

# The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

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### From the Co-Editors

Friends and Colleagues,

This is the seventh 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, we have submissions relating to literature in practice from around Japan and Iran, showing again that LiLT is becoming known outside Japan. In this issue we also report on some of the LiLT activities of the Japan Writers Conference and the 2015 JALT Conference held in Shizuoka. **Neil Addison** would like to remind everyone of the upcoming **Liberlit Conference** to be held on February 22, 2016 at Tokyo Women's Christian University. There will also be a **LiLT Forum** in Kyoto on September 17, 2016.

In this issue, in his literature in practice article, **Matthew Armstrong**, reports on his use of short works of literature by both well-known and less well-known authors with reluctant engineering majors in Kyushu. Next, **Seyed Mohammad Momeni** from Iran describes the process and results of introducing critical thinking skills to enhance the understanding of haiku poetry with two groups of intermediate female university students. Finally, **Peter Hourdequin** from Tokoha University describes his students' experience of reading and examining a translated version of Murakami Haruki's "Yesterday."

In Conference Reports, **Susan Laura Sullivan** reports in detail on "Alice Campion" at the Japan Writers Conference. Always prolific educator-author, **Wendy Jones Nakanishi** briefly enumerates some of her own work in 2015, including at the Japan Writers Conference. Next, **Anna Husson Isozaki** reports on the biliteracy forum at the JALT Conference in Shizuoka. Continuing with JALT, **Simon Bibby** and **Kevin Stein**, describe the presentation of LiLT-sponsored JALT presenter, **Professor Jane Spiro** and the evening **LiLT Forum**.

As always, we welcome contributions from LiLT members and from around the world. We welcome your suggestions as well. Your work is being read *globally*, so by all means please don't be shy with your submissions.

Yet again, we would like to extend our gratitude to the contributors who have published in this journal and to very conscientious and thoughtful people who took a lot of time out of their busy schedules to help in editing and proofreading. Perhaps you may also want to help us in our double-blind review process and enable us to proceed more speedily through the publishing process. Most of all, we thank you, our readers.

Gregg McNabb

Editor

Kevin Stein

Associate Editor

### **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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## Using literature in an EFL context to teach language and culture

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### Abstract

This paper illustrates how a literature course was organized in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context to help students increase critical thinking and make intercultural connections through short stories. Rather than focusing on linguistic elements through sometimes-contrived language in EFL textbooks, meaningful input was provided through the use of authentic materials. Short works of literature by both well-known and less well-known authors were the main source of input due to their length, descriptive writing styles and deep connections to various cultures. Students used all language skills to decipher the meanings in the text, as well as their knowledge and experiences to find connections with the setting, characters, themes, story plots, as well as cultural and historical references. Student reflections revealed that where there was some improvement in reading, listening and lexis, students benefitted mostly from learning how to engage more deeply with the reading material.

*Key words:* Literature in the L2 classroom, EFL instruction, critical thinking, intercultural awareness, reflection

Literature has been used to teach languages since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century notably in Britain and its colonies (Hall, 2005). As other methodologies such as the Grammar Translation Method became dominant, the use of literature in the language classroom waned. However, more interest has been shown since communicative practices in the L2 language classroom have become the common pedagogy. The 1980s in particular, saw a resurgence of literature being used as the source material for language learning as educators began to acknowledge the role of literature in facilitating awareness of cultural, linguistic, and cognitive/metacognitive skills (Brumfit &

Carter, 1986; Maley, 1989; McKay, 1982; Short, 1989). More recently, a collection of chapters by Teranishi, Saito & Wales (2015), which examined how literary texts can be incorporated into the EFL classroom, showed that its benefits are becoming more recognized in the Asian EFL context. This current study was, in its own context, particularly important at this time as the university in which it was conducted was in the midst of curricular change. That is, a change was being made from a sole focus on language skills to focusing on more authentic materials to raise awareness of language and culture. As an instructor in the Faculty of Languages and Cultures, using short stories was considered an appropriate choice of materials to increase cultural awareness through language as well as provide quality yet challenging content while staying within the curricular goals of the university.

The merits of using literature in the EFL classroom are numerous and have been proven empirically to be an effective mode of instruction. For this study, the researcher focused on three main areas to enhance communicative skills and develop students' literary competence: language, culture and metacognition. With regard to language, as short stories contain real examples of grammatical structures and common expressions, learners' awareness of the diversity of the target language is raised. Based on the previously cited studies, it was felt that using literature had the potential to advance students' proficiency levels. That is, not only do students come into contact with authentic language, but also through analysis of the literary work they are able to understand different writing styles and how word use directs the reader to feel emotion (Carroli, 2008; Collie & Slater, 1990; Frantzen, 2002; Murdoch, 2002; Ur, 1996). Literature can also provide the learner with insight into various cultures – about the characters in the story, as well as their customs. This enables learners to examine their own culture and reinterpret works based on this new information (Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Collie and Slater, 1990; Dupuy, 2000; Swaffar, 1999). Asking students to establish connections between their own community and the environments and situations they are introduced to in the short stories has the possibility of opening doors to intercultural understanding (Bibby, 2014b; Carter & Long, 1991). Concerning metacognitive awareness, literature on many levels works as an agent of change in helping to adjust attitudes, perceptions and existing beliefs (Carter & Long, 1991). As students increase their awareness of language and appreciation of various cultures, it was felt that they could be

more critical in their thinking. In addition, by connecting different aspects of the story with personal experiences, critical thinking would be further encouraged.

This paper illustrates how a literature course was organized in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context to help students improve their critical thinking and make intercultural connections through short stories. Meaningful input was provided through the use of authentic materials from mostly classic American authors rather than focusing on the current choice of textbooks at the university that featured mainly inauthentic reading passages. The 14-week course design is described to show the literary elements students were expected to identify and discuss for their mid-term and final examinations. The paper first explains the research background, and then describes the curriculum designed for a class of 25 mixed-level second year students. The course design, including stories chosen for the course is then presented and the paper concludes by highlighting potential challenges when teaching a literature course to a mixed-level class of EFL students and offering suggestions by students and the researcher for a course to be conducted successfully to meet the needs of mixed-level EFL students.

### **Research context**

The study is situated in a national university in Japan in an elective Oral Communication class consisting of 25 mixed-level second year students in the field of engineering. Even though the course was an elective course, it was mandatory for students to take one of the elective courses offered in the curriculum to obtain the necessary credits for graduation. Based on responses from the reading self-evaluation done in the first class, many students selected the course mainly because the class time fit within their schedule rather than due to any enjoyment of reading or an appreciation of literature. Of the 25 students, only one admitted to reading (in his L1) as a fun pastime activity. As such, motivational levels for reading and speaking were, in most cases, average at best and needed to be sparked throughout the course.

Two separate literature courses were developed. The first course was taught to 25 mixed-level students in the Engineering Department. In this course, students were introduced to literary elements of a short story, which culminated in a 15-minute group discussion about a text. The second course, building on previous skills, was an intensive reading course aimed at more advanced students. The goal of this course was to conduct a comparative literature study of the

primary reading and an additional work chosen by the student. This paper, however, focuses on the first course to help demonstrate to instructors of mixed-level, L2 students how authentic literature can be used with students coming from a non-English educational major with different language proficiency levels.

Each week, the students were given a new short story to read. They were challenged to participate actively in discussions by analyzing more critically each story, comparing stories to each other as they completed activities on the different literary elements. This aimed to further deepen the cognitive processing as students advanced from answering basic referential questions to questions that required more thought and analysis. The teacher initially provided questions to teach the basic elements of a short story (Figure 1, numbers 1-3). However, by the end of the course, after three weeks of discussion training, students were able to ask more challenging questions (Figure 1, numbers 4 & 5).

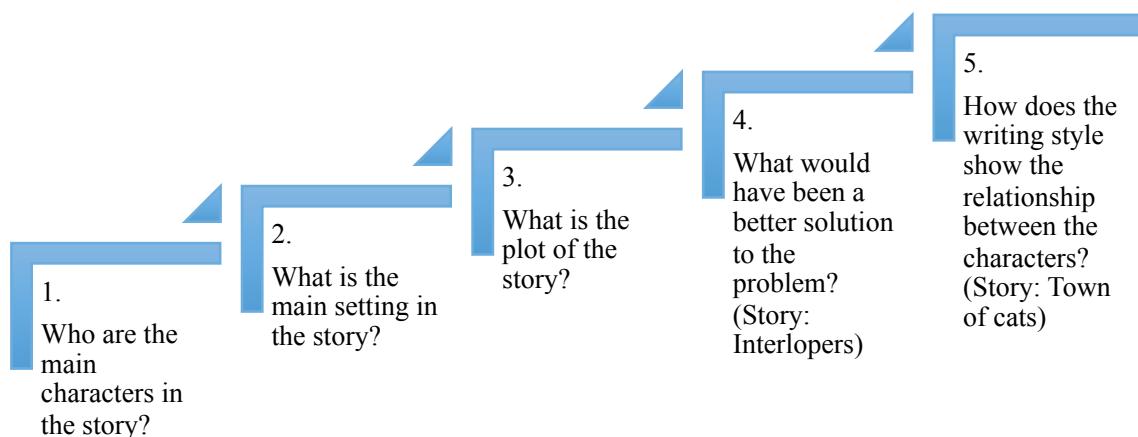


Figure 1. Advancing from referential type to inferential type questions

Presentations were completed each week to check students' understanding of the stories and depth of analysis. During the mid-term group presentation, students had two minutes each to present one aspect of a literary work (such as context, theme or characterization), ask the class two critical thinking questions to facilitate discussion and then monitor the class as they discussed the questions. The final 15-minute group discussion on a story chosen by the students (see Appendix A) demonstrated their ability to discuss a story in English using the literary elements taught (see Figure 3) as well as make connections to previously discussed stories.

### Rationale for using literature in the language classroom

The university in which this research took place has been recently going through an expansive restructuring of the curriculum in which content-based courses were required to be taught in English to students from their second year onward. Teachers were given the freedom to develop courses in any format they desired, as long as it met the expectations of teaching language and culture through content. Figure 1 is an illustration of the aims of the new curriculum (Yasuda, 2014, p. 106). As shown in the figure, ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) aimed to build on academic knowledge gained in the first year in a discipline or profession-specific genre.

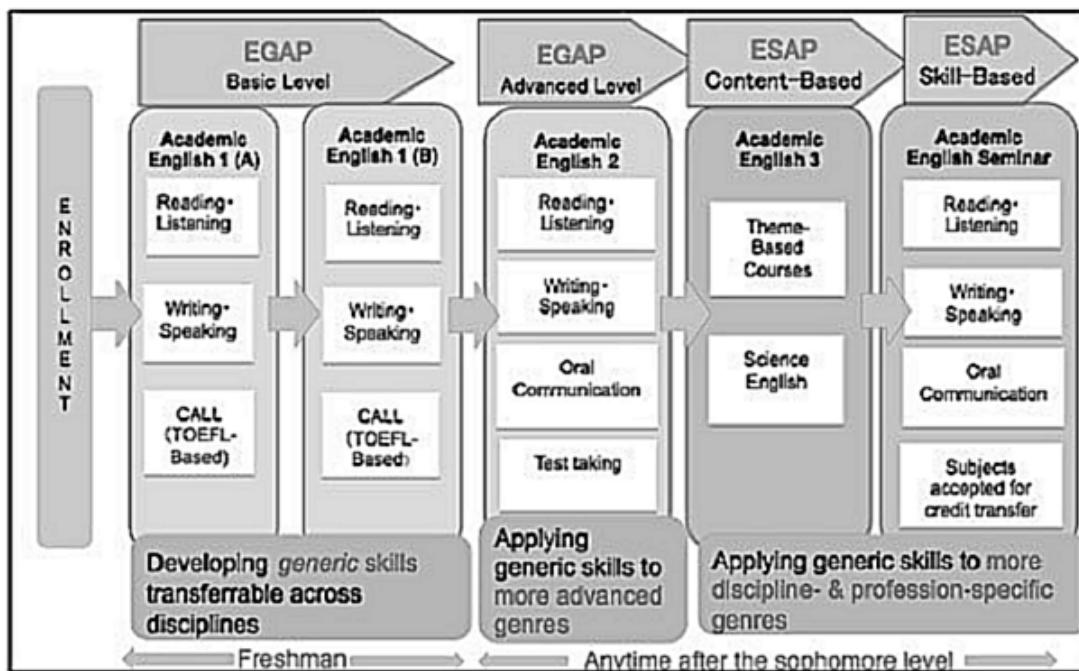


Figure 2. Overview of the Q-LEAP structure: From EGAP to ESAP

Literature was chosen as the discipline-specific genre with the central aim of fostering critical thinking skills, as well as exposing students to intercultural texts and values, which would hopefully help them to operate with more sensitivity in an international environment. Based on background research, the short story was thought guided the instructor throughout the course.

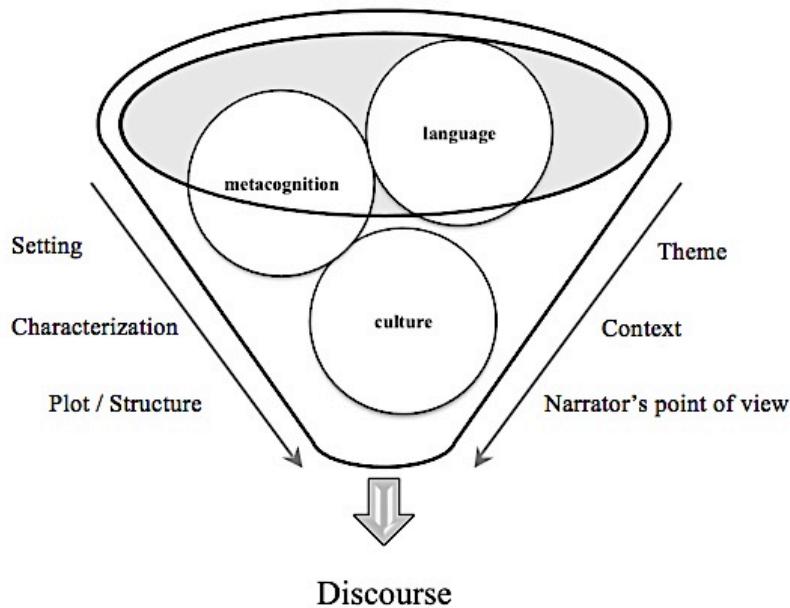
Table 1. Rationale for using short stories in a language-based curriculum

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Authentic material</b>	Language intended for native speakers as opposed to sometimes contrived texts with an unnatural focus on syntax as found in some traditional teaching materials
<b>Creative use of language</b>	Linguistic and stylistic features of a short story do not necessarily fit within the rules taught in traditional teaching materials
<b>Realistic view of cultural/historical situations</b>	Literary works offer a new world, which emphasizes different time periods, locations and customs. It also helps student to critically reflect on and examine their own culture and history
<b>Length</b>	Varying between 1,000-4,000 words, short stories can be read quickly in one sitting (usually between 1-2 hours)
<b>Focused on a single event or theme</b>	Short stories can maintain interest at a higher level than longer stories with more complex plot development
<b>Limited number of characters</b>	Short stories usually have 2-3 characters which is easier to follow as opposed to numerous characters often found within a novel
<b>Critical thinking</b>	Students can go beyond surface meaning of answering simple comprehension questions to achieving deeper underlying meanings through analysis
<b>Enhance communicative skills</b>	Age appropriate discussions on literary concepts rather than a focus on mere daily conversation practice.
<b>Language awareness</b>	Students are able to develop all 4 skills – reading, writing, speaking, listening – as well as understand the norms of language use and writing techniques
<b>Flexibility</b>	Short stories can be adapted to suit a class of mixed-level students

These criteria have been employed by many other researchers utilizing short stories in the classroom to teach language and culture (see for example, Oster, 1989; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Murdoch, 2002; Bibby & McIlroy, 2013; Bibby, 2014a). Indeed, the benefits of using literature in the EFL classroom to teach language and culture seem to far outweigh the disadvantages.

### Teaching model

A model was designed as a visual aid to help students understand the course design and expectations. The researcher's model of instruction was based on Maley's (1989) approach to teaching literature. This included a focus on literary elements of a text such as setting, characterization, plot, theme and narrator's point of view (see Figure 3). This approach ensured that students had knowledge of literary conventions necessary to give an effective presentation and participate in group discussion. Group presentations were used to show understanding of text and critical elements of a story.



*Figure 3.* Literary elements of a short story enhancing discourse

In the group discussions, students were given five roles adapted from the Oxford Bookworms Club Stories for Reading Circles series (Furr, 2009):

1. The Moderator (Providing context and guiding questions)
2. The Summarizer (Giving an overview of characters, setting and plot)
3. The Dictionary (Introducing interesting vocabulary and writing style)
4. The Collector (Collecting cultural references throughout the text)
5. The Connector (Connecting elements of the story to personal experiences and/or life within Japan)

Students were asked to prepare for every role, but were assigned responsibility for only one during the group discussion. The hope was that this would give the students more tools to help sustain an effective discussion.

## Course overview

Table 2 is a description of the weekly plan, including story selection, activity and examination type.

Table 2. Course overview of the 14-week curriculum

Week	Story selection	Activity
1	Course overview	Getting to know you activity/reading habits questionnaire/self-evaluation
2	The cask of Amontillado (Poe)	Setting
3	A White Heron (Jewett)	Characterization
4	The Gift of the Magi (O. Henry)	Plot and structure
5	Time (Murray)	Narrator's Point of View
6	The Interlopers (Saki)	Theme
7	Preparation for group presentation	
8	Mid-term: 10-minute Group Presentation	
9	The Last night of the World (Bradbury)	Guided Discussion (teacher)
10	Hills Like White Elephants (Hemingway)	Guided Discussion (teacher)
11	Student choice (Appendix A)	Guided Discussion (student)
12	Student choice (Appendix A)	Guided Discussion (student)
13	Preparation for group discussion	
14	Final: 15-minute Group Discussion	

As can be seen in the course design, the course progressed from basic to more advanced skills, leading up to the 10-minute group presentation in week 8. Activity types to match levels of difficulty were for example:

- Basic: 5Ws & 1H (what, who, where, when, why, how) referential type questions
- Intermediate: Reorder sentences in the story to make a summary
- Advanced: Fill in a table with key points from the story and inferential type questions

In the second half of the course (weeks 9-14), students were guided by the teacher during initial group discussions. In the first discussion, the teacher took the role of moderator. Students were given a worksheet to prepare for homework and in the following class, as they discussed their role, the teacher monitored each group and then wrote key points from student discussions on the board (Appendix B). This way, the students were able to learn from each group as well as become aware of other points they might have missed. Following this, they were directed to take on more independent leadership roles and participate actively in discussions with less teacher

input. Rather than the teacher selecting all the stories for the course, students were encouraged to decide on a story in English that they were familiar with to use for the final discussion. A discussion rather than a second presentation was considered to be more effective in showcasing depth of knowledge and understanding of literary elements.

### **Reflections on the course**

Towards the end of the semester, students were asked to write a short reflective paragraph on changes to their approach to reading and discussing literary works as well as any challenges in the course. The teacher used this information to review class goals and make changes in order to improve students' capacity to hold longer discussions in English.

### **Successes**

The course was seen as largely successful in that students were able to discuss a story more critically using the elements taught (Figure 3). There were three key factors that made the researcher feel that the desired outcomes of the course had been achieved – increased language skills, increased knowledge of cultures and increased higher-order thinking skills:

#### *Language skill development*

Although small, there were some improvements in speaking, listening and reading skills over the duration of the semester. With regard to speaking and listening, students were able to maintain communication over longer periods of time during final discussions compared to the start of the course when they were unfamiliar with the literary elements of a text. Through literary analysis and meaningful dialogue each week about the short stories, students came to be able to express their ideas using examples from the literary work. In the freshman EAP courses, identifying main and supporting ideas was one of the skills taught and students were able to apply it to their reading and discussion of the stories. As students recycled vocabulary and sentence structures from the readings, they demonstrated that they were able to reconstruct the story using their improved lexical base. Below are extracts from student reflections:

- *It is difficult to exchange my opinion in English, because I don't speak English well. But I think my skill of speaking English is better than last year.*

- *I learned to read stories well, for example speedy and efficiently and discuss about them each other.*
- *I become interested in English stories, perhaps because my ability of English reading is improved.*

#### *Development of cultural awareness*

Short stories provide meaningful content which can help students to become more culturally aware. In general, students were able to think more critically about each story by making cultural comparisons to characters, various items found in the stories or even weather patterns. In “The cask of Amontillado” for example, many students were excited to make a connection between the wine and sherry talked about to the different parts of France. By doing research, they could compare the quality of alcohol and winemaking regions in the story to the highest quality sake-making regions in Japan. It was most rewarding to hear students connecting, comparing and expounding upon Japanese cultural expectations with those found in the stories. Although difficult for them, students tried to discuss stereotypes of characters from other cultures found in the stories (such as the ongoing feuding in “The Interlopers”) and compare it to their perception of Japanese characteristics and cultural norms (that is, the image of the peaceful Japanese). This recognition illustrated the benefit of short stories in helping students to critically examine and understand their world from a different viewpoint. Below are extracts from student reflections:

- *I always try to make cultural connections with the stories, but sometimes the point is difficult to express. I can talk about this point better than other students.*
- *First time I read the “hills like white elephants,” I found it difficult to notice the true meaning of the story...In this story, elephants imply the baby, so she want to have a baby. I can connect the culture between that time and nowadays.*
- *I learned about wine from France and Spain. Wine is interesting.*

### *Metacognitive development*

By developing a stronger literary competence, students were able to become more critical and analytical thinkers. That is, students were able to move from a surface understanding to more deeply understanding various aspects of the story through connecting with the characters and plot on a personal level and reflecting on cultural elements. In particular, as students were not prolific readers as stated in the self-evaluation questionnaire they completed at the start of the course, they came to understand how to read a story with more depth instead of noticing only the events as they unfolded. This was especially evident as students engaged in discussion through the five group discussion roles. Below are extracts from student reflections:

- *It was the first time to read literary books. I didn't know any books. I can get meaning faster.*
- *I can think more deeply now about story, understanding setting, structure and so on.*

*Before I took this class, I used to read lots of stories, but I rarely think further. Now, I look for passages that are interesting or unusual. I like think about questions for my classmates.*

*Furthermore, I connect with the characters' thoughts and feelings. I also connect the story and real life. Since the society changes, the differences between story and real life can make me understand deeply*

### **Challenges**

Although students seemed to appreciate the novelty of learning literature in the language classroom, there were two main difficulties. First, students could not cope with slang, regional dialects and dated English found within some texts. Although this may support the argument for using textbooks with inauthentic language, the instructor found that it added a new dimension to discussions about language. With larger numbers of students in a class or with lower-proficiency learners, this might be more challenging for teachers. In this case, using literary work with simpler, conversational style text (such as Hemingway) is an option in order for the students to cope better with the language.

Second, the speed at which students were required to read the short stories and prepare for discussions in the following class was too fast with the longer stories. In a one-credit course,

the study load outside of class cannot be too heavy, thus stories need to be simple and easy to read so that students are able to get the gist quickly. Many students found stories over 1,500 words difficult to read in one week on top of their regular departmental study load. For instructors of such a course, a more effective use of class time would be to get students participating in deeper discussion about elements of the story rather than doing comprehension checks. With longer, challenging stories, time better spent critically reflecting on the story was cut to respond to basic questions about the plot or vocabulary.

### **Student suggestions**

Students were asked to give each other advice on how they could improve discussion skills. The following are their suggestions:

- Read the story!
- Before class, check words and how to express them
- Practice speaking about the story by yourself in English
- Join in the discussion actively
- Listen to others' opinions
- Don't speak in Japanese
- Think about the theme
- Be friends with Google
- Pick up important points. Don't read too slowly.
- Talk with many people
- Speak even if your grammar is not correct

### **Teacher suggestions**

Below are a few basic recommendations that the researcher would suggest to teachers interested in introducing a literature program in an EFL context in the language classroom:

- Do a self-awareness activity at the outset of the course to check students' knowledge of classic authors and literary works; personal reading preferences; and motivational

level for reading, so that students are more familiar with their own and their classmates' reading habits as well as their capacity to successfully complete the course.

- Choose materials carefully. It is important that reading materials match the level of the students and their interests. The initial readings should be more straightforward in order to avoid overwhelming students.
- Have students choose authors they are familiar with for group discussion, so that they can participate more freely.
- Model a clear presentation for students so that they know what is expected of them far in advance. This would result in fewer misunderstandings about what to do during finals.
- Have students practice presentations in every class in order to get them accustomed to using the language of the short stories as well as speaking in front of their classmates.
- Prepare guiding questions in every class to facilitate critical thinking and promote cultural awareness.
- Ensure that the margins are wide enough for glossing. Students found the vocabulary support useful and helped them to prepare better for class.
- Toward the end of class, leave about ten minutes to give a brief overview of the next story to be discussed and to respond to student questions about the story or course.

This list is not exhaustive and presents only the central points which teachers can use as a guideline when creating a course.

### **Conclusion**

One of the main concerns in EFL classrooms is the lack of authenticity of teaching materials, which can put students at a disadvantage when faced with real world situations. Using literature in the classroom is one of the methods to overcome this challenge. In short, literary

texts become the language through which students can experience real world situations as viewed through the stories. Language courses at most universities are divided according to academic skill. Although this has worked as an easy method of designing curricula, if institutions are serious about developing students who can think critically about their learning, more classes that introduce authentic materials and engage students in discussion about real events will be required. Not only can literature be used to meet the standard requirements of teaching four skills, it adds a new dynamic with its cultural and historical connections. Consequently, immersing students into the world of literature helps them to acquire skills needed to become more critical thinkers about languages and cultures. Further research that critically assesses the effectiveness of the course would be a useful next step to provide evidence that administrators could use to decide if literary studies in the classroom could be a feasible addition to the new curriculum.

To conclude, using literature in the classroom is well rooted in pedagogy since it has been shown to develop language and reasoning skills (see Teranishi, Saito & Wales, 2015).

Unmodified language texts in the classroom may be highly demanding for both students and teachers who may not familiar with this type of discipline-based genre or have the appropriate background knowledge; however, the ability of short stories to facilitate awareness of language, promote student understanding of different cultures students might encounter outside the classroom and encourage critical thinking should be three determining factors to promote the inclusion of literature into any existing curricula. As this study showed, even non-English major students with little interest in reading for pleasure can learn the basic skills of literary criticism and engage in active discussion. Further, they can gain an understanding that stories are more than just characters and a plot, but rather a world where there is deep-seated meaning waiting to be uncovered.

#### Author Note

Matthew Armstrong holds an MA in Curriculum Development and has taught at Kyushu University in Japan since 2006. His research interests are Literature in the L2 classroom, Peer-review in Academic Writing, Learner Psychology and Curriculum Development. He is currently conducting an action research, which helps students to transition from writing short five-paragraph academic essays to longer comparative literature reports.

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#### Appendix A: Stories chosen by students

<b>Stories selected by students</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Comparison</b>
The Little Prince "Little Prince <i>Hoshi no Ojisama to Watashi'</i> " (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)	The meaning of life	The Last Night of the World (Ray Bradbury)
Castle in the Sky " <i>Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta</i> " (Hayao Miyazaki)	Love	The Gift of the Magi (O. Henry)
Princess Mononoke " <i>Mononoke-hime</i> " (Hayao Miyazaki)	Nature	The White Heron (Sarah Orne Jewett)
The Second Bakery Attack " <i>Panya saishugeki</i> "(Haruki Murakami)	Bad decisions	The Interlopers (Saki)
Town of Cats " <i>in ichi kyuu hachi yon</i> " (Haruki Murakami)	Relationships and communication	Hills Like White Elephants (Ernest Hemingway)

**Appendix B: Discussion preparation worksheet and discussion points on board**

Discussion	Discussion points	Notes/Examples/Thoughts
<b>The Moderator</b> 1. <u>Start:</u> Context: Background information of the author  <u>End:</u> Discussion Questions	Author's name Country  Birth and Death Writing genre Famous story  Something interesting about his/her life  Questions for discussion	
<b>The Summarizer</b> 2. Overview of the plot of the story	1) <u>Exposition</u> : Setting (Time, place and characters) 2) <u>Complication</u> : (An important event) 3) <u>Rising action</u> : (what happens next?) 4) <u>Climax</u> (The high point) 5) <u>Falling Action/Resolution</u> (what happens in the end?) 6) <u>Theme</u> (The story's message)	1) 2) 3) 4) 5) 6)
<b>The Dictionary</b> 3. Interesting vocabulary or writer's style of writing	Narrator: "I" subjective or "He/She/It" objective <u>Style</u> : Conversational / Descriptive / Short and Simple / Long sentences <u>Tone</u> : Positive / Negative <u>Interesting words/expressions</u> and why you liked it/them	
<b>The Culture Collector</b> 4. Cultural and/or historical references	Find cultural or historical connections in the story. Connect them to your country	
<b>The Connector</b> 5. Connection to Japan or personal connection to story	Look for a connection to your personal life or current event in Japan	

### Hills Like White

① The Moderator  
 1899-1961 (suicide)  
 US writer Shotgun  
 story (1926) between WW I & II  
 worked as ambulance driver - saw horrible things  
 His writing can be dark sometimes  
 "The Old Man and the Sea"

### ② The Summarizer

Exposition: American couple, Train station Barcelona, hot day, Drinking beers, Argue.  
 Complication: She is pregnant, Have abortion?  
 Climax: Talking but not talking, Argument, Do it? Don't do it?, awfully simple operation, "fine". Rising Action: "I'll scream".  
 Telling action: Train is coming, continue drinking.  
 Resolution: Please please... . . . . .

Theme

- Sadness
- drinking to avoid problems
- relationship
- Communication
- death? (abortion)

### Elephants (Hemingway)

③ The Dictionary

A "white" elephant = ? baby?  
 The elephant in the room = ?

p. 46 "once they take it away, you never get it back"  
 It's finished

p. 47 "white in the sun and the country was brown and dry"

p. 46 Across on the other side, were fields of grain and trees

④ The Culture Collector

Language - das 2	candy - salty	gum
p. 44 cervezas (beer)	sweet	pure gum
Alcohol Anis del Toro (tastes like liquorice)	bitter	
Money reales	sour	
	kind of hard	
	Japan salary man / drink at train station	

## **The effects of employing haiku reading tasks on improving critical reading skills**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating the effect of employing poetry reading tasks on improving Iranian EFL intermediate learners' critical reading skills. The study was conducted with 60 female students learning English at Sefarat Language Institute in Qazvin (Iran). The participants attended 16 sessions of 45 minutes during a semester. Learners of English were divided into two groups: a traditional poetry reading (TPR) group and a critical poetry reading (CPR) group. The two groups were determined randomly and then taught separately. Haiku poetry was employed and taught to both groups. While the traditional poetry reading group was taught how to employ traditional reading skills such as skimming and scanning and more, the other group was instructed how to apply critical reading skills to decode meaning and symbols in haiku poetry. At the end of the term, a post-test was applied to measure progress in the students' critical reading skills and to compare the performance of the two groups. Analysis indicated that the CPR students did significantly better than the TPR students.

*Key words:* critical reading, literary text, poetry, haiku

One of the essential skills that help English learners to succeed in their studies is critical reading skills. "Teaching students to think while reading is referred to in professional literature as critical reading" (Collins, 1993, p.1). Critical reading differs from traditional reading in that the former allows a range of interpretations while the latter lays emphasis on definite meanings of words and sentences (Wallace, 2001). In other word, learners who employ "traditional reading skills" cannot pierce below the surface of literary works and poetry because they are not aware of

multiple layers of information in poetry. Critical reading would raise their awareness and aid their comprehension. They would learn to search for other unseen but written themes.

We must acknowledge that critical poetry reading is more complicated, although the interpretive process is the same as for any text, and requires learners to go beyond the surface layers of meanings to achieve comprehension. In essence, critical reading skills help learners to delineate implicit relationships between concepts and meanings in a poem to create a meaningful discourse (Siderstein, 1994). Accordingly, “various interpretations of a poem are always possible, so they can be good stimuli for meaningful classroom communication.”(Nakagawa, 2012, p.17).

However, some researchers (see, for example, Atkinson, 1997) believe that critical thinking/reading is more based on concealed social practice than on a set of teachable principles. So educators should be cautious when employing critical thinking methodology in The EFL classrooms. By contrast, Davidson (1997) argues that “critical thinking appears to be something more universally relevant than just a social practice”(Davidson, 1997, p.122). In short, it might be true that critical thinking/reading is a social practice but the results of the current study and many other studies prove that it can be learnt through implicit instruction and constant practice.

The Extensive Reading Movement (see, for example, Day & Bamford, 1998) believes that critical reading skills are maximized through extensive exposure to information, but through a long period of time. In the same way, performing critical poetry reading tasks can serve the same purpose, however, in a shorter time, and the reason is that the learners’ awareness is raised on critical reading skills by explicit instructions and analysis of literary texts.

Critical poetry reading can also be regarded as a part of CBI Content Based Instruction (Brinton et al, 1989) or CLIL Content and Language Integrated Learning (Marsh, Maljers and Hartlia, 2001) because through the integration of studying poetry and critical reading skills (in the present study, poetry as subject and CR as a language skill taught and learnt), the language ability of learners can be enhanced.

Poetry stimulates critical reading because poetry is derived by complicated emotions and life experiences on the part of poets, so it is critical reading that can mediate in access to original poets’ messages. It aids the learner to read the hidden relationships between the meanings of words created by figurative language in a poem, which in turn represents particular emotional states.

Bear in mind critical reading welcomes different interpretations. It is almost impossible to use only traditional reading techniques to assess a poem because the essence of poetry is different from ordinary everyday language. Poetry contains fantasy, imagination, metaphor, symbols, personification, allegory and allusions, which takes the reader to higher language. As a result, one should be equipped with critical reading techniques to decode and to comprehend it.

Critical reading is based on reader response theory with emphasis placed on the role of reader as an active participant. In this theory the readers' task is "to recreate the meaning while reading the literary text" (Hirvela, 1996, p.128). Reader-response theory also lays great emphasis on the interaction between the reader and the text. It is aimed to elicit responses in readers while reading (Carlisle, 2000). The suggestive nature of poetry like haiku often naturally engenders critical reactions, giving the unsuspecting skimmer a sudden psychological shift in perception.

### **Critical Reading of Haiku**

Haiku is a short form of poetry that originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century in Japan. This type of poetry is written in three lines of five, seven and five syllables. Two of the characteristics of haiku are its brevity and precious images that capture insight into our spirit (Abrams, 2005). Haiku, in comparison with long prose, seems to be more appealing to learners. To understand haiku, learners are required to "see with different eyes, which fosters more flexible reading, writing, and thinking" (Oster, 1989, p. 85).

One of the most unique qualities of haiku lies in its unfinished, somewhat open form, which means readers have to actively engage in drawing out meaning. In fact, the poet has created spacious spaces between lines which requires imaginative interpretation, thereby creating critical readers (Myers, 2009). A haiku usually includes natural imagery and a juxtaposition between two things that create a surprising moment. Take into account the following haiku by Basho:

*An old pond!  
A frog jumps in—  
the sound of water.*

If we only analyze the surface meanings of poem, we only have a picture with a pond, a frog and the sound of water. To comprehend what the poet intended to get across, the reader has

to depart from the primary meanings of the words and sentences. There is a juxtaposition between stillness and movement in the poem which might symbolize death and life. Without critical reading one cannot determine such things.

Critical reading tasks of haikus are accompanied by joy and happiness in the classroom too because when learners manage to decode the codes (the code can be the natural imagery that can symbolize an event or a feeling in life) in a haiku poem, it feels like solving a puzzle. Consequently, the learners' curiosity is satisfied with such class activities.

Cotterall (2003, pp.187-190) believes that critical reading involves the following steps (these were considered when designing poetry reading activities hereafter):

1. Identifying the line of reasoning in the text.
2. Critically evaluating the line of reasoning.
3. Questioning surface appearances and checking for hidden assumptions or agendas.
4. Identifying evidence in the text.
5. Evaluating the evidence according to valid criteria.
6. Identifying the writer's conclusions.
7. Deciding whether the given evidence supports these conclusions.

Note that the critical haiku reading task is different from the traditional reading task in that you teach metaphor/simile/symbolism/personification, etc. when instructing the CR group but not the traditional group, and this is a crucial factor in CR.

Since there is very little systematic empirical data on literature and even less on poetry (Hanauer, 2001), the current study reports on an experiment carried out to show how critical reading skills of learners can be promoted through some simple and effective haiku poetry reading tasks. The study, therefore, seeks to answer the following research question: Is there a significant difference between the effect of a critical poetry reading task and a traditional poetry reading task on Iranian EFL intermediate learners' critical reading skills? And in response to the research question, the following null hypothesis will be tested: There is no significant difference between the effect of a critical poetry reading task and a traditional poetry reading task on Iranian EFL intermediate learners' critical reading skills.

## Method

### Participants

The study was conducted with 60 female students learning English at Sefarat Language Institute in Qazvin (Iran). The students, all of whom were at the intermediate level, were divided into two groups. This level was focused on because of the presupposition on the part of the researcher that upper-intermediate and advanced students might have already acquired and be familiar with critical thinking skills. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 30 and their educational levels varied from having a high school diploma to having a bachelor's degree.

### Instructor

The instructor of the two classes was this researcher, a non-native English teacher whose mother tongue is Persian, with a major in English Language Teaching and approximately ten years of EFL teaching experience.

### Material and Instruments

First, the Michigan test was employed to identify students' language proficiency. Then, the Ennis-Weir critical thinking test was administered before the treatment to make sure that students had not already been equipped with critical thinking skills. The procedure of the test and learners' responses revealed that the majority of learners were not much familiar with critical thinking skills. While the traditional poetry reading group was taught how to employ traditional reading skills such as skimming, scanning and identifying main ideas, the other group was instructed in how to apply critical reading skills to decode meaning and symbols in haiku poetry. Haiku by Basho was chosen because it resonates with specific themes universal to the human conditions which can be tapped into by students across cultures. His haiku merely are more easily understandable in English and more familiar to students than other writers' verses. At the end of term a post-test was applied to measure progress in the students' critical reading skills.

### Pilot study

To finalize the materials and revise them, a pilot test was carried out to see whether the intended instruments could work as planned. The tools were tried out on ten EFL learners in two groups of five learners. One group was treated as the critical poetry reading CPR group and the

second group as the traditional poetry reading TPR group. The critical reading test was piloted and tested before the beginning of the study. The pilot study suggested that certain items of the critical poetry reading test need to be modified. For instance, there were some choices in questions that seemed to be ambiguous. Some poems also turned out to be too complicated for learners. Accordingly, some inconsistencies among the items were removed and the ambiguous questions were corrected. Some haiku which seemed to be beyond learners' language proficiency levels were omitted from materials for the post-test.

### **Validity of the test**

To increase the content validity, 40 haiku poems were randomly divided into two groups—one group to be taught during the term and the other one to be used for the post-test.

### **Reliability**

To determine the internal consistency reliability in measurements and establish the reliability of the test, the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) test was applied in the post-test; as a result, the reliability coefficient of .71 was obtained which is regarded as significant for this test.

### **Procedure**

In the first session for the CPR group, the researcher as a teacher introduced the essence of critical thinking and described the benefits of employing critical thinking skills to solve problems in life and academic settings. The teacher explained how critical thinking skills help people to analyze all obvious and hidden aspects of, for example, making a decision in their life. Students also shared their experiences concerning the process of decision-making they had gone through and why they fail or succeed. In addition, the teacher showed how creative reading skills could be applied first to reveal hidden meanings of a poem and then explained how using critical reading skills help to find the most logical interpretations for the poems. However, to avoid confusion, the researcher briefly gave critical reading instruction with emphasis placed on critical reading tasks. To validate the interpretations provided, the researcher consulted different books and websites on haiku criticism to ascertain the most logical and frequent interpretations of the haiku written by Basho (1672-1698) whose poems were frequently used for treatment and the post-test, and considered them as criteria and answers for the critical reading test. In the next

sessions, while using newly-learned critical reading skills, the learners were asked to read some poems in order to make sense of signs and symbols in them. The procedure was planned to be repeated for several sessions for the teacher to confirm that all learners were equipped with critical reading skills.

During the treatment sessions, some guiding questions were asked to trigger learners to adopt critical reading skills to identify the themes or meanings of the poems (Appendix A). Each question was designed to target one or more critical reading characteristics (Appendix B). The following descriptions show the application of critical reading skills and the process of interpreting haiku poetry.

*Along my journey  
through this transitory world,  
new year's housecleaning*

To begin one of the treatment sessions, I asked my students, “What is the subject of the poem?” A student said, “Life.” Another one specified, “The passing of time.” So I asked her, “What is your evidence? How did you come up with this?” Through this kind of direct questioning, I tried to encourage learners to substantiate their opinions. One of my students pointed out that it referred to the New Year season and house cleaning. Some students tried to compare it to Nourooz holidays in Iran when people do some housecleaning, and welcome the New Year (learners’ schemata seems to have been activated in this stage).

The next step was to ask learners to synthesize and combine relevant parts into a coherent whole, which is one important characteristic of critical reading. At the same time, the meaning of *transitory world* was provided to avoid any ambiguity and confusion. One student stated that, “It seems there is a sort of relationship between journey, transitory world and New Year.” Another student in the study said, “The whole poem implies to whole life, New Year has come and people are busy doing some household chores!” A voice from the back of the class said, “So life is a journey.” From these excerpts, it seems that in this stage of analysis, a thoughtful discourse was created, which, it may be argued, is another characteristic brought about critical reading skills.

The sessions for the TPR group were different: mostly students read the poems and used their dictionaries to grasp the meanings of unknown words. Since haiku are short, scanning and skimming seems to be alike, yet line by line discussion along with discovery of the gist of poems were encouraged. Sometimes, quite a few students went beyond the surface meanings and tried to decode symbols and metaphors in poems. Despite this, the instructor did not explicitly explain how to use critical reading skills. The steps that students went through were similar to what happens in conventional reading classes, except that instead of scientific or educational texts, poetry was chosen as the reading material.

### Data analysis

After the data were collected, a t-test procedure was applied to determine the effect of poetry reading tasks on critical reading skills of students at the intermediate level. Data collected through the post-test were compared and the results indicated the positive impact of employing poetry reading tasks on critical reading. As it was mentioned, the critical reading process welcomes different interpretations of poetry and someone might argue whether what seem to be multiple choice comprehension questions with single correct answers (decided by the teacher) are critical reading. The answer is that during the course and before administrating the post-test, the teacher asserted that there is no right or wrong answer for each of the questions regarding the meanings of haiku poetry, but that learners need to find evidence to substantiate their findings. What the teacher decided as “right” answers were determined by consulting with many literature teachers and literary reviews. The test was designed to encourage learners to see with different eyes, to look for evidence, to discover denotations and connotations suggested by words, and it was stressed that other interpretations might be true.

### Results

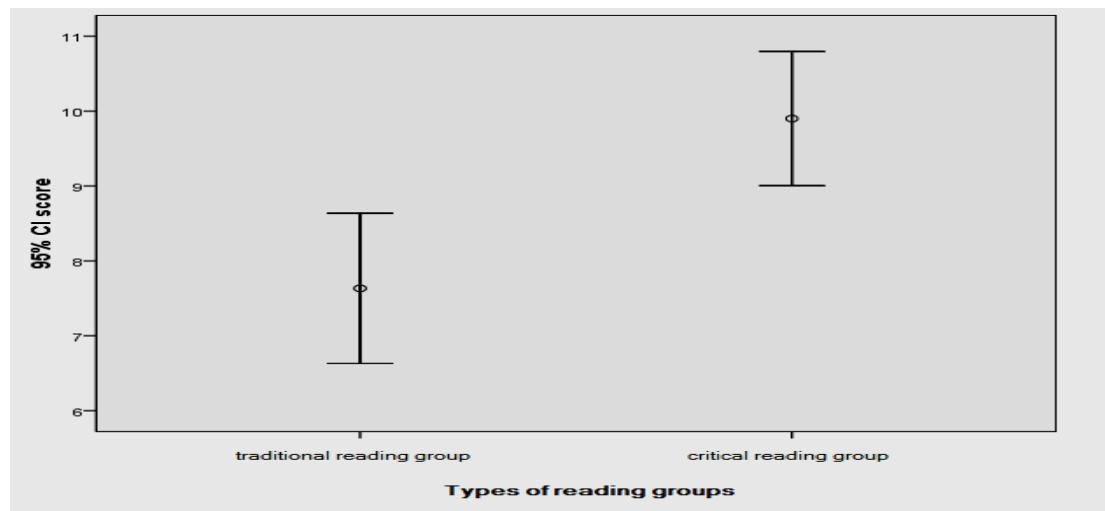
The following table shows the t-test results.

Table 1

*Group statistics: Means and standard deviations of two groups*

Factor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Control	30	2.684	.490
	Experimental	30	2.398	.438

A simple comparison of the means indicates that the two groups have performed differently, since the mean score of the CPR is greater than that of the TPR. The graphic representation of the results in Figure 1 more conspicuously represents the difference between the means of the two groups.



*Figure 1.* Learners' performance on the critical reading tasks

Table 2  
*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	1.145	.289	-3.449	58	.001	-2.267	.657	-3.582	-.951
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.449	57.275	.001	-2.267	.657	-3.582	-.951

In order to see whether or not the differences are statistically significant, a t-test was used. Figures in Table 2 show that  $t\text{-observed}=3.449$  and  $p < .05$ . Since the value of  $t\text{-observed}=3.449$ , which is a positive value revealing the effectiveness of treatment, is greater than the value of  $t\text{-critical}=2.02$  and whereas,  $p\text{-value}=.001$  is less than .005, we can claim that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis of the study ( $H: X_e > X_c$ ) is accepted. In short, as the comparison between the means of two groups reveals, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the CPR group and the TPR group. It can be concluded that the use of introducing poetry-reading tasks has played a significant role in increasing the scores of the critical poetry reading group. Consequently, we can claim that in this study the use of poetry reading tasks had a positive impact on the experimental group (CPR) learners' performance and improved their critical reading skills.

### Conclusion

The results lend strong support to arguments for employing poetry reading tasks in the EFL/ESL classroom and specify that if literary texts and tasks are carefully selected they can facilitate critical reading skills. Students learn not only not to accept the surface meanings of words blindly, but they also learn to look for connotations and denotations of words to unravel the message the poet has intended to communicate to the reader.

Furthermore, the mysterious scenes, which are an indispensable aspect of haiku poetry, make readers curious to want to decode the figurative language and facilitates reading comprehension. On the other hand, the results of the present study underline the crucial role that teaching methods play in discovering poems' meanings as well. While traditional reading skills spur learners to find out only surface meanings, critical reading tasks get learners involved in the discovery of hidden and interwoven relationships between the meanings of words and sentences in poetry.

The findings of the present study can benefit learners, teachers and textbooks writers in a number of different ways: In the first place, syllabus designers can employ pedagogically useful and aesthetically stylish literary texts such as haiku to add color and vividness to text books. In the second place, teachers can instruct learners how to employ critical poetry reading tasks to better evaluate the themes in poetry. Readers learn to read with different eyes.

It is true that the results of the current study confirm the positive effect of critical reading tasks, but we must acknowledge that critical reading of haiku is different from critical reading of other genres. Hence generalizations should be made with due caution.

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## Appendix A

### A Sample Critical Reading task

Read the following haiku carefully and employ critical reading skills which we have already discussed about in the class in order to answer the questions beneath each poem.

*1) Along my journey  
through this transitory world,  
new year's housecleaning*

- 1) Who is speaking in the poem?
- 2) What is the subject of the poem?
- 3) How does the poem make use of setting?
- 4) How does the poem use imagery?
- 5) To what extent does the poet rely on connotation or associations that words have?
- 6) What qualities- sorts of learning, feeling, taste and interest or value- does the poem evoke in the reader?
- 7) What is your historical and cultural distance from the poem?
- 8) How much evidence do you find while reading the poem? And what evidence helps you comprehend the poem?
- 9) What are implicit relationships between words in the poem?
- 10) What is hidden meaning or main idea in the poem?
- 11) What emotion does this poet try to express in the haiku?
- 12) What is the story behind this haiku?

## Appendix B

### A Sample Critical Reading Test

Read the following haiku critically and answer questions by choosing the most critical option provided beneath each one.

*1) Seen in plain daylight*

*the firefly's nothing but*

*an insect*

According the poem, why is the firefly nothing?

- a) Because it is only an insect
- b) Because the daylight is its enemy
- c) Because it is seen in plain daylight
- d) Because the identity of this insect relies on night

*2) All along this road*

*not a single soul – only*

*autumn evening comes*

The poem contains the elements of:

- a) Loneliness
- b) Love
- c) Travel
- d) Mystery

*3) Buddha's birthday*

*a spotted fawn is born –*

*just like that*

Why does the poet make a comparison between the fawn and Buddha?

- a) Because both of them are God's creatures
- b) Because both of them like loneliness
- c) Because both of them like caresses
- d) Because both of them are symbols of innocence and purity

Answers: 1. d / 2.a / 3.d

## Using Japanese literature in translation in the EFL classroom

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### Abstract

This article explores the use of Japanese literature in English translation as a centerpiece for class discussion in a Japanese university context. I discuss my use of a contemporary short story—Philip Gabriel’s English translation of Haruki Murakami’s “Yesterday” (Murakami, 2014)—as a vehicle for vocabulary development and to stimulate discussion about language and identity in a third-year English oral communication class. After describing the context of the class and a profile of its students, I discuss my choice of the story for use in class, summarize the story’s plot and characters, and discuss the preparations and tasks undertaken by students. Finally, I consider the success of my experiment based on student feedback and reflexive analysis.

### Context

My experiment in using literature in an EFL class took place within the context of a third-year elective oral communication class at a medium-sized, private, four-year university in central Japan. The class contained nine students, all of whom were advanced and highly motivated English language learners in the Department of English and American Studies within the university’s Faculty of Foreign Studies. Two students had studied abroad on long-term programs (6 and 8 months), one had spent a gap year between high school and college in the US (studying at a language school and staying with English-speaking relatives), and two students had studied on short-term language programs abroad (both for 2months). The remaining five students had never studied abroad. The university’s English department where this class is taught uses G-Telp and TOEIC scores to stream students within each grade, and these students were all part of the top stream because they had maintained TOIEC scores of 550 or higher since the end of their first year.

As an advanced undergraduate oral communication class for English majors, course objectives included vocabulary development, the promotion of spoken and written genre awareness, and development of critical and empathetic thinking skills.

### **Choosing the Story**

I chose to introduce the story entitled “Yesterday” by Murakami Haruki for a variety of reasons. First, I see Murakami Haruki’s fiction as uniquely adept at blending Japanese and Western cultural traditions. As one of Japan’s most prominent contemporary authors who writes for both domestic and international audiences, Murakami’s stories and novels are set predominantly in Japan but nevertheless feature frequent reference to popular American and British culture. This means that although Murakami’s stories are translated into English from Japanese, they are also in a sense bicultural.

More specifically, however, I chose this particular story because it seemed to address issues important to 21<sup>st</sup> century post-adolescent language learners—the complex relationships that exist between language use and identity, social positioning, desire, and mobility. These are all issues that emerge from what is commonly called “the postmodern condition.” In the past twenty years, with the acceleration of globalization, these issues have gained prominence in academia as a whole and also in the field of second language acquisitions studies (see, for example, Kramsch, 2009; Pierce, 1995; and Rampton, 1990, 2004). Of course, by using this story in class I did not set out to help students discuss theoretical aspects of “the post-modern condition.” I did, however, aim to use the story to raise students’ awareness about these issues, and their relation to language learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **The Story**

“Yesterday” tells the story of two college-aged men who have become friends while working together at a cafe in Tokyo. The narrator, Tanimura, is a college student who was born and raised in Kobe and is living in Tokyo while attending Waseda University. His new friend, Kitaru, is the same age but in quite a different position. Having failed his college entrance exams, he is what is known as a *ronin*. He is working part-time while studying for another round of entrance exams.

The story revolves around the two friends' relationship and Kitaru's odd proposal that Tanimura go out on a date with his long-time girlfriend, Erika. Erika, a student at Sophia University, has been Kitaru's high school sweetheart, but when the story begins, they have agreed to put their relationship on hold so Kitaru can focus on studying for his entrance exams. We sense that his failure to live up to expectations by gaining admittance to a prestigious Tokyo university has strained their relationship. We also soon discover that, in truth, Kitaru is only going through the motions of preparing for another round of entrance exams. Before long it becomes clear that Kitaru is actually searching for a way to escape his current circumstances.

It can be argued that the story has a fourth main character. It is not a human but an abstract concept: language and the markings of social class. According to Bourdieu (1991) language and social norms exert a kind of "symbolic domination" on the individual, creating a *habitus* that informs the way an individual exists—physically and psychologically—in the world (p.51). Seen in this light, Kitaru's eccentric yet playful uses of language may signal a desire for escape from the crucible of bourgeois pressures and expectations that envelop him. The most obvious example of this is that despite having been born and raised in Tokyo, Kitaru refuses to speak anything but the dialect of Japan's Kansai region. When pressed at one point by his friend to explain his linguistic choice, he replies:

As a kid, I was a huge Hanshin Tigers fan ... Went to their games whenever they played in Tokyo. But if I sat in the Hanshin bleachers and spoke with a Tokyo dialect nobody wanted to have anything to do with me. Couldn't be part of the community, y'know? So I figured, I gotta learn Kansai dialect, and I worked like a dog to do just that.

Tanimura, who is actually from Kansai, is going through the opposite kind of transition as he quickly and casually sheds his native dialect for the dominant discourse of his new college peers in Tokyo. As he explains:

Until I graduated from high school, I spoke nothing but Kansai dialect. But all it took was a month in Tokyo for me to become completely fluent in Tokyo standard. I was kind of surprised that I could adapt so quickly. Maybe I have a chameleon type of personality. Or maybe my sense of language is more advanced than most people's. Either way, no one believed now that I was actually from Kansai (Murakami, 2014, p. 75).

Like Kitaru, Tanimura realizes that changing the way he speaks is part and parcel with embodying a new identity. It is a tool for trying to escape from the past by inventing a new self:

Another reason I stopped using Kansai dialect was that I wanted to become a totally different person. When I moved from Kansai to Tokyo to start college, I spent the whole bullet-train ride mentally reviewing my eighteen years and realized that almost everything that had happened to me was pretty embarrassing. I'm not exaggerating. I didn't want to remember any of it—it was so pathetic (Murakami, 2014, p. 75).

Rebellion against cookie-cutter middle class life and expectations is another motive that Tanimura and Kitaru share. Reflecting upon his life before college, Tanimura explains:

The more I thought about my life up to then, the more I hated myself. It wasn't that I didn't have a few good memories—I did. A handful of happy experiences. But, if you added them up, the shameful, painful memories far outnumbered the others. When I thought of how I'd been living, how I'd been approaching life, it was all so trite, so miserably pointless. Unimaginative middle-class rubbish, and I wanted to gather it all up and stuff it away in some drawer. Or else light it on fire and watch it go up in smoke (though what kind of smoke it would emit I had no idea). Anyway, I wanted to get rid of it all and start a new life in Tokyo as a brand-new person. Jettisoning Kansai dialect was a practical (as well as symbolic) method of accomplishing this. *Because, in the final analysis, the language we speak constitutes who we are as people. At least that's the way it seemed to me at eighteen* (Murakami, 2014, pp. 75-76, *emphasis added*).

Like much of Murakami's prose, not much happens in this story. It is entirely character-driven with only a series of minor episodes leading to an inconclusive ending. For example, the date that Kitaru suggests for his girlfriend and Tanimura takes place but leads nowhere. They mostly just talk about Kitaru, who shortly thereafter disappears inexplicably. When Tanimura encounters Erika by chance many years later, she tells him that Kitaru has emigrated from Japan to settle in America, where he is working as a sushi chef in Denver, Colorado.

### **Using the Story in Class**

To use the story in class, I followed the following procedure:

1. I handed out the English version of the story (which is 12 magazine pages long) and told the students to read through it over the following two weeks. Given their level, this group of students could probably have completed the story in the week before their next class, but I wanted to give them time to digest the story, and I also wanted to allow time to discuss any difficult language that they discovered in the text. They were also asked to look up words and phrases they didn't know and bring any questions about vocabulary, idioms, etc. to one of the following two classes. I also told them where they could access the Japanese version in case they wanted to read that as well.
2. Two weeks later, after having discussed a few vocabulary items raised by students and confirming their understanding of the main characters and plot points, I divided the students into three groups of three: a character group, a plot group, and a language & technique group. Each group's first task was to just talk about the story freely—to discuss their impressions and reactions. At this time, I circulated among the groups at this time to help the students with anything that was still confusing to them and to join the short discussions that were developing. Students were given about 15 minutes for this task.
3. When I could see that the students had a grasp of the story, I asked each group to develop several (4-5) questions about their assigned area. I encouraged them to start with basic questions (e.g., Who are the main characters?), and then to try to come up with more complex “thought” questions for discussion. Some examples of questions that students came up with are given in Appendix A. Groups took about 30 minutes to complete this stage, and during this time I circulated among the groups, helping with grammar and vocabulary, and making sure the questions were structurally sound and comprehensible. I introduced such key words as (e.g. “symbolize,” “represent,” “metaphor,” and “narrator,” etc.) to the whole class, as these emerged and became necessary for question formation. I gave sample questions and examples using these words, and students were then able to use them in their own questions.

4. Once groups had finished forming their questions, they had 15 or 20 minutes to discuss their answers to these questions within their groups. Then, at the end of the first 90-minute class session, their homework assignment was to think some more about the questions their groups had formed, and to make some notes on their own responses.
5. In the following (2<sup>nd</sup>) class session, students reconvened for about 20 minutes in their specialist groups and discussed their answers to the questions they had created. I circulated among the groups, helping out with language and also pushing them to probe deeper into the story with additional follow-up questions.
6. The next stage of this activity, which lasted about 30 minutes, was for members of the specialist groups to break up and lead discussions in new, mixed groups. I instructed students to choose one or two questions that had provoked the most discussion in their specialist groups to introduce in their new groups which contained one member from each topic area (plot, characters, and language/technique).
7. The final stage was a full-class discussion at the end of the second class session. Students from each new group shared some of the questions they'd been discussing, and our whole class engaged in a dialogue about these, with various individual students contributing opinions and ideas that they had practiced articulating in their groups.

### **Assessing the Exercise**

To assess the effectiveness of this literature-based exercise and students' reactions to it, after receiving informed consent, students were given the opportunity to fill out and hand in a simple anonymous survey to our university's Student Affairs Office at the end of the semester. The feedback survey was optional, and though the questions were written in English, I told students that they could answer the questions in either English or Japanese or a combination of the two. I arranged to receive the completed surveys from the student affairs office after grading for the semester was completed and finalized.

The survey included the following seven questions:

- 1) What did you think of the story, “Yesterday” by Murakami Haruki?
- 2) Was preparing to discuss the story in class manageable (not too difficult)? Please explain.
- 3) Would you have preferred to read a copy of the story in Japanese first? Why or why not?
- 4) What did you think of the class activity in which you made discussion questions about the story?
- 5) Were small group discussions (using the questions you made) interesting and useful? How?
- 6) Were the full class discussions interesting and useful?
- 7) Would you recommend using this story again in my future Oral Communication III classes?  
Why or why not?

## Results

Unfortunately, only 5 of the 9 students handed in their completed surveys to the Student Affairs Office, as requested. I think there are two reasons for this low return rate. First, because the survey was given to students after the semester’s final exam, some students may have just forgotten to hand in them in the busyness they may have experienced at the semester’s end. Second, students were not required to complete the survey. Since the surveys were anonymous, there were no negative consequences associated with not turning one in. Still, while every class member’s perspective was not included, the surveys that I did receive provided rich qualitative data that confirmed some of my intuitions about the literature-based exercise I had designed and also offered me additional insights into how it might be improved.

Regarding the first survey question, which asked for students’ overall opinions on the story, student responses were mostly positive. One student wrote: “I think it’s interesting and this nobel [*sic*] is one of the deepest nobel I have ever read. Thanks to this nobel I am interested in Haruki Murakami more.” Two other respondents praised the story’s characters, seeming to appreciate their uniqueness. One respondent wrote (in English): “I think it was fun. I like the character of Kitaru. He doesn’t study and asks Tanimura-kun to go date with Erika, his girlfriend. He is a strange person but doing what really want to do.” Another wrote the following in Japanese: 「人間味のある個性的な登場人物が魅力的でした」 which roughly translates to “The uniqueness of the main characters was charming.” One student, however, expressed discontent

with the story and characters, writing: I tried to read it seriously, but it was つまらない … Sorry … All of characters had strange personalities, so it was difficult to understand the story.”

The second question asked about students’ ability to read and understand the story in time for our class discussions. While most students indicated that preparation was not overly taxing, one student wrote “Difficult!! because I couldn’t understand the story.” Another student indicated that preparation was challenging, but ultimately valuable: “I’m not good at reading, so it took much to read. However, I could enjoy reading and discussing.” A third respondent, wrote that though the story was not hard, she<sup>1</sup> was dissatisfied with the unevenness of her classmates’ preparation, writing “Not so difficult but ストリーを把握していないクラスメイトの話し合いは大変でした (translation: “It was difficult to hold a discussion with classmate(s) who had not yet grasped the story”).

The third survey question asked whether students would have preferred to read the Japanese version of the story first. Four out of five students answered no to this question, praising the value of challenging themselves with the English text only. Here one student admitted not reading the story, claiming she did not have time, but did not answer the question of whether or not she would have preferred Japanese language scaffolding.

The fourth question asked about the question-making activities. While one student’s response to the prompt was simply “It was difficult,” the other students all expressed appreciation for the task’s structure. For example, one student wrote: “I liked it!! I’ve been waiting for the activity like this. Actually, it’s difficult to tell our opinion and to share our opinions.” Another wrote: “I liked it because I could understand the story and ask questions through discussion in class.”

Questions 5 and 6 asked students about the in-class discussions. Students who answered these questions were generally positive about the discussion structures, but one student again noted that both small group and full class discussions were “useful” but “difficult for me.” Regarding the small group discussions, several students noted that they enjoyed the opportunity to hear different perspectives from their classmates. One student noted that full class discussions were motivating, writing: “all students are very good at English, so its very useful for me.”

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<sup>1</sup> As the surveys were anonymous, the gender of this and other respondents was unknown. The female pronoun is used here and subsequently for syntactical simplicity.

Another stated that she would have liked more time devoted to full-class discussions, as such opportunities had been rare over the course of the semester.

The final question asked whether or not students would recommend using the story in a future class. Three students said yes. Two of these students elaborated on their opinion, writing: “I recommend. The story is fun. In addition, Murakami Haruki is a famous writer, so it can get students’ interest” and “Its not just speaking English but thinking story and speaking our opinion.” The third student wrote only “Yes.” Of the two remaining students, one simply wrote “No,” whereas another wrote that though it is interesting to read a piece of Japanese fiction in English, it would be best to choose a little bit easier story in the future.

### **Reflection & Pedagogical Implications**

The survey results confirmed my intuition that using “Yesterday” as a vehicle for class discussion was generally successful and well-received. A shortcoming of the questionnaire was that it did not allow students to demonstrate their grasp of the language and identity issues raised by the story, but this is something I was able to assess in the course’s final interviews. Based on these, I found that by relating to Murakami’s quirky college student characters, students demonstrated increased ability to articulate connections between language and identity, and many engaged in perspective-taking about their own relationship with English.

From a methodological perspective, it would have been better to allot class-time for students to fill out the survey in order to guarantee a higher return rate, but the responses I received nevertheless demonstrated that some students may need more scaffolding in order to more completely appreciate the story. Results also reiterated the common sense notion that literature is sometimes just a matter of taste, and thus it may be hard to please all students all the time. The absence of an established “canon” of contemporary literature appropriate for the EFL classroom makes choosing literary texts difficult, but since this story raises important issues relevant to language learning in our global era, it seems to have served a valuable purpose. Further, some students appreciate Murakami and the post-modern topics he addresses, while others do not. However, because the overall response from students on their surveys and in class was positive, I feel confident that it is worth using again. Murakami’s writing style typically features simple sentence structure and vocabulary and thus usually translates into easily

comprehensible English prose. Still, as some students indicated that the story was difficult, it could be useful to pre-teach difficult words and phrases before assigning the story. This could help ease the burden of comprehending the story for lower-level students. Finally, pre-teaching some key terms commonly used in discussing fiction might aid students in composing and discussing questions about the story.

### Conclusion

While limited in its scope, this reflective action research project revealed some effective ways that Japanese literature in translation can be used as a centerpiece for class discussions about issues of language, identity, and mobility in a Japanese university EFL context. The chosen story featured eccentric but relatable characters, and the arc of their post-adolescent development made for engaging class discussions. Tasking students with the construction of their own discussion questions provided fruitful opportunities for language development, critical and imaginative thinking, and engaging discussion about topics relevant to their lives. Based upon the post-intervention survey and my own reflections on the efficacy of classroom discussions, I have decided to use the story in class in the future with additional scaffolding for students.

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## Japan Writers Conference Reports

### Alice Campion and Collaborative Writing

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Sections of Neville Shute's *A Town Like Alice* (1950) fictionalise the Japanese invasion of Malaya, where the two main characters are held as prisoners of war. The Alice of the title is Alice Springs, an outback town in Australia, close to iconic Uluru – known as Ayers Rock at the time of original publication. Alice is also Alice Campion, a name chosen by five women for its Australian association. In an almost historical reversal, these Alices held the audience captive with their insight, style and wit at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Japan Writers Conference in Kobe, late October.

How can Alice Campion be five women, and what does this have to do with literature in language teaching? As stated, Alice Campion is the pseudonym – chosen for its emblematic associations, and for the fact that “C” is eye-level when one walks into the book shop – for Jenny Crocker, Jane Richards, Jane St Vincent Welch, Denise Tart and Madeline Oliver. These five women from inner-Sydney co-wrote the novel, *The Painted Sky*, published by Random House earlier this year. Before their presentation at the conference, copies of *The Painted Sky* were prominently displayed but selling slowly. The weight of the tome and the three thousand yen price tag, a typical amount for a book in Australia but expensive elsewhere, might have had something to do with that. After their informative and highly entertaining session there was not a copy to be seen.

The women belong to The Book Sluts book club (they'll read anything), and after a weekend away enjoying what seemed to be a Dostoevsky cosplay, replete with vodka, they decided to write a bestseller to fund a shared vision of crossing Russia by the Trans-Siberian railway. Classified by St Vincent Welch as neither “chook lit” nor “chick lit,” but rather literature with an appeal to female rural and urban dwellers alike, *The Painted Sky* was the result

(K. Sullivan, 2015). That vision has led the writers as far as Japan, and to a publishing deal in Germany, though not as yet to Siberia's snowy climes. In any case, it has taken them a very long way from the "back of Bourke" – the Australian equivalent of the middle of nowhere – the setting for much of their fiction.

Highly irreverent, though not irrelevant, four of the Alices led us through their collaborative process. *The Painted Sky* was submitted to Random House without solicitation, and was accepted by the publisher as an almost seamless manuscript, two extremely rare occurrences. One member is a journalist, and another a documentary editor, and most have some professional background in writing so the ability to cull and tighten undoubtedly gives them an advantage over many aspiring artists. Even so, the voices of five women sounding so much like one narrator is quite a feat. How was it achieved?

The quartet (the fifth member had obligations in Australia) said it boiled down to genuine collaboration, writing, rewriting and writing again. A section of the work-in-progress might be started by one member but another member would rework it, and then another, and so on. Egos were checked at the door as rigorous peer assessment took place. Suggestions were readily given and for the most part taken, or argued against with reason. Ultimately, only writing the sex scenes caused major semantic arguments, but also led to comedic fodder. Initially each member's submission to the steamy and saucy was anonymously written in the same format, with the same font and size to avoid identification and embarrassment. However, efforts failed because the friends knew each other so well that individual authorship was easily recognizable. Much like the act itself, they just decided to get over their prudishness and get on with it. As they lost their bashfulness, even the notoriously difficult-to-produce lines of lust became a natural part of their craft.

The sensual and sultry aside, LiLT members can take the success story of the Alices as an example of the benefits of peer assessment and process writing. Even within our own writing classes, English as an Additional Language (EAL) students can contribute to other class members' work, despite being novices, though a feedback model is needed. The Alices themselves recommend "The Three S's": specificity, sensitivity and being solutions-focused (Jenny Crocker, personal communication, November 18, 2015). This can be adapted to the EAL field. Within this field, student responses particularly focusing on content are generally most

beneficial to improving writing, but student-driven evaluation can also be useful for locating format errors, and giving advice on the aims of an assignment (Soares, 1998).

Feedback indicates that some students feel they benefit from being exposed to different content, form and levels of writing skill through peer assessment, rather than regarding their progress as an exclusive dialogue with the teacher (Advanced writing, personal communication, 2012; Seminar 2, personal communication, 2014). This encourages learner autonomy and agency. This process also enables learners to view their own prose from the reader's standpoint, rather than the writer's, which can help develop their own work. Students can concretely experience the difficulty of trying to follow writing that is too egocentric. Consequently, possible awareness is raised of the same failing in their own drafts (Zamel, 1982, p. 206).

If similar collaborative concepts are employed, the scope of exercises involving student-generated literature can widen. If small student groups attempt to write sections of an original story and are then required to rewrite the work of their partners, similar well-honed prose might occur. If that is a little too ambitious, at least the activity has potential as a source of new ideas and is conducive to strengthening notions of teamwork.

A popular writing exercise is asking students to compose in the “voice” of a particular author. In this case, collaborative methods are perhaps a good way of helping students discover the craft and concepts of tone and diction. A deeper analysis of selected pieces of literature, at both a practical skills-based and content-based level, is a possible result. There is a chance for writing and literature to develop organically, both as process and product, through the mechanism “. . . of discovering meaning” (Zamel, 1982). Furthermore, if students truly work together to convey their “thoughts and ideas,” (1982) they also combine shared linguistic knowledge, and this can often be observed in their output while undertaking a task (Swain, 1995, 2005). Language use and awareness, hopefully leading to improvement, can advance as a result.

Alice Campion was engaging and it was a delight to make the acquaintance of four of its members. Many thanks to Jenny Crocker’s brother, James Crocker, the founder of *The Font: A Literary Journal for Language Teachers*, for inviting them to attend. James hosted this year’s conference at Kobe Women’s University in Suma.

### **Members, Presentations and Publications**

LiLT members known to me at the conference were John Roberts, Wendy Jones Nakanishi and myself. Many more may have been in attendance. Wendy, *sans* scheduled LiLT member Simon Bibby, presented on the process of publishing their Japan-based textbook, *Real Reads – an Introduction to Literature*. As well as participating in a panel discussion on getting published with Suzanne Kamata, Sara Kate Ellis and Ann Tashi Slater, Wendy also presented independently on making the most of being an expatriate writer in Japan. Her murder-mystery, *Imperfect Strangers* (written as Lea O’Harra), was available for purchase. John Roberts and I co-presented with Jared Angel on the successful running of a writing event (Angel), or writing group (Sullivan & Roberts). I also presented on returning to writing after a hiatus, touching upon the lack of confidence that can sometimes crowd out creativity and productivity.

It was an inspiring weekend. The conference, though not directly related to language teaching, was definitely attended by many language teachers who are also writers, or vice versa. 2016’s writers’ conference location has yet to be announced. Contact John Gribble on [gibblej\[at\]gol.com](mailto:gibblej[at]gol.com) to be added to the mailing list. For more ideas on collaborative writing for fiction, a few of the Alice’s have guidelines and information at [www.groupfiction.net](http://www.groupfiction.net)

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#### Appendix A. Alice Campion



Wendy Jones Nakanishi

*Shikoku Gakuin University*

LiLT member Wendy Jones Nakanishi gave three presentations at the Japan Writers Conference held on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> at Kobe Women's University, Suma Campus. The first presentation, entitled 'Real Reads and Real Persistence: A Literature Textbook for Language Learners, and the Road to Its Publication,' dealt with the creation of an introductory literature text for language learners. She discussed not just the textbook but also the process of creating a textbook from start to finish, dealing with various publishing houses and, once a deal was eventually struck, the final publication process itself.

Jones Nakanishi also presented on the topic of 'The Ex-pat Writer in Japan: Making a Virtue of Necessity.' In this talk she revealed the results of a questionnaire she had sent to a number of ex-pat writers, asking whether they thought living in Japan constituted a help or a hindrance in their own creative efforts. She talked, too, about her recently published crime novel set on the campus of a small private Japanese university entitled *Imperfect Strangers*, published under the pen name of 'Lea O'Harrar.' The book is available on Amazon in digital form as issued by Endeavour Press (UK) and in print version as designed by Fine Line Press (New Zealand).

Finally, she appeared with Karen McGee, Sara Kate Ellis, Suzanne Kamata and Ann Tashi Slater addressing the topic 'Getting Published: a Panel Discussion.'

Jones Nakanishi gave a presentation at the Iris Murdoch Society of Japan held on November 21<sup>st</sup> at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo on the topic of 'The Insider Outsider in Iris Murdoch's *Bruno's Dream* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*'

## JALT Conference 2015 Reports

Anna Husson Isozaki

*Gunma Women's University*

At JALT National, LiLT member Anna Husson Isozaki participated in a biliteracy forum held by the bilingualism SIG, along with Alec McAulay and Susan Miyake. She focused on shared enjoyment of children's and young adult literature read aloud or listened to, as a base for building future fluent biliteracy. With researchers such as Charles Browne pointing out the dearth of daily life spoken vocabulary (well less than one thousand words) and television and radio offering counts only slightly over one thousand, compared to literature (a difference upwards in the thousands), it is easier to understand why hearing stories read aloud is so essential and effective for both initially freeing self-expression, and later, for empowering literacy in young bilinguals. Recent research illuminates the connections listening to literature read aloud build toward biliteracy for bilingual children. Tomlinson (2000, p. 526) posited an "inner voice" activated during reading. Subsequent empirical research has given evidence of precisely that, and has shown that skilled, fluent reading requires a great deal of listening in language experience to build and empower that inner listening when reading fluently – even superimposing the sense of oral rhythm and stress onto the written page (Ashby, 2006; Stephens, 2011a, 2011b, Whalley & Hansen, 2006). Within just this past year further research has come out, showing decisively that even for EFL (rather than already bilingual) readers, audiobook-supported reading greatly improved both comprehension and reading speeds compared to silent reading conditions (Chang & Millett, 2015).

With classic children's literature and novels available to read aloud or listen to via CD or downloads, there is much to intrigue story-loving children and satisfy the minds of their literature loving elders. Listening together to moving, memorable stories creates a lasting base for sharing and discussion, and repeated listening, with readings before or even long after, connect naturally with the genius of the young brain saying "read it again" – and build solid ground for fluent biliteracy as well (Stephens, 2011a, 2011b).

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## **LiLT SIG events**

Simon Bibby – *Kobe Shoin Women's University*

Kevin Stein – *Clark Memorial International High School*

Gregg McNabb – *Shizuoka Institute of Science & Technology*

The 41st JALT Conference took place in Shizuoka, over the long weekend of Friday 20 November to Monday 23 November, 2015. The chosen venue was a good one -- spacious and airy, with plenty of natural light. A particular boon was the view of Mt. Fuji from large windows on the higher floors -- truly glorious to behold! We were further blessed with unseasonably warm weather, and so the kiosks set up outside selling assorted foods and beers were welcome and popular, and enabled participants to get some welcome fresh air.

### **LiLT Forum**

For us in the Literature in Language Teaching SIG, our main focus was the well-attended SIG Forum held on Saturday evening, where Kevin Stein had arranged for five seasoned professionals to discuss literary matters in the context of language teaching. The panel consisted of LiLT-sponsored guest speaker Jane Spiro, John Fanselow, Marcos Benevides, Jill Hadfield and Jane Joritz-Nakagawa. Discussion was provocative and lively, covering such topics as whether graded readers are truly authentic literature (Benevides argued that they can be); the value of boilerplate, transactional, “textbook” English versus literature (Professor Fanselow questioned their utility); and the role for poetry outside the classroom. For example, Professor Fanselow informed us that for Somalis, having an excellent working command of poetry demonstrates that one has been well educated.

### **Jane Spiro: Writing mirrors: teacher-writers and learner-writers**

In her poetry workshop, LiLT-invited speaker Professor Spiro repeatedly stressed and exemplified the value of adopting patterns and imposing constraints (limiting the field parameters) on poetry to produce better results, where “better results” meant putting pen to paper

to start the writing process versus waiting for inspiration to write a so-called “important” poem. She referred to appreciating the moment, finding poetry in everyday moments and events and writing about them. She shared lovely work from her childhood notebook. She talked about congruence and need for language mindfulness on the part of the writing teacher and the teacher of writing. She suggested we could practice mindfulness by assuming new voices (child, adult, male, female, animal, object). For Spiro (and no doubt many others), teacher and learner enter into a writing partnership. She views the classroom as a community of writing practice in a shared endeavour to make writing a meaningful activity capturing real experiences and more.

**Neil Conway** of Musashino University discussed the types of poetry to use with students, suggested various poets and poems to use (and also noted those to not use, notably to avoid *Jabberwocky!*), and explained approaches to have students focus on aspects of poetic language and form. Among these, he particularly advocated having students read the poetry aloud to help them more fully appreciate tone and rhythm. Editor’s note: This ties in nicely with Husson Isozaki’s biliteracy review on page 57.

## Announcements



**Neil Addison** of Tokyo Women's University [Naddison34@yahoo.co.uk] wants to remind you that the 2016 **Liberlit Conference** will be held on **February 22** at Tokyo Women's University.

There will be a **LiLT Forum** in Kyoto this summer on **September 17**. We look forward to your participation.

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

Issue 4.2 has featured various literature in practice papers from around Japan and Iran as well as summaries from member presentations at the Japan Writers Conference and the 2015 JALT Conference in Shizuoka from November 21-23.

Issue 5.1 is expected to be published in late June or July 2016 and submissions are being accepted now. **The deadline for submissions for the next issue is April 16, 2016.** You do not necessarily need to be a member of JALT to publish in this journal. In addition to normal, well-researched scholarly writing, we always welcome student-produced work in literature, so if you have shepherded any of your students' writings in ways that readers may find interesting and useful, please send in your submission. Further information is available from the LiLT SIG website <[liltsig.org](http://liltsig.org)> and from the editors of this journal via email to [liltsig@gmail.com](mailto:liltsig@gmail.com). For the time being, you are encouraged to submit directly to [greggmcnabb@gmail.com](mailto:greggmcnabb@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 solely responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations.\***

## **Style**

This 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.