary group, but women married to Japanese men who are eligible to join the group will find that its quarterly journals and annual conventions frequently feature literature (I write myself a column for its journal called "Inside Poetry"). <www.afwj.org/>

Upcoming events

LiLT's 2014 conference on literature in language teaching:

LiLT will be holding a conference on the teaching of literature in September, 2014 at Aichi University's Toyohashi campus. For more information, contact program chair John Roberts: roberts5413@msn.com or visit the LiLT website at <liltsig.org>.

Website URLs and/or email addresses for quick reference

AFWJ – Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese: <www.afwj.org/>

ALSJ – American Literature Society of Japan (日本アメリカ文学会): <als-j.org/>

ASLE – The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (文学・環境学会): <www.asle-japan.org/>

East Japan Poetry Association (東日本国際詩学会): Contact <janenakagawa@yahoo.com>

ELSJ -- The English Literary Society of Japan (日本英文学会): <www.elsj.org/>

LiLT's homepage: <liltsig.org>

Nagoya Writes: <nagoyawrites.wordpress.com/>

Four Stories (Japan and U.S.A.): <www.fourstories.org/>

PGL -- Peace as a Global Language: <pgljapan.org/>

IASIL (International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures) Japan: <iasil.jp/>

SCBWI – Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators: <www.scbwi.org>

JCLA – Japan Comparative Literature Association (日本比較文学会): <www.nihon-hikaku.org/index-e.html>

SWET -- The Society of Writers, Editors and Translators: <www.swet.jp/>

JFWW – Japan Foreign Women Writers: Contact janenakagawa@yahoo.com

Tokyo Writers Salon: <www.meetup.com/writers-648/>

JIPS -- Japan International Poetry Society: Contact <janenakagawa@yahoo.com>

Tokyo Writers Workshop: <www.meetup.com/Tokyo-Writers-Workshop/>

JWC -- Japan Writers Conference: <www.japanwritersconference.org/>

Toyohashi Writers Group: Contact John Roberts <roberts5413@msn.com>

Liberlit: <www.liberlit.com/>

Women Educators and Language Learners: <welljapan.org/>

Report on the LiLT Forum at the JALT 2013 Conference in Kobe: Learning is a lifelong voyage

Simon Bibby, *Kwansei Gakuin University*

Tara McIlroy, *Kanda University of International Studies*

The theme of the 2013 JALT National Conference was *Learning is a Lifelong Voyage*. Within the special interest area of Literature in Language Teaching, the idea of the lifelong voyage may suggest the progression of life's stages, or the stories of our lives. In the LiLT SIG Forum, educators from different settings in Japan looked at the following theme: *Literature and the stories of our lives*. Members of the SIG talked about the ways that literature, stories and the lives of characters in creative literary texts have shaped their experiences as teachers. For additional discussion of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG and recent activities by the SIG see Bibby and McIlroy (2013a & 2013b).

Wendy Jones Nakanishi (Shikoku Gakuin), Simon Bibby (Kwansei Gakuin University) and Mari Ota (Kagawa University) talked about *Teaching Literature to Japanese students with lower-intermediate English proficiency*. This presentation addressed the challenge of getting Japanese students possessing only a basic English proficiency interested in literature written in English while also increasing their English vocabulary and grasp of simple English grammar. The three presenters noted what they thought to be a paucity of suitable materials currently on the market, and here described a textbook that they are working on to remedy this, provisionally titled *Real reads: An introduction to literature*. Text choices were discussed, the thematic layout of the proposed text explained, and lesson examples and layout of textbook pages were demonstrated. A key question to the audience was asked and discussed by participants in the forum: To what extent should we use Japanese notes for learners using literature in Japanese settings, if at all? In answering this the notion of scaffolding learning

and making tasks more achievable was raised. For queries or further information, the authors can be contacted at realreadsrocks@gmail.com

Neil Addison (Meiji Gakuin University) presented on the topic of *Finding Shakespeare: The readiness is all*. Beginning with a personal journey towards tentatively engaging with Shakespeare as a teenager, and the legacy of Shakespeare in cultural terms, the presenter mixed modern and classic references to engage his students and the present Literature in Language Teaching SIG audience in his topic: Hamlet. Ranging from discussions on Gil Scott Heron, to Lady Gaga, to Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be" speech, the presentation examined how Shakespeare is used, or avoided, in English classrooms in Japan. The talk concluded by proposing several ways in which Shakespeare could be explicated in reading classes.

Tara McIlroy (Kanda University of International Studies) discussed *Creating a content-based literature course for language learners*. Using literature as the beginning point for classroom activities on life events such as childhood, growing up, marriage and divorce the presentation was inspired by the writings of various including Lewis Carroll, Dylan Thomas and Oe Kenzaburo. The theme of literature and stories linked these types of materials together. Next she showed how Paul Nation's suggested four strands are mapped across the design of the materials for this course allowed for scaffolding of resources. Nation's four strands are *meaning-focused input*, *meaning-focused output*, *language focused learning* and *fluency development*. Through this framework a balanced programme using literature can be created which meets the needs and goals of learners. She

talked about the need for material to encourage the interpretation of texts through skills such as discussion and debate. Describing the classroom use of Edmodo, Gogledocs and Youtube, various techniques for scaffolding learning were outlined as part of the discussion.

Suzanne Kamata and Dierk Günther (Tokushima University) introduced their creative writing programme while talking about *Teaching creative writing in extra-curricular english learning programs and regular university classes*. Suzanne Kamata, award winning author of the novels 'Losing Kei', 'Gadget Girl' and the anthology 'The Beautiful One Comes', talked about a variety of workshop-style activities using literature in the 'English Support Room' (ESR) at Tokushima University, in both credit and non-credit classes. Some of the workshops were described in detail, for example those which included describing pictures, using storybooks with learners to develop plot and sequence, and personal writing. Suzanne Kamata's course concept has been adapted for and tried out by Dierk Günther and the presenters described the practical issues surrounding setting up such a course. Finally, the presenters talked about the proceedings, problems, advantages and results of these extra-curricular and university-held classes and answered questions from the attendees.

About Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT)

The Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) Special Interest Group (SIG) was set up to encourage and promote the use of literature in the language classroom. Our diverse membership includes teachers teaching across the age ranges teaching language through film, creative writing, poetry, the short story, classic literature, literature in translation and world literature. We also welcome interest from educators interested in cultural studies, politics through literature, language learning and applications of literary texts in different contexts. LiLT SIG activities include sponsoring literature/language experts to

spread the good word of literature use across Japan, co-sponsoring conferences, working with other groups to promote effective pedagogical practice, publishing a bi-annual journal. In September 2014 we will have our first full conference.



Notes on the authors

Simon Bibby founded the Literature in Language Teaching SIG in 2011. He was using literature in classes, looked around for a relevant JALT group to discuss with like-minded folk, but couldn't find one. So he decided to start up a new SIG, and here we are! In addition to being a qualified school teacher, he has an MA in Educational Technology and is currently an EdD candidate at the University of Liverpool, UK.



Tara McIlroy is the co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. She has an MA (Applied Linguistics) from Victoria University of Wellington, NZ and an MA (English) from the University of Aberdeen, UK. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her interests include literary reading, investigating uses of creative texts and uses of world literature in the language classroom.

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Report on the Japan Writers' Conference in Okinawa

Simon Bibby, *Kwansei Gakuin University*

Gavin Brooks, *Kwansei Gakuin University*

Tara McIlroy, *Kanda University of International Studies*

John Wolfgang Roberts, *Aichi University*

This year Simon Bibby, Gavin Brooks, John Roberts and Tara McIlroy from the Literature in Language Teaching SIG were able to attend the Japan Writers' Conference (JWC) at Okinawa Christian University in Naha. This was the seventh year for the annual conference, which is held at different locations around Japan each year. It was our first SIG presentation at the conference and first time for the JWC to visit Okinawa. This short report gives some details of some of the literature-themed events at the conference and highlights some of the shared interests of conference attendees and presenters. A particular focus on publishing open-access journals is given here also.

Literature-themed presentations

Many of the presenters and attendees at this conference are writers themselves, and, as such, newly published materials of participants are available for purchase at the conference site. Other than that, however, the conference is non-commercial, and is free for anyone to attend. Perhaps as a result of the non-commercial aspect and the differing overarching conference theme, the atmosphere of the conference is different from JALT and other commercial TESOL conferences typical in the field of language teaching.

Some workshops at this conference are closed workshops, and required registration before the day of presenting. Other sessions are run as writing workshops and are open to all, with the writer in mind rather than the language teacher.

John Wolfgang Roberts presented a short lecture

with Q&A, on metafiction and how its self-reflectivity can be used in narrative to challenge the assumptions we make regarding textual and social conventions. In covering some metafictional devices and plots, as well as various metafictional samples, he demonstrated how the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality, author and reader, can help reinvigorate the novel.

The conference took a charmingly participative turn for the creative with Sean Lotman's haiku/photography discussion and workshop. The presenter described his dual creative process, starting with a single preferred camera, an aged and unreliable machine. He works from the (occasionally!) yielded images to write haiku. He showed images which had successfully provoked his creative output, and read the resulting haiku. Audience members were then invited to exchange images they had brought with a partner, and then write haiku based on these images.

Setting up open-access journals

There were three joint presentations on the topic of setting up open-access journals at this conference. In order of appearance these are described briefly, including our own presentation on behalf of the LiLT SIG.

On Saturday, 2nd November, Carol Begg, Jo Mynard and Tim Murphey talked about setting up two journals at Kanda University of International Studies. Some reasons for going open-access were described, including the principles of open-access, issues of cost and philosophical justification for

sharing academic findings freely online. The two journals each have a different niche. SiSAL (Studies in Self-Access, <<http://sisaljournal.org>>) is a journal in the specific field of language teaching which relates to principles of autonomy. Jo Mynard explained that there was a need for a journal in this field since the only other one was in Mexico, and in Spanish. The journal was set up in 2010 and is now listed in several major databases including DOAJ and EBSCO. The principles of 'peering', that is learning from others who are peers and connected with each other was introduced by Tim Murphey. The metaphor of stepping stones on the journal website is used to illustrate the principle of peering. His interest in writing a journal for educators comes from his use of student work spanning a period of 20 years. The journal Peerspectives (<peerspectivesonline.org>) is now completely online and encourages submissions from first-time writers as well as students. Carol Begg is an editor of Peerspectives and has been involved managing the move to open-access for the journal. The presenters finished with a Q & A session with the attendees.

In the LiLT SIG presentation also on Saturday, Simon Bibby, Gavin Brooks and Tara McIlroy talked about setting up the Journal of Literature in Language Teaching (JLiLT). The context of JALT and the SIGs within JALT was explained to the audience, who were editors and writers rather than being exclusively connected with language teaching. Simon Bibby began the presentation by telling the story of the SIG and the journal, and the justification for setting up both. There was a distinct absence of literature-themed groups and opportunities to publish within Japan, and this served as motivation to set up the journal. The JLiLT also works alongside open-access principles and has been created with similar guidelines to the JALT journal. Gavin Brooks introduced the design and layout principles being utilised for this journal using the software InDesign. He compared the different considerations for online publications with those for print publications such as the OnCUE journal which he co-edits. Gavin offered advice to attendees who had specific questions about InDesign and its suitability compared with other

software packages, such as Word. Tara McIlroy talked about the journal's growing readership and the uses of social media such as Twitter, Google+ and Facebook in getting the word out about the journal, which can be found at <liltsig.org>.

James Crocker, Gareth Jones, Kelly Quinn and Steve Redford talked about setting up a new literary publication, The Font, in which teachers could write of their personal experiences of language learning and language teaching. Published writers Kelly Quinn and Steve Redford both gave entertaining and well-received readings of recent creative work, which have been published in abbreviated form in The Font. Gareth Jones discussed how creative work can be considered research, and how it may be professionally presented as such for hiring purposes. James Crocker explained his reasons for setting up such a publication, his hopes for the publication and the multiple avenues for publication within the new periodical. The Font can be found at: <thefontjournal.com/>.

Marketing and self-publicity

Bob Tobin herein offered advice regarding marketing of written product and of self, suggesting technological tools, and offering useful general tips for getting one's name out there and getting noticed. Perhaps the most useful advice within the session, and one which applies to all, is the statement from a book publisher present in the audience. Upon receiving a proposal, publishing staff immediately check the individual on various social media. Herein is a nugget of advice for us all, as writers and as teachers, we need to be in control of our web presence, and we need to create a positive, professional online impression using the range of media tools available to us.

Overview

Overall, we found this to be an enjoyable and convivial conference, and a refreshing change from the more standard TESOL fare that we have been used to as language teachers. Particularly welcome was the Saturday night meal, a very friendly affair, wherein a number of conference participants gave literary readings to assembled peers. The next conference is projected to take place in 2014, tentatively to be held

in Iwate Prefecture. Perhaps we may see you at the next Japan Writers' Conference!

About the JWC

The Japan Writers' Conference is an annual event organised by a group of volunteers based in different locations around Japan. As a group of writers and editors their interests are broad and their conference has featured varied presentations by a range of authors over the years of the conference's existence. It is the primary event for writers and those interested in publication around Japan.



Notes on the authors

Simon Bibby founded the Literature in Language Teaching SIG in 2011. He was using literature in classes, looked around for a relevant JALT group to discuss with like-minded folk, but couldn't find one. So he decided to start up a new SIG, and here we are! In addition to being a qualified school teacher, he has an MA in Educational Technology and is currently an EdD candidate at the University of Liverpool, UK.



Tara McIlroy is the co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. She has an MA (Applied Linguistics) from Victoria University of Wellington, NZ and and MA (English) from the University of Aberdeen, UK. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her interests include literary reading, investigating

uses of creative texts and uses of world literature in the language classroom.



Gavin has a Masters of Applied Linguistics and is currently researching the rhetorical structures Japanese students use in their L1 and L2 academic writing. He is co-editor for the Journal of Literature in Language Teaching as well as assistant editor of the OnCue Journal and the JALT Pan-SIG proceedings.



John Wolfgang Roberts has a background in literature and creative writing, and is interested in their function in second language acquisition.

Publication websites

The Font. <thefontjournal.com/>

The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching (JLiLT). <liltsig.org>

Peerspectives. <Peerspectivesonline.org>

Studies in Self-Access Learning (SiSAL). <SiSAL.org>

Japan Writers Conference (JWC)
<japanwritersconference.org>