

The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

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From the Co-Editors

Friends and Colleagues,

This is the fourth issue of the 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 people and events related to ELT and literature in Japan, we have a range of articles and short pieces on a number of different topics. First, there is a feature article from **Akira Watanabe**, on using literature in the language classroom, specifically using García Márquez short stories and Sandra Cisneros's *La casa en Mango Street* in Spanish. A second feature article, by **Simon Bibby**, looks at a new textbook using literature in *Criteria and Creation: Literary Texts and a Literature Textbook*. **Kevin Stein** has written a literature in practice article which showcases the Writer's Workshop method of in the reading classroom.

In this issue, we are also lucky enough to have interviews with three members of the LiLT SIG introduce ideas, inspirations and stories about teaching and literature. **Neil Addison**, **Suzanne Kamata** and **Kevin Stein** all share their interests in literature. Thank you to all three for their time and their stories.

This issue also features two conference reports. **Atsushi Iida** and **Tara McIlroy** write on the *Paperless: Innovation in technology and education* conference from a literature perspective. **Neil Addison** and **Tara McIlroy** report on Tokyo's *LiberLit* conference which in 2014 ran for the fifth year.

Finally, a review from **Heather Doiron** introduces a text for use if teachers want to introduce *The Great Gatsby* to L2 learners.

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. Perhaps you may be able to help us to help you - even offering to review just one single paper each year in our double-blind review process would help us greatly and enable us to proceed more speedily through the publishing process. We are grateful to readers, reviewers and all members of the editorial team who helped produce this issue.

Tara McIlroy, Frances Shiobara and Simon Bibby

Co-Editors

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.

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**Throw away the Textbook and Get a Paperback Instead:
Reading García Márquez Short Stories and Sandra Cisneros's *La casa en
Mango Street* in Spanish with Limited Vocabulary and Grammatical
Knowledge¹**

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Abstract:

In this essay, the author would like to share his experiences of reading Gabriel García Márquez's *Doce cuentos peregrinos* (*Strange Pilgrims*) and Sandra Cisneros' *La casa en Mango Street* (originally written and published in English as *The House of Mango Street*) in Spanish language classrooms at two leading universities in the Kanto region. These readings appeared to be a positive experience for the students, most of whom encountered either Latin American or US Hispanic literature for the first time. They not only learn the language itself, but also get acquainted with the socio-political context of the book at the same time. As most of the students start to study Spanish only after they enter the university, their grammatical knowledge and vocabulary are limited, but with slow-paced but proper, directed guidance, they can still reach a good level of understanding, and perhaps most importantly, they acquire confidence to read something in a foreign language, either in English or Spanish.

第二外国語のスペイン語の授業の中で、優れた文学作品を取り上げることには、どのような意義があるのだろうか。そして効果的な読解のためには、どのような工夫が必要だろうか。本稿は、関東圏の大学におけるガブリエル・ガルシア＝マルケスの『十二の遍歴の物語』ならびにサンドラ・シスネロスの『マンゴー通りの家』スペイン語版の講読の授業実践例を紹介し、文法的・語彙的知識の限られた学生でも、教員による適切な指導があれば、辞書を使って文章を十分に理解し、さらには作品の背景となる社会につ

This title is inspired by Shūji Terasawa's famous phrase, "Throw away your books, go out to the town!" Obviously, however, it is not my intention to disregard any textbook or their authors. Instead, my aim is to emphasize the importance of going out of textbook sphere and getting into a 'real world' literature.

1

いて学ぶことが可能であること、そしてこうした授業における読みの経験そのものが、英語・スペイン語を問わず、外国語で何かを読むということについての自信につながることといった、さまざまな学習効果があることを指摘した。

キーワード：スペイン語・ガブリエル・ガルシア＝マルケス・サンドラ・シスネロス・短編小説・出版・辞書の活用

Teaching Spanish as a Second or Other Language in Japanese Universities

Teaching Spanish as a second foreign language in Japanese universities is somewhat different from teaching English in the same educational environment. Spanish teachers have certain advantages and disadvantages compared to English teachers. Most of the students start studying the language only after they enter the university. Most of the time, this is an advantage because the class is relatively homogeneous in terms of the learning level, as they are all beginners. In addition, some are highly motivated, thanks to the music and other cultural assets that comes from Spanish-speaking countries and regions. For some, this is a new and fresh experience after having many not so pleasant experiences in learning English in high school. On the other hand, however, some of them are taking the course only because it is obligatory to study another foreign language in addition to English. There are also students who fall behind from the very start of the course, because they fail to understand (or to put it simpler, to accept) basic features of the language such as verb conjugations, or even the idea that nouns have a gender in Spanish.

Even when the positive sides of learning Spanish are stronger than the negative ones, the fact that most of the students only start learning Spanish at the age of 18 means that even for the very best students, it is not so easy to get to the level of reading something serious, as both their grammatical knowledge and vocabulary are far from adequate. Yet, at some good universities, students' intellectual level is so high that reading very basic textbooks are sometimes just too boring for them. That is when teachers like myself are tempted to take some good literature out of the library and try to use them in classrooms.

In this essay, I would like to share my experiences of teaching Spanish language through reading the original Spanish language version of Gabriel García Márquez's *Doce cuentos peregrinos* and *La casa en Mango Street*, a Spanish version of Sandra Cisneros' *The House of*

Mango Street (translated into Spanish by Elena Poniatowska²) at the University of Tokyo and the Faculty of Law of the Keio University, respectively. In my opinion, those readings have been good experiences for the students, most of whom are encountering either Latin American or US Hispanic/Chicana literature for the first time in their lives, and have helped students to become acquainted with the socio-political context of the book, and while, of course, learning a little bit of Spanish.

Before moving to explain my own cases, I will briefly mention the importance of use of literature in the English classroom in Japanese universities, citing the champions of traditional reading-translation (*yakudoku*) method as well as what are commonly known as *Native* teachers here in Japan, i.e. native speakers of English, who contribute to this journal. I then explain my teaching methods and their consequences, according to my observations and feedback from students.

Background: Approaches to teaching and texts

In Japan, there has been endless argument about the direction of university-level English education. One trend, set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technologies, is that language learning should be more focused on communication, which seems to have become the mainstream now (MEXT n.d.; Jōchi CLT Project 2014). The traditional reading-translation method is often criticized by the followers of these communicative methods, as being insufficient to help students become capable users of the target language (see, for example, Shirai, (2014).

However, there still are champions of traditional reading-translation method. For example, Saito (2007) argues that in the process of second language acquisition, we neither have the young memory to memorize, nor the time that we spent learning the mother tongue, so we have to rely on grammar and its explanations in L1 to study the language systematically. On the other hand, Sugawara (2011) points out that his students at the University of Tokyo who have

² Poniatowska is one of the best-known contemporary female Mexican author/journalist who won the prestigious Premio Cervantes award in 2014.

studied English under the so-called *communicative methods* in high school, are less capable in both understanding and pronunciation compared to previous generations, and they often lack self-confidence, and estimate their English as “incompetent” (p. 15-16). Sugawara explains this paradox in the following way: “despite the new policy’s emphasis on communication, firstly, students are not properly taught the correct pronunciation using phonetic symbols; secondly, sometimes they give up trying to improve their speaking ability, because they cannot compete anyway with those bilingual students who grew up abroad, especially in terms of fluency” (Sugawara 2011, p. 16).

Saito and Sugawara concur that students should not only study the grammar, but that L1 Japanese should be used as a learning tool, and that they should read and try to translate what they read into Japanese for a better understanding of the texts. The English department of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Tokyo, where both have been members, recently launched a new textbook emphasizing “*kyōyō eigo*”, or “English as liberal arts” (Nakao, 2013). While the University is also trying to improve their *communicative approach* section by starting new, small-sized classroom curriculum, this project is a bold move to emphasize that reading is as important as other language skills, such as speaking, listening, and writing.

Differing aims and approaches to using literary texts

The philosophy driving this national group and this journal may have some ideas in common with Saito and Sugawara’s concerns, but appears slightly different from their approach, as most of the contributors to the journal are from Native English Speaker Teachers (NESTs) (Addison, 2013a and 2013b; Bibby, 2012; Joritz-Nakagawa, 2012; Judge, 2012; McIlroy, 2012). While the use of literature is nothing new in the Japanese classroom, its use by native teachers is rare, as they may tend to focus on other issues such as students’ communicative proficiency (McIlroy, 2012). My understanding is that it is also a movement toward what is often called *content-based language teaching*, that students should learn more than just the language itself. Bibby, for example, discusses several different models of teaching literature: the cultural, language, personal growth, and context models (Bibby, 2012). Apart from learning the language itself, reading literature can broaden students’ views; help them get to know other countries, their

cultures and societies; and then return to the case of Japan to think about their own culture and society.

This content-based approach can be undertaken in several different settings, and perhaps the most traditional case in the Japanese classroom is the English language class given by Japanese teachers. There are also attempts by *native* teachers such as many of the contributors to this journal. What I discuss herein is a third case: reading Latin American and U.S. Hispanic literature in Spanish with minimal knowledge of the language, and getting to know about those countries, regions or societies represented in these texts. The content of what we read in the classroom is particularly important in my case, as students often find it difficult to get motivated to learn Spanish. There are several reasons for this: it is not so easy to achieve something concrete in Spanish, such as speaking proficiency, as they study the language only for two years; and it is difficult for them to find opportunity to use the language in practice, likely less so than English. Also, if they struggle with a text, painstakingly consulting their dictionary and carefully examining its structure, and find out that the text says nothing really interesting, it will be quite disappointing. Teachers have to offer students a text which is rich in content and also readable.

I have taught in the Faculty of Law at Keio University and the University of Tokyo (commonly known in Japan as *Todai*) as a part-time lecturer for a number of years (at Keio since April 2006 and at *Todai* since September 2007), and have formulated certain methods (very primitive, for sure) of using suitable literature in those classes. I have used *La casa en Mango Street*, the original Spanish version of *The House of Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros³, for the 2nd year students in the Faculty of Law at Keio University, and *Doce cuentos peregrinos*, the last short stories collection of Gabriel García Márquez, in the *Intermediate Spanish as the third foreign language* course at the University of Tokyo. I discuss these experiences in the following two sections.

The House on Mango Street is also popular as a reading material in the English classroom at U.S. middle and high schools. For example, the Minnesota Literacy Council has several supplementary materials for the use of the book in the classroom (Carson-Padilla 2014).

The story at Keio: Why should we read a paperback, instead of a textbook, if we are not at all good at Spanish?

To read a paperback in Spanish with my students at Keio University sounded like a good idea. The Law Faculty of Keio is one of the best private schools in Japan and they should be capable of such a challenge after a year of studying grammar. However, there is a small problem: my class is supposed to be a lower level intermediate course, which is taken by those second (or even third and fourth) year students who had almost failed their Spanish course in the previous year. Most of them probably do not like to study the language, and some may even be quite traumatized by their experience thus far. Still, reading *La casa en Mango Street* is quite a nice way to get those students involved in the class.

The story takes place in a place called Mango Street, a poor Latino neighborhood, or *barrio*, in a big American city, and is narrated by the teenage protagonist, Esperanza, in the first person. It is difficult to define the style of *La casa en Mango Street*. It's a novel, but it also can be seen as a series of short, poetic, episodes that can be read as a collection of short stories. It is actually a suitable format for our classroom, as we can read a single text in two sessions at most. Sometimes it is not so easy to understand the text because expressions are so poetic: for example, the protagonist says her "mother's hair ... is the warm smell of bread before you bake it" (Cisneros 1984, p. 6), and her name, Esperanza, which in English means hope, while "in Spanish ... means too many letters" (p.10), and "(a)t school they say it funny as if syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth," although "in Spanish, my name is made out of softer something, like silver" (p. 11). However, I suggest that this is also a good experience for most of the students, as in many cases they have never read such rhetorical texts before, even in Japanese. It is also good to look at the world from the perspective of a teenage girl, as most of my students are male, and to imagine how people live in a place like Mango Street, the *barrio* where Mexican and other Hispanic migrants live.

At the beginning of the academic year, I give a brief review of grammatical knowledge for 4 or 5 weeks, focusing on the tenses and the meaning of each of them, and from then on, every week or two, we read a text from the book. I do not ask them to prepare for the class, just

to read the text consulting a dictionary in the classroom for the first 45 minutes or so. I write down some of the words, mostly conjugated verbs, on the blackboard because they cannot find them in the dictionary as they are, and walk around the classroom answering their questions. It is a fairly primitive method, but even in Keio, there are students who are not used to consulting a dictionary when they read something in a foreign language. At first, some of the students appear perplexed and some of them are just sitting there, without moving their hands, but by around October, a few weeks after the start of the second semester (it takes time!), they are used to the rhythm of the class, and they get much better at using a dictionary, whereas at first, they sometimes could not even find certain words.

The fact that they are used to the rhythm I am trying to set in the classroom, and that those students who are shy at first and cannot talk to me, the teacher, become more open and capable of asking me questions, are the most important achievements I can see myself. For example, at first they ask just for the meaning of a word or a phrase, but little by little they ask me more elaborated questions, for example, if the translation they did themselves are right or wrong. At the same time, the habit of consulting the dictionary remains, which can be an important skill for them in a long run.

Feedback from my students has been encouraging. One of the most pleasing comments was that one of them told me he bought the original English version of *Mango Street* and had started to read it. Another student told me it was the first time he read anything other than a textbook in a language other than Japanese; surprisingly, he hadn't read any books in English prior to this course. Another student noted that the class was 'fun' in the feedback, although my class is not meant to be like that(!) - I just ask them to consult dictionaries themselves, read a page or two, and try to understand what is happening. While revising this article, I asked this student via email for clarification. He replied immediately and explained the reason why he liked the class. The response is useful to consider in full:

“In most language courses offered at the university, teachers assign us a textbook, and gives emphasis on studying grammar and learning certain basic vocabulary until the course is over. However, in Prof. Watanabe’s class, we (students) are actively involved in

it by consulting the dictionary and reading a 'book' written in Spanish. That was a fresh experience for me. I felt that the process of reading a book written in a foreign language, looking up unknown words in the dictionary, was such a thrilling experience, similar to solving puzzles. Reading the book also led me to think about the place where the story is taking place and the life of its characters. In other words, the reading gave me a chance to envision the life of the protagonist of the different race in a foreign country at certain age, and the way she felt and thought, which sometimes even led me to re-experience what she does in the book. It was a certain kind of intercultural exchange and was very exciting one. That is the reason why I felt I was having fun in your class” (Personal communication, June 1, 2014).

I myself never thought that my method could be classified as *active learning*, but it may well be a good example of the fact that primitive teaching methods are sometimes quite compatible with the aims of those modern methods such as active learning. Of course, I am sure that not all the students felt the same way, but we cannot satisfy everyone in the classroom, and it is good to know that at least some of them are approving of one's way of teaching.

The story at *Todai*: Reading García Márquez's original text with only basic grammatical knowledge

I have been teaching a somewhat peculiar class at the University of Tokyo for several years: intermediate level Spanish as the *third* foreign language, which means that the students study English, another language (they can choose French, German, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Italian, and Spanish, as the second foreign language), and are still willing to learn Spanish. Most students are likely capable language learners and may be considered '*genko otaku*' or 'language nerds', so the class is very fast, covering one or two verbal tenses (or topics peculiar to the language such as reflexive verbs) per week.

After covering the grammar in seven weeks or so, we start reading short stories from García Márquez's *Doce cuentos peregrinos*, the last collection of the author's short stories, which García Márquez himself said was the short story collection closest to that which he had

wanted to publish. The book was published in 1992, 500 years after the ‘discovery’ of the Americas. All the stories take place in Europe and the main characters are people from Latin American countries or from Caribbean islands. Although my favorite pieces are “*La santa* (The saint)” and “*María dos Prazeres*”, those stories are relatively long so sometimes due to time constraints, I have to choose shorter ones, such as “*El espanto de agosto* (The ghost of August)”, “*Me alquilo para soñar* (I sell my dream)”, or “*El avión de la bella durmiente* (Sleeping beauty and the airplane)”. The last piece may be particularly pertinent to Japanese students as it is based on a short story by Yasunari Kawabata, “The House of Sleeping Beauties.”

Of course, it is not an easy text, and even the best students have problems understanding phrases such as the following:

“...durante años pensé que Margarito Duarte era el personaje en busca de autor que los novelistas esperamos durante toda una vida, y si nunca dejé que me encontrara fue porque el final de su historia me parecía inimaginable (García Márquez 1992, p. 55).

(The English translation is as follows: ... for years I thought Margarito Duarte was the character in search of an author that we novelists wait for all our lives, and if I never allow him to find me it was because the end of his story seemed unimaginable (García Márquez 1993, p. 37).

The García Márquez passage is complicated, but it provokes, and attracts readers into the narrative. In fact, this is one of the key passages of the entire story and this question will be answered in a heartwarming way at the end. At the end of the semester, it is clear from the feedback that students are proud to have read García Márquez, perhaps one of the best known Nobel laureate authors, in his own language.

Concluding Remarks

In this essay, I have explained how I use good works of literature in my Spanish classrooms, as further examples of the use of literature in teaching language. My method in Keio is perhaps rudimentary, but it has worked in my classes, and perhaps I should add that I reached this simple method only after some trial and error process. Of course, I always pay attention so

that students can get into the text as smoothly as possible, giving them grammatical orientation and offering adequate clues when they have some problems understanding a word or a phrase. Once it is on track, students can read the text by themselves and I only have to correct their mistakes or give some hints when they face some difficult expressions.

My classes at the University of Tokyo are slightly different from that of Keio. While the motivation of students at the beginning may well be higher, the texts we read in class, García Márquez's short stories, are also more difficult. In both cases we read texts that tell us about the life of the characters, and the people represented by them. Those texts expose students to the rich cultural heritage of the language⁴, and offer a means of transporting students to where the story is taking place. The stories enable students to think more about those places, or about something more universal. That kind of exposure can be an eye-opening event for those young students, and as a teacher, I hope that those experiences have a long term impact on their education generally, and on their future careers, as well as their learning experience of the Spanish language.

Author notes

Akira Watanabe has taught Spanish Language and Latin American Studies at several universities in Kanto region, before getting hired as an associate professor at the University of Yamanashi in

Of course, it may be questionable to include *La casa en Mango Street* in the category of Spanish language literature, as it was written first in English and Cisneros herself admits that her Spanish is not as good as her English (Rodriguez 2012). However, I dare to say that the book can be included into the category of the Latin American literature in a broader sense, because the story takes place in a *barrio*, the neighborhood in a U.S. megalopolis where many Spanish-speaking people lived (and perhaps still live). It is also worth mentioning that Poniatowska's translation is a very good one. As for the Latin American heritage in the United States, I would like to quote the former Mexican president, Ernesto Zedillo, who made the following polemical speech in Chicago, where Cisneros was born. He said in the 1997 National Council of La Raza:

⁴ "I have proudly affirmed that the Mexican nation extends beyond the territory enclosed by its borders" (Fonte 2005, 10). Indeed, the number of Mexican-origin Hispanics have reached 33.7 million in 2012 (Gonzalez-Barrera and Lopez, 2013), which is more than 25% of the Mexican population. Thus, books like *The House on Mango Street* are very important if you want to study about Mexico or Latin America in a broader sense.

2012. He obtained B.A. and M.A. at the Department of Latin American Studies at the University of Tokyo, and also studied at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, El Colegio de México, and Yale University. His research focuses on the local politics of the State of Yucatán and the migration from the region to California, U. S. He has also written essays about Japanese culture and language in Spanish, in journals and books published in Mexico, Spain, and Venezuela.

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Criteria and Creation: Literary Texts and a Literature Textbook

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Abstract

Three LiLT SIG members, Wendy Jones Nakanishi, Simon Bibby, and Mari Ota recently published a textbook called *Real Reads: An Introduction to Literature*. Discussion of the textbook in this article is situated in consideration of criteria that teachers need for choosing suitable literary texts for language students. Five criteria are suggested for teachers to consider when deciding upon the suitability of a text: lexis, syntax, length, interest and familiarity. Major aspects of the creation of a literature textbook for language learners are explained, including the authors' reasons for textbook format, text choice and first language (L1) and second language (L2) balance, before moving on to consider and advise with regard to further issues such as consideration of audience, the creation of the online teachers' guide, shared workflow, and dealing with potential publishers.

Keywords: poetry, short stories, publishing, literature, textbook

LiLT SIGのメンバーであるジョーンズ=中西、ビビー、太田の3人の近著、*Real Reads: An Introduction to Literature*は、文学作品を活用した語学学習者のための教科書である。本稿では編著者の一人であるビビーが本書の制作過程を振り返り、適切なテキストの選択基準（語彙・構文・長さ・関心・作品の知名度）および、制作の具体的な手順（教科書のフォーマットの決定・実際の文章の選択・L1/L2のバランスについての考察）について説明し、さらには本書の実際の授業での利用に（対象となる学生・オンライン教員用手引きの作成・教室での使用の例）ならびに、制作の過程における出版社との様々なやりとりについても、自身の経験を紹介する。

キーワード：詩・短編小説・出版・文学・教科書

Blanton (1992) notes teacher dissatisfaction regarding fragmented language chunks in textbooks connected by briefly introduced and very differing themes, and by disembodied grammatical points. In such circumstances, it is understandable that students may become disengaged by disjointed textual content and a paucity or absence of context. Perhaps you, the language teacher, may seek to engage students at a deeper level, and wish for more sustained and engaging readings, but wonder what real reading content may be available for students. For teachers contemplating using literary texts in their language classes, how are they to choose suitable reading materials? In searching for such, and upon purchasing and examining multiple textbooks that do exist as collections, some choices of texts have appeared unusually challenging, and seemingly inappropriate for language learners. This leaves the twin challenge of choosing texts based on a robust yet easily usable set of criteria, and finding a collected set of texts which can be used in the Japanese university language classroom. Noting the difficulties in choosing, and the absence of a suitable collection, LiLT SIG member Wendy Jones Nakanishi (PhD English Literature) led a project to create something for language teachers and students in Japan, and *Real Reads: An Introduction to Literature* (Jones Nakanishi, Bibby & Ota, 2014) is the resulting product.

This paper is split into two sections. Firstly, to situate the later discussion, a set of criteria for choosing literary texts for language students are suggested. Secondly, the creation of a textbook by three LiLT SIG members is described. The thematic format of the textbook is explained and text choices discussed. The author suggests how to balance L1, notes the contents of an online teacher guide and details publisher requirements of prospective authors.

Part 1: Criteria for Selecting Literary Texts in Language Classes

The use of literature in language classes has seen considerable ebbs and flows (Khatib & Hossein, 2012; McKay, 1982). McKay notes that literature has sometimes been seen as a teacherly whim, as an indulgence, and insufficiently instrumental, as “it will do nothing toward

promoting the students' academic and/or occupational goals" (p. 530). Inappropriately difficult choices in texts no doubt count in part toward such accusations, and your author recollects seeing a Saki (Hector H. Munroe) short story, *Open Window*, as the first text in a collection of English texts for language learners. Whilst Saki is indeed an assuredly biting satirist and a master of the short story form, his tales may prove too challenging for students due to the syntactical complexity and the high volume of low frequency lexical items.

Countering the charges, McKay (1982) cites Widdowson (1979) in the defense of literature usage, who argues that reading literature requires a decoding of language and comprehension of meaning, both at heightened levels. Widdowson additionally discusses the significance for the language learner of the *interaction* of meaning between reader and text, echoing Rosenblatt's (1938) arguments for school age students reading literature in their first language - the importance of readers' own ideas and views when reading literary texts, and the necessity for teachers to respect and to accord value to student interpretations.

Lexis and Syntax

Two main points of criticism have been leveled at the use of authentic literary texts - the issues of unfamiliar lexis and of challenging syntax (see, for example Robson, 1989, Savvidou, 2004). Explicating these in turn, lexical level is the difficulty of individual words, and sets of words. This can be an issue for language learners when provided with authentic texts. Low frequency vocabulary may be unfamiliar, may appear in unusual volume, and is likely to be of reduced regular communicative use for a language learner. Secondly, syntactical complexity may be daunting for students more accustomed to shorter, single-clause S-V-O type constructions, particularly in school textbooks. A common issue is the appearance of sentences with multiple clauses, in which students can quickly get lost, particularly if these are additionally awash with descriptive vocabulary. When choosing literary texts, we have to pay particular attention regarding these major interlinked challenges as while we may wish to expose our students to rich and creative language, and such is a definite benefit of using authentic texts, we surely do not wish to overburden and discourage.

The rise and contemporary prevalence of Extensive Reading (ER) programs can be seen in this light. ER tenets are the provision of texts leveled by vocabulary, read in bulk, and according to student choice. In addition to being leveled by vocabulary, sentence structure is kept relatively simple, and the sentences kept short. The present author is an advocate of this approach for texts that are specifically written, both fiction and non-fiction, and uses such an approach in language classes. There may however be some issues where texts are amended downwards to fit designated word limits. Reduction of texts renders some loss of richness, of language, and, inevitably, of meaning (Honeyfield, 1977). In the present author's view, such dilution can be readily seen in the Penguin graded reader (level 4) version of George Orwell's *1984*, where too much original meaning appears to be lost in the reduction process, and the text rendered oddly... empty. McKay (1982) notes further potential issues that may occur with reduced classics (rather than those written to order within vocabulary limits): "the simplification of syntax may reduce cohesion and readability" (p. 531). Instead, using ungraded literature can provide naturalistic examples of grammar (Liaw, 2001), provide wide, rich examples of vocabulary (Pugh, 1989) and provide a real context for language that is so often missing in our EFL setting (thereby suggested as an additional *content-context model* by Bibby, 2012).

Length

Noting psycholinguistic models of reading, derived from Goodman's (1967) early work, Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1980) argue that students operating in their non-native language will have significantly decreased facility to dual-process top-down (using background knowledge) and bottom-up (word recognition). This is particularly pertinent for L2 literature, compared with artificially prepared texts, noting the above issues of syntax and lexis. For this reason, literary texts cannot be used in a manner akin to that of a standard L1 undergraduate literature course, where multiple novels may be assigned through the semester at a rate of about one per week. Students face not just the twin challenges of vocabulary and syntax, but also the length of a text, or texts. Longer texts can still be used, but in a necessarily *scaffolded* and slower manner, likely using a range of reader response style activities (as discussed in Carlisle, 2000; Hirvela, 1996; Oster, 1989), and in decreased number through a course. The authors never

reached precise agreement regarding exact maximum length of a text, but keeping within two double-page spreads is how the book is presented.

Interest and Relevance

Any text that the teacher selects should have at least potential interest to the students. This is of course difficult to judge, as a new selection of individuals appears before teachers each semester, with different life histories, ideas and preferences. Seeking to address this when putting together a literature/language textbook, the textbook authors endeavored to choose texts that we thought would have a certain universal appeal, and a common humanity.

Familiarity and the Need for Schemata Building

Additionally, as teachers we need to be wary of erroneous notions of what we think may be commonly known without sufficient critical thought. Marshall (1979) notes such a danger in assuming shared understandings across cultures, instancing this with reference to Puerto Rican students understanding English weather and literary references to this. Marshall cites two examples: Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Spring and Fall* and T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland* where students lacked appreciation of some aspects of the texts due to differing geography to that of the writers, thus meteorological conceptions and metaphors. Regarding history, when teaching a course centered on George Orwell's *Animal Farm* course to undergraduate students, I was fully aware that students were all born after the end of the Cold War, and would be unlikely to have more than a passing understanding of early twentieth century history (or perhaps of any history other than that of the locale). We need to carefully consider where our students *are*, not just geographically (and meteorologically) as Marshall notes, but culturally, historically, and cognitively, not to mention the most immediate issue that concerns us as language teachers, i.e. linguistically. Such areas where knowledge and understanding may be lacking are best addressed before starting a text by careful attention to building the relevant schemata (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983), which is to offer background and supporting information to aid understanding of something new. Schemata building for language students will be addressed in a later paper by the present author.

Part 2: Creating a Literature Text for Language Students

Wendy Jones Nakanishi, based on her experience of both English literature and language teaching experience in Japan (thirty years), had the idea to write a textbook for language learners focusing on literature. Simon Bibby and Mari Ota came on board to help, and between the three authors there is over fifty years of teaching experience. *Real Reads: An Introduction to Literature* and was published in February 2014 ready for the 2014 Spring semester. The choice of *Real Reads* for the title is twofold. This emphasises both the authenticity of the texts, and their unbowdlerized, ungraded nature.

The textbook is not just written as a conversation prompt, or as a general reading textbook (although it can be used for both those purposes) but as an introduction to literature, and incorporates what would be expected with such a professed remit. Key literary terminology is introduced, e.g. *moral, allegory, stanza, rhyme, points of view, personification* and explained as it arises naturally within the texts. The terminology provided is enough for students to start talking and writing about literature using the appropriate language for this academic field. The language is recycled, to give students practice and to increase familiarity as they progress through their studies with the textbook.

The textbook is designed to be flexible for teachers and students, mainly aimed at university teachers, but flexible enough to be used elsewhere. Any text can be read in different ways, at different literary and cognitive levels. Discussion of not just the texts, but ideas surrounding the texts, will naturally be at different levels also. In pedagogical terminology, this is *differentiation by outcome* whereby learners respond at different levels to a given task. That said, *Real Reads* authors suggest that a natural fit for the texts would be intermediate through to advanced levels.

CEFR levels

A tool for assessing language level is the Common European Framework (CEFR), which now reaches beyond Europe and is widely used by textbook publishers globally as a level guide, and has made considerable inroads within Japan too. The CEFR instrument uses a series of Can

Do statements to inform curriculum design, and to assess performance against published standards. We placed our text as spanning the B1 and C1 boundaries, which is around the intermediate level. For lower level language learners, language support is provided, as discussed in the next section.

Teacher's Guide, and using Real Reads

The authors have put together a teacher's guide, which has been made available online, for free. The text is designed for quick and easy reference. Putting this together, we were thinking very much as end-user teachers ourselves and what we would wish for, and thus includes what teachers will need pertaining to understanding of the text, course planning, assessment, extra activities, and institutional administration. Within an initial *Overview* section authors explain a number of issues, discussing the pedagogical underpinnings, rationale for L1 usage, offer tips for helping students read and seek meaning within the texts, discuss dictionary usage, and suggest means for formative and summative assessment of students. Concerning the classroom implementation of the text, a sample syllabus is provided, plus structured guidance as to how teachers can use the texts in class, noting that literary texts offer much more than the standard read-and-comprehend format, and can be used as the basis for discussions in students' L2.-

Before Reading and After Reading Sections

Now considering the textbook itself, prior to reading each text there is a designated *Before reading* section, to activate both conceptual and linguistic schemata. Each literary text is prefaced with a variety of questions for private thought, leading to discussion with peers, concerning certain key themes of the respective texts. Where we judged it likely that students may struggle with the language of the text, we offer simple exercises for students to understand meaning. Usually, these are straightforward lexis/meaning matching exercises. Additionally, a full glossary of terms is provided. Teachers are advised to direct students to this, prior to the designated lesson as homework, or at the rear of a previous class to provide students with clear

continuity between lessons. Flexibility is there for teachers to judge, and depending on both individual class duration and course scheduling.

For post-reading activities, multiple activities are provided within a designated *After reading* section. Firstly, students are invited to respond to the text with their own personal views, and the authors regard this to be the crux of using literature, not just in L2 but in L1 too. Where teachers prematurely impose meaning on texts that are ‘up for grabs’, student engagement, enjoyment and learning may be considerably diminished, and it is back to the constrictive “Teacher says so, and that’s final” traditionalist approach. We encourage teachers to step back, for a while, and give students an initial opportunity to try to find their own way, to attempt to determine their own meanings, on both surface and deeper levels. Similarly, we encourage teachers to be try to coax further, pushing for deeper (justifiable) interpretations from students, as they engage with their peers to exchange their ideas. The cognitive load required to process the language itself, then to seek ‘meaning’ on the initial surface level is substantial, even before attempting some deeper understandings, so teachers do need to give students plenty of time, encouragement and support for student efforts.

Textbook sections

The text is structured in temporal/life fashion, with units moving from childhood through adolescence, through life choices, to getting older, until...death. The textbook thus commences at a reassuring, unthreatening linguistic and cognitive level, with some children’s literature. The first unit comprises a selection of *Aesop’s Fables*, six in total, plus the Grimm brothers’ *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The fables offer students short, pointed readings, with a clear message. Similarly, *Snow White* is a relatively short text, and has some clearly signposted morals. Information is provided for students about common themes of children’s literature.

Within the second unit, *Growing up, finding out*, two readings are provided, a blackly amusing poem by Hilaire Beloc, and an allegorical tale by Oscar Wilde. One issue is how to approach the Judeo-Christian heritage which underpins a sizable chunk of the Western canon, and directly features in our chosen text *The Selfish Giant* by Wilde. Such critical linguists as Pennycook (1991) and Phillipson (1996) have argued that the ESL industry promulgates Western

cultural and political hegemony. Thus, one must balance the provision of information regarding key tenets of Christianity as they feature in relation to the text with any possible perceptions of selling a belief system - of proselytizing.

Thirdly, students are presented with some meatier readings within the *Life Decisions* unit. Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*, Rudyard Kipling's *If* and James Joyce's *Eveline* are the three texts herein. The common thread is clear.. The first two poems are well-known texts within English speaking countries, but are likely new to students studying in their L2 in Japan. Frost's text is very accessible in length, lexis and syntax. Kipling's contains some lower frequency vocabulary, which is addressed in the pre-reading section. The poem is short (it fits easily within a single column on a single page), and the lines short too, each comprising a single idea relating to the anaphoric *If*.... Joyce's short story *Eveline*, may provide the first slight challenge for students but fear not, as this text is taken from *Dubliners*, and is nowhere near as fraught as are attempts to read *Ulysses*. Throughout this unit we engage students directly by asking readers to consider decisions that people take, that they themselves take in their lives, and the effects of their life choices on their past and future selves, and on others.

The fourth section, *Love*, also contains three texts, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *How do I Love Thee? Let me count the ways*, DH Lawrence's *Intimates* and John Steinbeck's *Breakfast*. Likely the first and third of these will be familiar to readers, while Lawrence's short poem features a spousely dispute. Readers are invited to reflect on differing interactions and relationships through these texts, and to consider different types of love.

The final section offers consideration of the inevitable end for us all: *Getting ...older...* and features Katherine Mansfield's *Miss Brill*, and WH Auden's *Funeral Blues*. The second of these will probably be familiar to many readers through its use in the popular British film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Using additional media in class can certainly add extra frisson, but it may be better to allow students to access the poem in its written form first, and to read in their own internal voice, rather than having this imposed externally by teacher or by film. Additionally, we suggest to ask students whether they think a man or a woman may have written this, and about whom. Mansfield's *Miss Brill* may not be as familiar to readers. Without depriving readers of their own experience by providing excessive detail, it is a short, evocatively

rendered description of an elderly lady, her perceptions, her reactions, and her thoughts, on a particular Sunday, and the reactions of others toward her.

Language support

Some readers may be considering the publishing route, and will be faced with the question of whether to use L1 Japanese, and if so, the quantity and placing of the support. As such, authorial considerations and publishing house guidance (as we experienced it) are shared here. Many books on the TESOL market, presumably aimed at Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) have L1 Japanese included throughout the text. However, excessive reliance on students' own L1 in on-page support may hinder progression of L2 learning. The authors sought a balance between on the one hand, judiciously assisting, and on the other hand, flooding with L1 leading to student over-reliance on language support.

Originally, the authors envisaged that the Japanese language support would accompany each literary text. Finally, the decision was made to push the Japanese language support to the back of the book, for three reasons. Firstly, the authors believed that, where possible, the flow of English should not be broken, allowing for an immersion in the L2. Secondly, the impression the authors had was that this would be favoured by the majority of Native Speaker Teachers (NSTs), who, in our experience, have usually expressed preferences for a minimum of Japanese language within English textbooks. Thirdly, the publisher indicated this to be their preference, so that the text can be published for use by language learners in other countries, by the simple process of swapping out a single appendix section.

Final Words

An integral part of the job of a teacher is choosing and providing learning materials for classes. In an ideal world provision would be largely through a single textbook, and creating only a modicum of extra materials to support the text. In my experience of teaching content classes, considering appropriate levels (cognitive, maturity and language) and thematic interest of materials means the searching, choosing, mixing, creating and collating of lesson texts takes time, effort and patience. Likely you, the reader and teacher, approach classes similarly, and have

a tranche of self-created materials, and may be thinking about sharing the materials more widely via publication. Telling of our experiences herein may hopefully be of some assistance if you are considering publication of your course materials.

After initial consideration of criteria for choosing suitable texts, this article has taken readers through the creation of the text *Real Reads: An Introduction to Literature*, which is now printed and available. Constructive feedback is very much welcomed, and the authors can be contacted at <realreadsrocks@gmail.com>. Literary questions can be directed to the main author of the text, Wendy Jones Nakanishi, literature/language pedagogy questions to Simon Bibby (present author), and queries regarding translation to Mari Ota. Meanwhile, do share your teaching ideas here within this journal, and hopefully you will also be able to share your lesson materials in the form of a textbook too.

Author notes

Simon Bibby is a full-time lecturer at Kwansei Gakuin University, technology fiend, chess player, and literature enthusiast. He founded LiLT SIG in 2011.

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Close and Careful but not Cautious: Using the Writer's Workshop Method in the Reading Classroom

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**If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use reading it at all.
—Oscar Wilde (1889)**

When passing out a work of short fiction in a second language classroom, I'm often dismayed by the large number of students who immediately pull dictionaries from their bags and begin to engage in a word-by-word translation. But perhaps, I shouldn't be so emotional about it. Masuhara (2003, p. 342) notes that from Japan to Brazil and all points in between, "reading in the L2 seems to mean almost invariably a slow and laborious decoding process, which often results in poor comprehension and low self-esteem." Part of this is perhaps simply a result of the reading classes themselves. In Japan at least, reading classes often revolve around stories and articles dense with unknown words and crammed with new target grammar. Only by breaking down the text into its component parts are the students able to get the information they need in order to pass the all-important mid-term or final exam.

To make matters worse, when texts are not used to teach specific lexis or grammar, but as the basis for more conversational activities such as discussing social issues or even just relating the events in the story to students' personal lives, teachers often rely on a standard set of comprehension questions as the initial means of checking understanding. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that the questions teachers use actually provide any kind of accurate information. The following is a summary of the features of good comprehension questions as identified by Paul Nation (2008, p. 88-90) :

- *They should be easier to understand than the text itself*
- *Answering the questions requires reading the text, which means that first, a very proficient reader to try and answer the questions without reading the text before using them*
- *The questions should use language/words not in the text itself, which makes them even more difficult to write for lower level students who have limited vocabularies*
- *The questions need to test comprehension, not memory, so they should avoid focusing on details which even a proficient reader might not remember.*

I have rarely come across comprehension questions which meet all of the above criteria. But even if I do manage to make (or stumble upon) a set of decent questions, what do I learn about how my students are engaging with a text from their answers? I might recognize that they are failing to comprehend chunks of the story, but I'll never be exactly sure where or why they are having difficulties. In addition, by giving students a set of comprehension questions, I may be putting them in the mindset that reading a story is all about finding the right answers. The questions become signposts which direct the way they read. This is, in and of itself, at odds with the kind of experience I want my students to have when engaging with a story.

How do I want my students to engage with a story? In my ideal world, they would read carefully, without being overly cautious. They would believe in the importance of the words on the page, but also understand the active meaning making role that a reader needs to take on. And most of all, they would truly believe that stories need to be read again and again, and that each consecutive reading, rather than a chore, was an act of exploration.

In fact, the process of reading in which I would like my students to engage is very similar to the way I was taught to read as a member of a creative writing workshop. In a creative writing workshops, the students are not considered to be masters of their craft. Every story they write is going to be flawed. In order to provide useful feedback to the writer, a careful reader has to clearly articulate where and why the story has gone astray. This means that workshop participants must read a story multiple times. In the workshop I attended at Washington

University in St. Louis, we made extensive use of time-lining as a tool for understanding the stories we read and to provide feedback. Time-lining also an activity I have found to be adaptable for the second language classroom. With a few tweaks here and there, it can help students move beyond wading in the shallows of a story and dive down into the narrative to find a richer, more personal understanding.

Time-Lining a Story

The first step in this activity is to have students read through a story and use a highlighter to mark all of the major events. The events are then mapped onto a timeline. Depending on student level, the activity can be simplified by preparing a timeline in advance with some of the events already mapped onto it. The timeline activity ensures that students have identified the “what” and “when” of a story. While this does not prove full comprehension, not being able to identify this information is a clear sign that students are lost. Unlike comprehension questions, this activity also allows teachers to begin to identify specific problems a student is having. For example, during a first reading, some students will miss the change in form from simple past to past perfect which often signifies a jump in narrative chronology. This is especially difficult in very short stories in which over the course of just a few sentences there might be three or more chronological shifts, such as can be found in the following excerpt from Grace Paley’s (2006, p. 337) “A Man Told Me the Story of His Life”:

And then I was made a cook. I prepared food for two thousand men.

Now you see me. I have a good job. I have three children. This is my wife,

Consuela. Did you know I saved her life?

Look, she suffered pain. The doctor said: What is this? Are you tired? Have

you had too much company? How many children? Rest overnight, then

tomorrow we'll make tests.

The next morning I called the doctor. I said: She must be operated on

immediately. I have looked in the book. I see where her pain is. I understand

what the pressure is, where it comes from. I see clearly the organ that is making trouble.

Paley's story has a Flesch-Kincaid grade level of 2.3 and fully 97% of the words are found on the General Service List (West, 1953), and yet, without paying careful attention to chronology, students become lost as the story moves back and forth through time. Aside from verb tense, lower level students with minimal reading experience are sometimes not even aware that visual cues such as a set of asterisks or a significant gap between printed text can also signal a shift in narrative time. Time-lining helps to make these cues more salient, and when they are missed, provides a teacher with a diagnostic tool to help pinpoint exactly at what point in a story understanding faltered. After doing time-lining activities in class, I often collect student feedback surveys. A majority of students report that the activity does indeed make it easier to understand the stories. Perhaps more interestingly, students often say that time-lining a story results in a second and third reading feeling both more purposeful and enjoyable. One student went so far as to compare making a timeline to holding a map, allowing her to know, "What direction I am facing as I read through the story."

Creating a timeline serves two more functions. Once students have completed a timeline (usually in small groups), they can then compare it with other students. There are often differences in opinion as to what constitutes a "major event" and these differences lead to some lively conversations. Aside from these conversational opportunities, once students have a timeline, they can then begin to explore moments which are only hinted at in the text, the narrative ellipsis. In *Writing Fiction*, Burroway (2000, p. 39-40) notes that there is crucial difference between plot and story. The plot is composed of the fixed points a writer chooses to reveal in the text. A story, however, can never be reduced to plot points alone. For example, "A Man Told Me the Story of His Life," begins with:

"Vincent said: I wanted to be a doctor. I wanted to be a doctor with my whole heart. I learned every bone, every organ in the body. What is it for? Why does it work?"

The school said to me: Vincent, be an engineer. That would be good. You understand mathematics.”

When time-lining this story with my students, what they produce initially is rather sparse (see Figure 1).

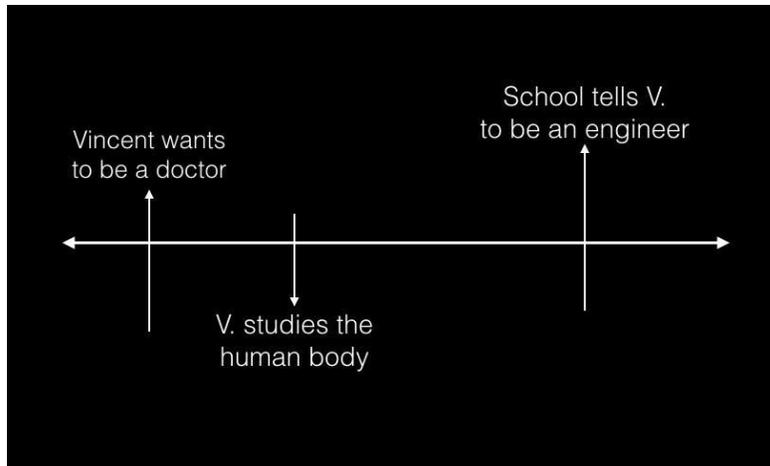


Figure 1

While not exactly wrong, it has not managed to capture quite enough of the story. Still, the students have taken a first step towards a fuller comprehension. They have become familiar with the basic contours of the story and at the same time practiced a number of important skills required for working with various genres of text: identifying key points, paraphrasing a sentence, and even summarizing whole paragraphs. After the initial time-lining, students can then go back and examine the spaces between events. They can begin to explore the importance of interpretation and come to better understand the role that the reader plays in bringing meaning to a text. In the case of this particular story, one of my students remembered taking an academic ability test at the end of junior high school. He asked if schools in the US also required students to take these types of tests. This kind of conversation, in which students recognise that they truly have the experience necessary to, as readers, help co-construct the narrative, can (albeit slowly) provide the support students need to differentiate between when they are confused because of the words on the paper and when they feel lost because an author has purposefully left a blank space

within the narrative. In the end, these conversations result in finished timelines which are more balanced mix of the words from the page and the experience and ideas of the students themselves (see figure 2).

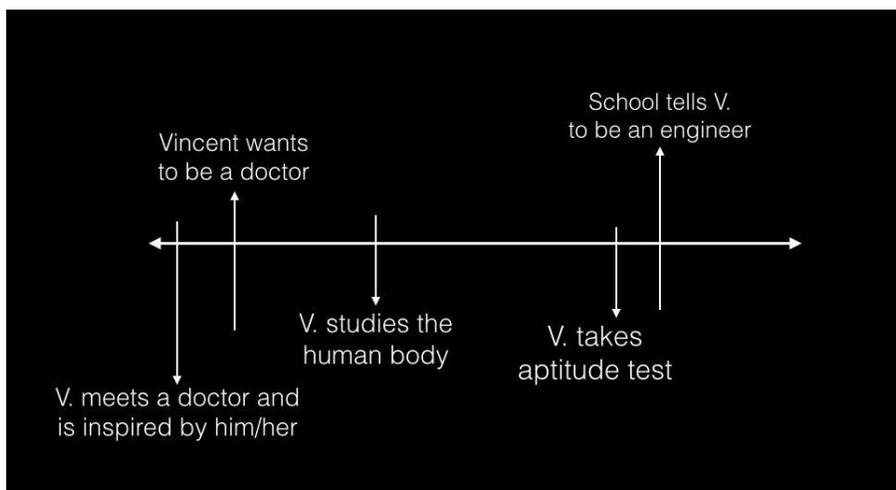


Figure 2

Once my students have become familiar with the time-lining process, usually by the third story, I include it, along with out-of-class pre-reading, as a homework assignment. If even only a few of the students prepare a timeline in advance of a discussion class, the sometimes extreme difference in what has and has not been included provides a clear example of the multiple ways in which a story can be constructed out of plot. For many of my students, it is the first time for them to recognise that part of learning to read in a second language requires letting go of the idea that there is a correct word by word translation which leads to understanding. And while not all interpretations are equally valid, knowing that they do not have to understand the text in one specific way decreases anxiety and affords students a bit more psychological space to enjoy the act of reading.

All communicative interactions require us to deal with ambiguity. All texts, whether a business letter or a conversation with a friend, require us to read between the lines. Working with literary short stories provides our students with a chance to practice this crucial skill. Time-lining stories provides a framework for making that practice a little less anxiety-inducing while also

turning multiple readings into a source of classroom conversation. More importantly, a well structured time-lining activity encourages students to take responsibility as readers, to actively engage in the process of meaning making. Because without the awareness and courage to build a personal meaning in the empty spaces found in any text, no story is ever truly complete.

Author notes

Kevin Stein is a member of the LiLT SIG, working at a private high school in Osaka. He brings a range of teaching experience to his writing on education and topics in ELT. His special interest is the use of stories in the language classroom. He's an active blogger on topics such as teaching, reading, and exploring the language classroom. You can find his writing in various places including regular blog posts over at his blog *The other things matter* (<theotherthingsmatter.wordpress.com/>). He is also a professional mentor at the International Teacher Development Institute (iDTi) professional development website <itdi.pro/blog>. Kevin can also be found via twitter: @kevchanwow.

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Report on Paperless: Innovation & Technology in Education Conference, February 1st 2014, at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan

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On February 1st, 2014, Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS), along with Apple Distinguished Educators (ADE), hosted the *Paperless: Innovation and technology in education* Conference (<paperless2014.weebly.com>). 117 delegates from as far afield as the UAE, Turkey, Uruguay, Mexico, Hong Kong, Macau, Australia, Korea and all over Japan attended the conference. Participants talked about how paperless technologies are changing education while digital formats of books and writing continue to evolve.

In education, developments in technology are changing and improving constantly, giving teachers new opportunities to explore new ways to develop and create materials for teaching literature in the language classroom. Specific to literature is a growing interest in the use of digital texts, commonly known as ebooks, and the use of a range of mobile technologies (such as tablets, smartphones) in the learning environment. LiLT SIG members Atsushi Iida and Tara McIlroy presented at the conference on topics linked to literature and language teaching. This short conference report introduces some aspects of the conference of relevance to LiLT members.

Paperless Learning and Talks about Literature

In the digital era of tablet technology, cloud computing and ebooks in education, the role of the literature teacher is evolving. The conference organisers suggested that becoming paperless was more than simply saving trees, and more about a shift in thinking in education.

One aspect of this change is a move from paper books to digital readers and greater reliance on technology in the classroom. Another is the variety of ways that materials can be accessed outside the classroom. Some universities are initiating *bring your own device* (BYOD) policies requiring students to purchase an Apple or Android tablet for educational use. This is an intriguing theme for literature teachers and issues surrounding the uses of blogs, digital media, and paperless technologies are of critical importance. This occurs as reading, accessing literature, and teaching with literature moves into the post-paper age.

Plenary Talks

In the opening plenary Mark King from the University of Melbourne presented on *Interactivity, values, and the affordances of the distributed learning system in a tertiary setting*. His multidisciplinary plenary had relevance for language teachers and content-based learning alike. Next, Adrian Leis, assistant professor in the English education department at Miyagi University of education gave a featured talk entitled *Discussions on paperless lessons in an EFL environment*. At the end of the day, plenary presenter Alice Chik talked about digital practices and learning using international case studies, two things which are sometimes disconnected. In her talk, *It's not the technology: Making technology relevant to learning*, an emphasis on making learning last, and realising the place for technology was a theme that teachers of all disciplines are grappling with as technology changes so quickly.

Literature and Writing Themed Presentations

Atsushi Iida's presentation entitled *Blogging in a second language: Learning beyond the classroom* reported on the theoretical framework and practical guideline for the usage of weblogs in the Japanese EFL classroom. In this presentation, he shared his experience of using weblogs in an ESP course, second-year business English in a four-year Japanese university. Learner's blogs were utilised through which each student created an account and updated blogs on a regular basis. This provided opportunities to work on different writing tasks (e.g., reflection papers, response journals, summary writing, synthesis essays) outside the classroom along with in-class reading. It also helped students to develop the sense of authorship while taking responsibility for

their own language learning. Iida concluded his presentation by suggesting that the usage of blogs should be as providing enhanced language learning experiences, not simply as providing a teaching resource.

Brett Milliner also presented on the topic of blogging also in his talk *Using a classroom blog to start your paperless classroom*. In this presentation, Milliner focused on the steps that a teacher could follow to set up and manage a blog for a writing or reading class. One feature of this presentation was that some of the problematic aspects of blogging were discussed so as to assist teachers who might plan a blog and be unaware of the additional work it can create. One problem, the issue of managing information once students are using individual blogs and writing on them frequently, was discussed in this presentation. It was a refreshingly honest view of the process of teacher-led blogging which did highlight possible problems for teachers.

There were a number of presentations using *iBook Author* to create in-house materials which could be one way for authors and users of literature to make their lesson materials more interactive. In one, Alex Worth, Alex Selman and Chris Kowalchuk from Kanda University of International Studies presented on *Using iBooks Author to produce course material*. Here the speakers described some pilot materials being created for specific use in the language classroom for university students. While *iBook Author* has a range of features suitable for creating language learning materials, one present limitation is the requirement for Apple products to be able to make the most of the iBooks created.

Professional Teacher Development

Tara McIlroy presented with Brian R Morrison and Craig Manning on the topic of online education. The growing use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in education includes student-oriented learning, development of autonomous learning and lifelong learning. MOOCs allow for distance education to be open-access, and many MOOC providers offer the classes for free. A range of topics was the topic of their talk: *MOOCs in education: possibilities and potential*. This presentation was in three parts. First, Manning talking a collaborative project in 2013 in which he participated in a MOOC alongside a group of language learners. Next, Morrison outlined a self-directed language learning module where students chose MOOCs to

meet their goals, particularly as preparation for study abroad. McIlroy talked about participating in MOOCs for professional teacher development, particularly with literature courses. She described the style of teaching in two courses from MOOC provider Coursera <coursera.org> and tasks which include forums, online essay submission and peer assessment. Two courses are highly recommended: *The fiction of relationship* with Brown University and *Science fiction and fantasy: The human mind, our modern world* from the University of Michigan.

Overview

Overall we found this to be a useful conference for those teaching writing, using literature and considering the directions that paperless technology may take in the future. While technology in language teaching may be a brave new world for some, it is possible to see paperless technology becoming more the norm for literature teachers in the future.

Notes on the Authors

Tara McIlroy is the co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. 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.

Atsushi Iida is Assistant Professor in the University Education Center at Gunma University where he has taught first-year and second-year English courses. He was awarded his Ph.D. at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include L2 poetry writing, voice and identity in L2 writing and literature in L2 education.

Report on the 2014 LiberLit Conference, February 10th, at Meiji Gakuin University, Shiroane Campus, Tokyo, Japan.

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Literature in Language Teaching SIG

The 5th Liberlit conference was held at Meiji Gakuin University, Shiroane campus, on February 10th. This year's theme was *Content with Your Content?* which was explored in a range of ways in twenty-three presentations. The aim of this year's theme was to discuss from the teacher's perspective what content the student should learn, and for what purposes content can be adapted. Again, as has become the norm at Liberlit, the quality of the presentations was high, ranging from practical suggestions on teaching historical subjects such as the Chartist movement and Second World War narratives through literature to discussions on how technology such as audiobooks can aid students in comprehending texts. Some stand-out themes in this conference were a) the diversity within types of literature used by teachers b) technology in literature teaching and c) content-based instruction and how it is being re-imagined by different teachers in different contexts.

Plenary and Selected Presentations

The plenary, *English department: What's in a Title?* was delivered by Robert A. Lee, formerly of Nihon University, Tokyo, and the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK. In his talk Lee celebrated the role of literature as a tool for critical thinking and for understanding the human condition, whilst bemoaning how literature teachers in Japan are often forced to teach

language skills in addition to literary studies. He argued against the role of English language teaching as an automatic given in Japanese universities, and instead recommended that language teaching be taught externally in a specially created language centre by highly qualified linguistics instructors. Lee then discussed the role of theory in literary analysis, and maintained that the inclusion of more literary criticism in a literature curriculum would in turn engender the growth of scholastic criticism amongst Japanese literature students. Nevertheless, whilst maintaining a deliberately polemical position in discussing how literature teaching models could ideally be transformed in Japan's future, Lee stopped short of offering concrete or practical methods for literature teachers working within the current educational dynamic to employ in terms of explicating complex L1 literature for L2 students.

One of the most illuminating and relevant presentations was delivered jointly by Barnaby Ralph, of Tokyo Woman's Christian University, and his two students Azusa Miyazaki and Miyuki Mura. *Great Textpectations: Insider/Outsider Perspectives on the Teaching of Literature* addressed issues of textual perception, and prejudice from both teacher and student perspectives. Firstly Ralph discussed from a literature teacher's professional viewpoint how texts by different writers from the canon such as Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Somerset Maugham should be included on an English literature curriculum, yet also observing how such curricular and textual selections are to a great extent informed and shaped by the definitions of the canon. Azusa Miyazaki and Miyuki Mura then offered a fascinating insight into how students often choose literature courses for very different purposes of language acquisition and cultural familiarization, whilst desiring the inclusion of a wider selection of contemporary texts which may differ from their teacher's canonical definitions. The contrast between the two perspectives neatly illustrated some of the problems teachers face in encouraging students to read classical literature, and also highlighted the possible need for a more dynamic process of teacher-student negotiation.

Joff Bradley's presentation embraced the popular understanding that movies and their narrative styles are firmly placed within the field of literature. His talk, *Sustaining the literary*, offered ways of seeing the typical models of literature teaching in universities. According to Bradley there is something missing from curricula which only approaches content-based instruction without problem-solving and challenging students with the use of important and

interesting discussion, for example in posing existential dilemmas. He uses the canon of Hitchcock as *extensive viewing* in a class at Meiji Gakuin using an overview method of introducing texts to students. With a specific focus on the non-linear puzzle of movies using different ways to help ask key questions about time, memory, identity, Bradley encourages thinking and problem-solving. His particular approach is from a Deleuzian perspective of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, which centralises identity as a process of becoming, and is thus in constant change. This makes the content and the problem-solving nature of the lessons interesting for students.

Iain Lambert from Kyorin University presented *Japanese learner creativity and non-standard forms in literature*. Iain Lambert is interested in World Englishes and teaches reading classes which features Englishes with features such as creoles and pidgins, and he does this by introducing texts from different parts of the world where these non-standard forms are the norm. His research over a period of years has been particularly focused on attitudinal studies of non-standard versions of English in the field of *perceptual dialectology*. He asked pairs of speakers to look at different types of readers, Native English speakers, bilingual Japanese-English users and Japanese students. This can help to find out about attitudes towards non-standard Englishes, and also attitudes towards non-standard Japanese. Using Scottish texts in Scots written by James Kelman and Irvine Welsh he reports on written annotations and picture responses to show students' creativity from students. Some students had knowledge from their other languages, for example, understanding the meaning of the Scots word "ken" (know) if they had studied German. Some questions were raised about the types of linguistic creativity students show through the understanding of non-standard Englishes, just as they might have attitudes about non-standard forms of Japanese also.

Presentations by Members of the LiLT SIG

As in previous years, Liberlit was strongly represented by members of the LiLT SIG and continues to make an impact on the presence at the conference. We offer some views of the presentations done by LiLT SIG members here.

Quenby Hoffman Aoki introduced practical ideas for teachers of literature in her

presentation *Three birds, one stone: Writing skills, literature, and diversity in an EFL classroom*. A comprehensive guide to approaching writing skills through literature was introduced with notes on how to focus on positive examples and use activities such as freewriting for lessons. Aoki discussed in detail some texts which introduce gender diversity and racial diversity, such as writings from nobel prize winning women and members of minority groups. The use of this material in turn leads to critical thinking around topics, as was explained by Aoki using examples from her classes. A useful list of possible texts was provided to accompany the talk along with quotes from students who recognise the value of including these topics for discussion.

Atsushi Iida presented on *Humanizing EFL Pedagogy: Expressing voice through haiku composition in a foreign language*. Iida is working in the field of L2 literacy and is interested in developing teaching methods within the existing teaching pedagogy in Japan. His particular focus is on the teaching of literacy for Japanese students who have learned English in Japan using the grammar-translation method or audio-lingual method. Looking particularly at haiku, Iida gave a definition of traditional Japanese haiku and talk talked about some reasons for using haiku in the language classroom. Some reasons for using haiku are to involve students in the process of writing, to include autobiographical events in writing and to help students to extend their awareness of the target language through writing. A lively discussion around the use of titles with writing and ways of seeing haiku in English involved participants in the session.

Hugh Nicoll presented on *Exploratory practises for teaching literary texts and contexts*. Nicoll teaches literature to English students at Miyazaki Kouritsu Daigaku, and his session explored ways in which learners can gradually be led towards both literary texts and socio-cultural knowledge. Using the adapted the principles of Allwright and Hanks' (2009) *exploratory practice* within the context of an American Studies Seminar, and used texts by writers such as Mark Twain, Langston Hughes and Booker T. Washington to explicate a deeper student understanding of African-American history from emancipation to the Harlem renaissance. Nicoll's presentation was of particular interest for teachers looking to enliven the literature classroom, and prompted a lively post-presentation discussion on scaffolding content.

Neil Addison discussed two ways to scaffold literary content in the classroom. Firstly, in his *Realizing Ideas in Shakespeare's Hamlet* presentation he illustrated how universal themes

specific to the human condition can be explicated through teaching short bite sized chunks of Shakespeare's plays. In *Literary Content and Post-Colonial Criticism* he examined how, whilst literature contains such universal themes, it also re-presents cultures tendentiously, creating divisions of insider and outsider. Practical examples were then given of how students can be guided towards reading a wide selection of literature such as *Sredni Vashtar* by Saki, *Dead Men's Path* by Chinua Achebe, and *Kokoro* by Natsume Soseki with a more critical and culturally comparative approach.

Tara McIlroy used examples from a reading class to discuss aspects of texture in the talk *Is There a Texture in this Text? Applications of the Cognitive Poetics Approach*. Using Peter Stockwell's (University of Nottingham, UK) ideas on cognitive poetics a description of some possible applications of the approach to classes was explained. Some examples from class material, using Mark Twain's memoirs and *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel encouraged discussion on the uses of Hallidayan theory and notions of coherence in practical teaching situations.

Future directions

The Liberlit conference is now a firmly set event in the year's conference calendar, and promises to be around continue in the foreseeable future. There will be the beginning of a new venture this year, under the direction of Myles Chilton, in the form of a literary journal. More information can be found at <liberlit.com> In the closing comments at the end of the day, Michael Pronko and Paul Hullah invited everyone to return again next year, and warmly thanked all literature-related groups for their support. We at the LiLT SIG look forward to the next event with enthusiasm.

Notes on the Authors

Neil Addison has a BA in English Literature from the University of Kent, an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Southampton, and is currently undertaking his PhD at the University of Birmingham. His research interests reflect his passion for using literature in the language classroom to improve students' critical thinking abilities.

Tara McIlroy is the co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG. 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.

A Conversation with Neil Addison

Tara McIlroy

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Neil Addison is a lecturer at Tokyo Woman's Christian University and is a member of the LiLT SIG. Neil's presentation at the 2013 JALT National forum on *Finding Shakespeare* helped to frame the use of Hamlet in modern, Japanese teaching contexts. Neil has a number of ongoing projects linked with literature in language teaching, some of which he shares in this interview.

TM: First, could you describe a bit of your background and how you came to be interested in literature?

NA: I wasn't a particularly motivated student when I was younger, but in my final school year I happened to have a charismatic literature teacher who largely through sheer force of personality instilled an interest in books. He had a rather quirky and humorous way of introducing texts and making them come alive, and from this I developed a nascent interest in reading literature which, after I'd left school, gradually grew into a fully fledged autodidacticism. Of course, as we all

know, becoming a committed reader is akin to opening Pandora's Box; each book one reads references and signposts the way to another book, being part of a vast interconnected tapestry, so once my independent reading trip kick-started in earnest I was hooked for life. I realized, as all people who love literature do, that reading connects us to an expansive historical archive of human thoughts, sensations and experiences, and allows us to travel through time and space. It makes us empathetic, as we begin to see the world from other people's personal and cultural perspectives. Yet I found that the greatest thing about reading was discovering that things written in books by other people corresponded to and were qualified by my own life experiences. Literature gives voice to our voiceless thoughts, and puts a kind of official stamp on universal instincts and sensations that we all implicitly feel, and yet can't always articulate or express when we feel them. As Seamus Heaney said, literature allows us to credit the promptings of our intuitive mind.

After several years spent working I returned to formal education and entered the University of Kent as an English literature major, and from there my winding road brought me to Japan to teach English in an EFL context. Yet, as time has passed I've gradually started to bring literature more and more into my language classes, becoming as much a literature teacher as an English teacher. Remembering my own educational background and the important role that teachers can have in motivating students' interests, my teaching approach involves striving to try and bring literature alive for my students.

TM: What are some of the teaching experiences which have shaped your views of literature as a teacher and student?

NA: From a student's perspective I realized from an early age that the natural personality, and enthusiasm of my literature teacher was an important factor in my learning process. I noticed that individual things certain teachers did or said often helped encode specific pieces of information in my mind. The information I successfully remembered from classes was often due to the style in which it was taught, and its physical and acoustic mental associations. Years on, despite having obtained a CELTA and an MA in applied linguistics, I still hold the suspicion that a

teacher's individual presence and unique style can on occasions trump the more orthodox methodological codes and practices learnt in teacher training. I think that this is particularly the case when teaching literature or content related emotive subjects, as seizing students' attention at a profoundly visceral level is important. The problem, however, with this teaching quality is that it is (as bemoaned by the headmaster in Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*) difficult to quantify. Obviously, having a structured, well planned, step by step curriculum is important when teaching reading, and yet within that framework I feel that literature teachers should also be given a chance to use their own unique 'horse sense' to find what content works well for their particular students. There needs to be dynamism between the two factors.

TM: How is literature particularly useful, more so than other types of texts, do you think?

NA: Firstly, I guess it depends on how you would define literature and seek to distinguish it from other texts. Are all texts literature? Most of us wouldn't agree with that, and yet defining literature in absolute terms is problematic. Samuel Johnson famously commented that it was easier to define what literature wasn't than what it was. In which case should we define literature purely in terms designated by the traditional canon? Again, this is problematic, as the canon has come under attack from people like Terry Eagleton for being an ideological construct, organized by powerful competing groups who assert the values of specific writers for their own ends. Emily Dickinson is one of the greatest poetic stylists of all time, yet her poetry was initially considered by the canon to be the work of someone who did not correctly understand style! D.H. Lawrence's place within the canon has also been defined and redefined depending on the social, moral and stylistic mores of the time, moving from pornographer in-chief to high priest of modernist literature. Now many universities are apparently taking him off the curriculum again, as his position is once more brought under review.

Yet in terms of defining literature which is specifically useful in the classroom, I believe we need to select texts which have some undercurrent of complexity about them. By complexity, I don't necessarily mean complexity of language. Our students obviously won't enjoy trudging through impenetrable texts with large numbers of polysyllabic words and multi-clause sentences, whilst

making them do so may undermine any vocabulary or content based teaching aims we might have. Instead I mean that we should look for works that deal with complex, and challenging themes which will stimulate our students. We should select texts for the classroom which truthfully and honestly represent the complex world in which we live. For example, we can say that Shakespeare's literature is greater than Tom Clancy's because Shakespeare represents his characters in a more truthfully complex way than Clancy does. Hamlet appears intensely human to us because of his imperfections, his constant changes of heart and his paranoia, while Clancy's characters are more two dimensional. It's impossible to discuss the latter's texts for any great length of time beyond mere description of plot or sequential events. Great literature, however, writes about the human condition with honesty, and shows us to be complex, contradictory beings living in a confusing and difficult world. It's pedagogically more honest to bring these sorts of challenging materials into the classroom than distributing content which represents the world simplistically.

In a previous journal interview Wendy Jones Nakanishi wrote about simplified textbook topics reducing students to the conversational level of simple-minded adolescents, whilst using demanding literary content takes their conversation to a more interesting adult level. I couldn't agree more! My old literature teacher brought Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* into our literature-phobic school English class, and it sent shockwaves through the room. It was a 'Wizard of Oz' moment in our lives, as if someone had pulled back the curtain and revealed what was behind it, and it prompted weeks of discussion. Even though the language was difficult for us, by breaking key chapters of the text down into manageable reading chunks and through paraphrasing when necessary he brought it alive.

Of course, as I said before, such literature needn't possess particularly demanding language. Charles Bukowski noted that an artist or writer says a complex thing in a simple way, and it's a credo I'm keen to adhere to as a teacher. Such materials don't have to take the form of conventional literature to be challenging. As some contributors to this journal have already previously argued, the constraints of the traditional canon perhaps need to be re-conceptualised,

so that manga, movies and other forms of art can be incorporated. So I don't believe it's a strict literature versus text issue, but more a case of selecting something with an undercurrent of complexity (be it Tolstoy, Shakespeare, a TV show or a comic book) which will challenge the students. If we can find a way to make such complex content come alive and make it meaningful to our students then it becomes incredibly useful as a reading, thinking and communicative prompt.

TM: On to Shakespeare, and Hamlet, then. What makes The Bard relevant to today's students, in your opinion?

NA: Shakespeare has become an economic cottage industry at home and abroad, and is unfortunately used today as an elitist form of cultural or commercial symbolism. His image can be found in British ELT textbooks like Headway, juxtaposed next to pictures of the Queen and fish and chips. We tend to think of him not as an actual living and breathing historical human being but instead as this idealized cultural exemplar of greatness, and of course this tends to intimidate Japanese students, and make them immediately apprehensive (as I was at school) about reading him. Because of this it seems that the Bard is often barred from the English reading classroom! This is a great pity because Shakespeare actually wrote for the groundlings, the common audiences. He used the common vernacular of the day, and because of this it made its way into the lexicon via the mass printing of his plays. In many ways he can be seen as the poet laureate of the common man, remarking in King Lear that the pompous upper classes (arguably addressed to King James) should 'take physic' and consent to feel what wretches feel. He was actually looked down on by other university educated playwrights such as Robert Greene for being a populist – an uneducated “upstart crow” or troublemaker. Yet as Ben Jonson wrote, he was not of an age, but for all time. His themes still resonate with us today, because, like Dostoevsky or Tolstoy he holds a mirror up to mankind, and shows us to be complex, inconsistent and flawed, with the capacity for both good and evil. In doing this his plays provide a sustained and sophisticated contribution to our understanding of the human condition. His characters contend with problems that still dominate our lives today, as we attempt to deal with

the subtleties of the human heart, form relationships, build lives and search for meaning in them, often in the face of sheer meaninglessness.

TM: How do you introduce Shakespeare in class? And how do you keep interest high?

NA: I don't tend to teach the entire plays, but instead focus on specific segments of poetic speeches. When doing so I'll often ask the students to compare ideas in these examples with similarly related themes in other short texts such as contemporary poetry by John Cooper-Clarke, or even pop songs lyrics. Before introducing the poetry, however, I'll distribute simple overviews of the plots with accompanying focus questions before then moving to character analysis. We go over some the problems specific characters might have, and the students will discuss in groups or pairs what the main protagonist or the supporting characters should do. For example, I asked them what they would do in Hamlet's place and gave them a series of possible options. When most of them looked crestfallen and replied that they didn't know I told them that this was of course Hamlet's problem. Most of his difficulties are inherited, and he is given an almost unplayable lie, to use a golfing analogy, so that his future actions are contaminated by the source of these problems. Once we have focused on the character-driven problems, I start to pull back and look more at the possible cultural discourses which may influence the play, and the problems of the characters. In the case of teaching Hamlet and his inherited problems, we looked at two oppositional cultural traditions in art which preceded the writing of the play; the renaissance heroic tradition and the culture of *memento mori*, the remembrance of death. The students discussed one particular painting by Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, which seems to contain strains of both of these traditions locked together within the canvas, and they then connected them to contemporary heroic and prosaic depictions of characters in movies, manga and novels. We then returned to Hamlet and, having previously studied the mechanics of metaphor and simile performed some close reading work on the metaphorical language found in several of his key soliloquies with reference to these discourses. For example, when Hamlet describes himself as being a rogue and peasant slave he is chastising himself for his heroic deficiencies, yet when he juxtaposes man as like an angel and yet a quintessence of dust he is

subverting this heroic renaissance tradition. I then asked the students to consider whether these discourses influenced Hamlet's indecisive and wavering actions in the play, and more contemporaneously, how cultural, social and family inheritance shapes their own thoughts and actions in Japan. Through teaching in this way I try to make the students see that Hamlet's problems are the common lot of us all. None of us are able to choose how or where we are born; we are all brought into the world with linguistic, cultural and family baggage, and have to bear this problematic inheritance whilst trying to navigate forwards through life.

TM: Have you met with any reluctance or aversion to Shakespeare, and how might you deal with that?

NA: The only reluctance or antagonism I might possibly face is at the start of the class, if I were to grandly announce to the students that they are going to study Shakespeare, or poetry, or literature for that matter. Instead of doing this I ease things in gently, with simplified overviews and lots of discussion before beginning to assign readings from the authentic texts themselves. By the time that the students are immersed in the ideas, moving to the literature itself seems relatively painless.

TM: What other writers and texts are you particularly taken with which have some uses in the language classroom?

NA: A colleague Neil Conway and I have recently been teaching romantic 18th century poetry such as Wordsworth at separate institutions, and conducting combined post-course research on our students' attitudes and opinions. Our study can be found in the 2013 JALT PanSIG Proceedings, which should hopefully be in print by now. While we feel that graded readers have an important role to play in consolidating language acquisition outside of the classroom we also think it's important to also get beyond the headword and teach authentic texts such as poetry, which can afford students valuable examples of how lexical chunks of language collocate and form, as Wittgenstein says, family relationships. Poetry, we believe, is perfect for in-depth L2 classroom analysis of authentic literary language, as the time consuming process of reading a

novel can be negated without cheapening the complexity level. We chose to teach the poetry of Romanticism (and its opposition to the Industrial Revolution) because we wanted texts whose historical themes would connect with contemporary concerns familiar to our students' lives such as global warming and pollution. As Saint Augustine once said, in the new does the old unfold. Students were first asked to discuss some of the main recurring themes found in Studio Ghibli animated films, such as animals versus humans and science, and industry versus nature before discussing the same opposing discourses in examples of British romantic landscape art. Having identified these thematic tensions the students were then given different Wordsworth poems that addressed these oppositional themes, and having performed adjectival gap fill exercises they were required to discuss the meaning of the descriptive and metaphorical language in relation to these discourses.

TM: Do you have any advice for teachers attempting to approach literature?

NA: I don't have anything especially valuable to say in terms of advice, other than (of course without question) to be passionate about what you do, and the text that you are trying to teach, (be it literature or other forms of content) as the students will know when you are merely going through the motions, and will respond accordingly. Passion will give you a huge head start, but it won't carry you all the way. As the poet Mark Halliday documents in his amusing *Moose Failure* essay, just being passionate about a poem isn't enough. We need to consider how a text will be perceived from the students' point of view, key it to their interests, and then scaffold appropriately. Just dumping a literary text into the students' laps and expecting the beauty of the piece to captivate them rarely works. That said, with careful planning and thoughtful foregrounding of literary ideas, themes and cultural background it's likely that introducing literature into the classroom will be one of the most satisfying classroom experiences students and teachers can ever have.

TM: What are your 2014 plans, as far as teaching, presenting and writing go?

NA: I'm currently co-writing a Cultural Studies textbook with another colleague Barnaby Ralph,

which we hope will give teachers a critical yet practical framework to approach short stories, images and other forms of culture. I'm also going to be presenting at a Tokyo literature conference entitled 'Romantic Connections' in June, where I hope to discuss the relationship between the Western literary tradition of Orientalism, and its residue in modern English teaching practices abroad.

TM: Thanks Neil, and best of luck for all of your future writing and teaching.

A Conversation with Suzanne Kamata

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Suzanne Kamata is a member of the LiLT SIG and a published author, of amongst other writings, young adult fiction. Suzanne also presented on her ideas about creative writing workshops at the 2013 LiLT SIG forum. Congratulations to Suzanne on the recent success at the APALA (Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association) with recognition of writing success in receiving a YA Honor award for Gadget Girl. For more information on Suzanne Kamata's publications her homepage has details <www.suzannekamata.com>

TM: Let's begin with a few questions about how you got involved in writing. What sparked your first interest in writing?

SK: I've been writing stories since I was a kid. I think everyone does, but I never stopped. I suppose that I started writing stories because I liked reading them. I remember my mother taking my brother and me to the library on a regular basis, and always being the kid sitting in a corner with a book during family reunions.

TM: How and when did you start writing professionally?

SK: My first paid assignment was for a newspaper article I wrote while I was a high school student. It was about teens enlisting in the army. During college, I had a part-time job at a library as the community relations secretary. I wrote press releases and newsletter articles, and

then later, when I came to Japan, I started to write on a freelance basis for magazines and newspapers.

TM: Who are some of your favourite writers?

SK: There are so many! I'm a big fan of Louise Erdrich, Chitra Divakaruni, Kyoko Mori, Donna Tartt, Jay McInerney, Jayne Ann Phillips, Sherman Alexie, Barbara Kingsolver, the list goes on.

TM: What makes a good story, in your opinion?

SK: I think a memorable, well-rounded cast of characters is the most important element. I like stories about human relationships that touch the heart. Some writers are very good at the craft of writing, and are maybe good at keeping the plot moving along, but don't create characters that I believe in or want to spend time with. Ideally, the characters struggle with something, and come out changed at the end.

TM: How has the Japanese setting influenced you? For example, in 'Losing Kei' the context of the international marriage in Japan is very specific. What can you say about the Japanese context and what aspects of it have been interesting for you to write about?

SK: People always say, "Write about what you know." After 26 years in Japan, the place I know best is Tokushima. Not many Anglophone writers have written about Tokushima. And not a lot have written about international marriage, or bicultural families in rural Japan, especially from a woman's point of view. I feel that I have something fairly unique to write about.

TM: In your creative writing workshops at Tokushima University, what factors have you considered when designing the course?

SK: The level of the students' English ability is probably the main factor I've had to take into consideration. I also implement familiar stories and forms, such as Japanese folktales in translation, manga, and lists, such as those written in Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*. Thus, I consider the students' literary background.

My colleague advertised the class through posters, which were put up around the university, and word of mouth. At our first meeting, we tried to come up with a time that was convenient for most of the members. Most of them had either studied abroad, or were non-native speakers from abroad who spoke English as a second language, so we were able to conduct the entire course in English. Although some students had written poetry or stories on their own for fun before, none of the participants had ever studied Creative Writing, i.e. the craft of writing.

Although creative writing, by its very definition, allows experimentation and innovation, we began by examining basic story structures, such as the three act format of Freytag's Pyramid (inciting incident, development, denouement) and fundamentals of craft. As an exercise in storytelling, students narrated a wordless picture book in rounds (we used *Clementina's Cactus* by Ezra Jack Keats and *Flotsam* by David Wiesner). Students explained what was happening in the illustration page by page, in turns, according to their abilities. We also charted traditional tales such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" and "Momotaro" according to the pyramid structure and asked students to rewrite the story or a scene from a different point of view, or in a different setting.

In early sessions, we explored the notion of showing versus telling, by comparing newspaper articles, which are largely reported, i.e. "told," with passages from literature including vivid imagery and strong verbs. We also discussed how to create well-rounded characters, imagining

flaws, fears, likes and dislikes of one-dimensional characters such as Momotoro; setting, as established by various sensory images; point of view; and effective beginnings. Additionally, we talked about various forms such as lists (using Sei Shonagan's *The Pillow Book* and Native American chant poems as models), the six-word story (as made famous by Ernest Hemingway's six-word-story "For sale: baby shoes never worn") and had students write lists and six-word stories of their own. Because these sessions were not for credit, and some students were occasionally absent due to job-hunting or academic obligations, our goal was to concentrate on one aspect of craft per week, and to give students time to write in class. Over a 90-minute period, they were then able to complete a single task, and hopefully feel a sense of accomplishment.

The ultimate goal of our course was to have students write and revise a full-length short story over a period of ten weeks. When students were ready to share a draft of their stories, the work was typed, printed and distributed to all students. Using a list of non-judgmental questions, such as "Where is the story set?" "What kind of a person is the main character?" we discussed each story. The student writer was then able to determine whether or not his/her story had the desired effect and what elements needed work.

TM: What kind of feedback have students given you about the creative writing workshops?

SK: Mostly, I've found they really enjoy creative writing. Many have never tried to write a story or poem in English, and they seem pleased when they're able to finish a piece. At least one student wrote that she was more interested in reading in English after she'd taken my colleague's creative writing course, which was based upon my workshop.

TM: How do you think literature can be useful for language learning?

SK: Literature is part of culture, so in order to know another culture, it's good to study its

literature. Students often say that they want to learn more about American or British culture. They can't really learn much from memorizing lists of vocabulary words. I think that stories, poems, and essays are inherently interesting. Students can also learn about prosody (the sounds or words), metaphorical language, and nuances in language from literature.

TM: What advice can you give readers of this journal who are interested in literature in language teaching and writing fiction?

SK: Don't be afraid to give it a try. Many of us may think that our students are not ready for literature, or for writing fiction, but both can be taught to even low level students. Start out small, with six word stories, or flash fiction - or even first lines. Build from there.

TM: Finally, can you tell us a bit about your next project and future plans?

SK: A colleague and I are working on a textbook for ESL students of Creative Writing. I hope to continue to develop and explore the possibilities of teaching Creative Writing in English to non-native speakers. On a more personal level, my next novel, *Screaming Divas*, about an all-girl band in 1980s South Carolina will be published in May by best-selling author Jacquelyn Mitchard's Merit Press. I'm currently working on a sequel to *Gadget Girl*, for which I received a Multicultural Work-in-Progress Grant from SCBWI, and a mother/daughter travel memoir for which I received a grant from the Sustainable Arts Foundation.

TM: Thanks once again Suzanne for the interview and we look forward to reading more from you in the future.

A Conversation with Kevin Stein

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Kevin Stein is a member of the LiLT SIG, working at a private high school in Osaka. He brings a range of teaching experience to his writing on education and topics in ELT. His special interest is the use of stories in the language classroom. He's an active blogger on topics such as teaching, reading, and exploring the language classroom. You can find his writing in various places including regular blog posts over at his blog *The other things matter* (theotherthingsmatter.wordpress.com/). He is also a professional mentor at the International Teacher Development Institute (iDTi) professional development website itdi.pro/blog. Kevin can also be found via twitter: [@kevchanwow](https://twitter.com/kevchanwow).

TM: First off, could you tell us a little about what sparked your interest in writing?

KS: There's really not much of a story here. When I was 7 years old, I wrote a story and my teachers and my parents gave me a lot of praise. I enjoyed writing the story (which was about a goat that fell off a cruise ship) and the positive feedback I got made the whole writing-stories-thing seem like a pretty fun way to spend my free time. As I got older and read books that moved and challenged me, I wanted to do something similar and so I got a bit more serious about writing in general.

TM: How did writing begin to and how does it continue to influence your teaching?

KS: Because I love to write, I sometimes think that my students must also enjoy it. This, of course, is probably a terrible assumption on my part. Writing is time consuming and in a second language it can be difficult and anxiety-inducing. Fortunately, as I was learning Japanese, I also tried to do a lot of writing in Japanese as well. I started by writing *tanka*. The short form of a *tanka* poem was just about as much as I could handle. I was lucky to have a few of my *tanka*

featured on a weekly NHK radio show as well. So once again it was a positive feedback loop. Writing led to success which led to more writing. But when I write in Japanese, I still wrestle with every word, every sentence. So when I do writing activities in class, for example having students write haiku, or letters to a character in a story, I focus on what the student is trying to say (and manages to say) as opposed to simply the mechanics of the language they use. For me, writing in the classroom is one of the ways students can challenge themselves and become more aware of how rich language can be. Writing can and should be an exploration of potential. And perhaps more than that, writing is often a search for an answer to a question. It's open-ended enough that there is always room for a student's authentic voice.

TM: What is your interest in various types of literature, and how are you using it in your classes?

KS: I love all kinds of literature. I keep a book of poetry by my bed and like to read it before I go to sleep. Lately I've been reading *Leaves of Grass* and I'm just amazed by how much joy is there on the page. I use short poems with relatively easy to understand surfaces in my classes.

Raymond Carver, Robert Creeley, and Tess Gallagher. There are some difficult vocabulary items that pop up in these poems, but they are also many identifiable situations my students can connect with. Sometimes I just have the students read a poem and leave it at that. Sometimes we work with the poems and take the often truncated language of a poem as a base to build longer, more fleshed out sentences. Sometimes we use it to explore cultural differences.

I also use a lot of short fiction in my classes. Grace Paley is one of my favorites. I also use Murakami Haruki's stories translated into English. My students especially liked "On seeing the 100% perfect girl one beautiful April morning.". And there's something about Murakami's sentences which have an especially English feel and flow to them. So when my students read the Japanese version, I think it also will positively impact their English abilities. In this issue I introduce some an activity I use to help my students work with and enjoy reading literary fiction. I find that if students have the time to find something special in a story, to make it their own, they very much enjoy working with these kinds of texts.

TM: Could you tell us a bit about your short fiction for EFL learners?

KS: About two years ago, my friend suggested I write a short story for my students. I think I had been complaining about the length of most of the stories for learners and how I would like to have a text which could be read and enjoyed multiple times within one class period. He just said, “So write one.” And I did. I have 9 stories now finished and up on my blog. Some of my friends have been kind enough to use them in their own classrooms. There is a teacher who works at an engineering university in France who uses one, a high school teacher in Korea, an adult EFL teacher in Brazil. And they not only use the stories, but send me their lesson plans and notes. So on top of producing materials for my students, I’ve gotten many excellent lesson plans and supplemental materials I can use in my classes. The stories themselves are all short, just around 500 words, and I try to make sure that at least 90% of the words fall within the General Service List. In addition, the stories, I hope, are grounded in character. I try and make sure that there is a real human at the heart of each story so that reading doesn’t just become a question of understanding the plot, but about getting to know a person.

TM: How do you think teachers who have never written before can start to use writing and literature in their classes?

KS: I would suggest that any teacher who does write for their students, make sure to listen to what the students have to say about the story. When a student doesn’t understand something on the page, you have a real chance to engage in a dialogue and find out where things went astray. Sometimes it is a problem in the writing, sometimes it is a problem in how the student is reading. Sometimes both. But because it is a teacher-written story, there is a lot of space to kind of tell the student, “hey, this is just a story I wrote. It’s not perfect. I think I probably tripped you up here.” I’ve found this to be one of the most beneficial aspects of using materials I wrote myself.

And as far as using literature in class, I recommend a teacher start by being open to what literature is and perhaps define it with a very small “I”. Poems by Shel Silverstein, or well-

written scenes from a television drama. It's all literature and it can be really accessible to the students. I also recommend using something you really love and know well. Finally, I think you have to decide when you use a text, are you focused on the meaning and how it ties in with the structure and language, or are you primarily focused on the language itself. If you are using a poem or story to teach grammar, I think you are kind of doing a disservice to your students and the text itself. Playing with the language, looking at the text critically, helping students pick up on language and use it in different ways. All of these things work well when using a literature in the classroom. But picking apart the grammar pulls students out of the text, often before they have even got ankle deep into it. So my biggest recommendation is plan a series of activities which lets the students gradually move deeper and deeper into the text.

TM: Over at your blog, *The Other Things Matter* you've become quite involved in the online community of teachers in EFL. What's the story so far with your blog and what future plans do you have for that?

KS: When I started blogging about 2 years ago, I was primarily looking for a way to explore what I was learning as I studied for my dipTESOL and make more sense of how my studies aligned (or didn't) with what I was doing in my classes. As I posted, I explored other ELT blogs. I ended up finding a core group of teachers who were doing very different things from myself, but whose ideas of teaching and blogging seemed similar to my own. I left comments on their blogs and very naturally we became engaged in an ongoing dialogue. From there I was invited to write some guest posts on the iTDi blog and it kind of just blossomed from there. Now I have a very close group of teachers who I can bounce ideas off, who I can ask for recommendations around materials, and will help me sort out issues as they arise in my classes. So for me, blogging was a way to explore my own class, but it eventually became a key component in building my professional learning network.

TM: Amongst other roles as professional mentor, you've been involved in the professional development work done over at iTDi also. Can you tell us about your experiences with the team at iTDi?

KS: Well, my connection with iTDi started through my blog. Then I got to know Chuck Sandy, Barbara Sakamoto and Steven Herder and what they were trying to do, which is basically connect up any English teacher interested in professional development and make sure they had the chance, regardless of money or Internet connection speed, to grow as a teacher. I myself was, and still am, trying to develop as a teacher and realized that the more voices I exposed myself to, the better the chance that I would be able to figure out how to be a better teacher. And that's exactly what has happened. As I've learned a bit more about how teachers hold their classes in Brazil or Indonesia, I've been challenged to think about what language teaching is all about. Bumping up against all of these ideas has helped me grow as a teacher. To help give back, I've become a mentor and hopefully I've been able to provide some ideas and directions so that other teachers have new ways to look at their own teaching.

TM: What kinds of things do you think teachers can learn from blogging and communicating online?

KS: I probably am going to come off as kind of evangelical here, but I think that there comes a point in every teacher's development when they have to move beyond their immediate school setting in order to really keep growing. This used to mean joining JALT and attending conferences. But now, it's possible to attend webinars, virtual conferences, and even teaching chats on Twitter and build a professional learning network with nothing more than a bit of time and an internet connection. The most important thing a teacher can get from plugging into this network is to simply find out all the other ways English is being taught around the world. Hearing genuine teaching voices and being exposed to other teachers' ideas about teaching is crucial to being able to rethink what you are doing in your own classroom. For a reflective teacher who is trying to understand what they are doing in their own classroom, the value of making connections with other teachers can't be overstated.

TM: What advice can you offer members of the LiLT SIG who are interested in writing, blogging and communicating with their international colleagues?

KS: Come and join iTDi <itdi.pro/blog>. It's free. They have amazing webinars by people like Scott Thornbury, John Fanselow, Shelly Sanchez Terrel, and Penny Ur. Most of all, the teachers in iTDi are incredibly curious and supportive. They want to know what you are doing in your classes and share what they are doing as well. I also recommend #ELTchat <eltchat.org> a regular Twitter chat focused on one topic proposed and voted on by chat members. You don't have to join anything, just look for the #ELTchat hashtags and join in the conversation. Finally, even if you don't blog, I really recommend checking out ELT blogs, leaving comments and getting involved in the conversations that are going on. There are blogs focused on materials and lesson plans (I highly recommend Sandy Millin's blog <sandymillin.wordpress.com/> and Rachael Roberts' ELT-Resourceful http://elt-resourceful.com/), various guests posts from teaching all over the world (Barbara Sakamoto's Teaching Village <teachingvillage.org/>), reflective practices (Michael Griffin's ELT Rants, Reviews, and Reflections <eltrantsreviewsreflections.wordpress.com/> and Josette LeBlanc) and almost any other aspect of teaching you can imagine.

TM: Finally, what are your 2014 plans as far as teaching and writing?

KS: 2014 is the year I am hoping to complete a book of short fiction for language learners. The book will also contain thorough lesson plans and class reflections on how each of the stories was used as well as student reactions. I'm in discussion with a publisher now and there is some talk that if it works out, it could be a series in which teachers who are writing stories for their own classes can then submit to the next book in the series. I really do think that there are all kinds of fantastic literary materials being produced by teachers and that it would be a great idea to share these stories with a larger audience. As far as teaching goes, the education group I work for is going to be opening an American style high school. Students will be taking 20 hours of English classes a week. I am very excited about this. I've always found that working in Japan, it's always a struggle to keep expectations for student development in line with the limited amount of in- and out-of-class exposure learners will get to English. 20 hours a week of class time seems about just the right amount to see the kinds of gains that I know my students are capable of. And of

course, I will be spending a good chunk of my planning time finding just the right kind of literature to use during class to help make that dream of progress a reality.

TM: Thanks so much Kevin. Good luck with your projects, and we look forward to reading more from you soon.

Using classic literature in the ESL/EFL classroom: The Great Gatsby in the classroom: Searching for the American dream

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Abstract

The following book review is based on *the Great Gatsby in the classroom: Searching for the American dream* by David Dowling. The book, written for an American high school literature program contains lesson plans and activities that help students derive meaning from literature. Regardless of the original target readership, the teaching materials outlined in the book could be easily applied to other literature classics, and be used as materials by teachers who wish to use the classics in the ESL/EFL classroom.

The evolution of the graded reader has made classics far more accessible to the ESL/EFL reader, but for many L2 or even L1 students the historical and cultural underpinnings are not always readily available and may result in students regarding the classics as outdated and impersonal. *The Great Gatsby in the Classroom: Searching for the American Dream* by David Dowling provides the necessary background and instructional techniques to bring a classic to life. Although it is written for the high school classroom to accompany the original novel, the activities and lesson plans can be easily adapted to the graded reader version of *The Great Gatsby*.

Dowling's lesson plans and activities, draw on several of the general objectives of an ESL/EFL reading class i.e., activating prior knowledge, pre-reading, author's purpose and tone, main ideas versus supporting details, character development, as well as identifying and reflecting on story themes. As an activating prior knowledge or pre-reading activity for *the Great Gatsby*, Dowling suggests

that students watch *The emergence of modern America: The roaring twenties*. The video recording is accompanied by a handout in which students compare the 1920s to modern times. In my own class, rather than watch the video, I had students do research on the 1920s and then complete the comparison sheet (pp.11). Many of the activities designed by Dowling, involve integrated skills; the oral interpretation exercise (pp.33-37) requires students to create and perform dialogues between characters. This activity is accompanied with an oral interpretation-grading rubric, providing a framework on how to evaluate the exercise. Student participation in this exercise highlights the importance of understanding the tone of the author as well as the role of the characters in the novel. Understanding chronology (pp.52-55) is an activity in which students look at the supporting details of the story in order to make a timeline of events. Then, in partners, students refer to the the timeline to answer a number of questions based on the themes of *the Great Gatsby*: the American Dream, materialism, and the 1920s; this activity is especially useful for ESL/EFL language learners who may not be knowledgeable about these aspects of American history and culture.

The Great Gatsby in the Classroom: Searching for the American Dream provides ideas, lesson plans and insights into teaching *The Great Gatsby*, but the book does fall short in some areas as an ESL/EFL resource. The book is designed from the point of view of a veteran high school literature teacher, so ESL/EFL users of the books must keep in mind that modifications are essential to make many of these lesson plans possible. For example, some activities are based on a 78-minute class that meets two- three times a week, as opposed to a 90-minute ESL/EFL class that may meet only once or twice a week. The language of the text may also need to be modified to meet the particular level of ESL/EFL class. Lastly, the book does not contain an index, to act as a guide for those teaches who are acquainting or reacquainting themselves with *The Great Gatsby*.

In conclusion, Dowling has written a book that illuminates not only *the Great Gatsby* but also the idea that classics, which when thoughtfully activated, can work in the classroom. The book offers inspiration and energy to the experienced teacher and guidance and structure for the new teacher. *The Great Gatsby in the Classroom: Searching for the American Dream* is part of a series of teacher resource books published by the National Council of Teachers of English. If you are interested in this book you may browse the table of contents and the first chapter online at readwritethink.org. As an EFL/ESL reading teacher Dowling's work provides a guided passage to a far more student-centered reading classroom.

Author notes

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Announcements



Information about the next issue of *The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching*

Issue 3.2 is a proceedings papers issue from ‘The Heart of the Matter’ conference. Feature articles are also accepted for this issue. Further information is available from the LiLT SIG website <liltsig.org> and from the editors of this journal via email to liltsig@gmail.com

Editorial Policy

Literature in Language Teaching Journal, the refereed research journal of the Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) Special Interest Group, invites research articles and research reports on using literature in language classrooms in Japanese and Asian contexts. Submissions from international contexts are accepted if applicable to language teaching in Japan. Further details can be found at <liltsig.org>

The editors encourage submissions in six categories:

- (1) FEATURE ARTICLES: Full-length articles, (Feature Articles, FA) detailing research or discussing theoretical issues. Between 2500-4000 words.
- (2) LITERATURE IN PRACTICE: Slightly shorter, more directly practical than Feature Articles. Descriptions of how teachers use literature in their classes. Explain clearly for other teachers to be able to readily apply. 2000-3000 words.
- (3) Interviews with SIG members: about themselves, their ideas and their teaching experiences using literature. Maximum 2500 words.
- (4) Write-ups by presenters themselves of their recent presentations (format somewhat akin to proceedings)
- (5) Conference reports by attendees at literature-themed events.
- (6) Comments on previously published *LiLT Journal* articles (*Talk back*).
- (7) Book and media reviews (*Reviews*).

Articles should be written for a general audience of language educators; therefore, statistical techniques and specialized terms should be clearly explained.

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations.

Style

The *LiLT Journal* follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition. We recommend that authors consult recent copies of *JALT Journal* or *TESOL Quarterly* for examples of documentation and references.