



The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

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From the Editors

Friends and Colleagues,

This is the fifth 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 on ELT and literature in Japan, we have three Feature Articles and two articles about Literature in Practice. **Anna Husson Isozaki** has written a fascinating article that explains and reports about the effectiveness of combining listening via audiobooks alongside conventional readers. She states that “audiobooks paired with books can decrease intimidation and increase time spent with the language as well as facilitate skilled reading.” It seems to be an area of research that has thus far been overlooked. In the second feature article **Simon Bibby** successfully straddles theory and Literature in Practice in his carefully detailed description of his single-semester course on *Animal Farm*. Substantial emphasis is placed on Reader Response theory. In the final feature article **William Collins** explains that recent research in second language acquisition has recognized the importance for learners of understanding how language reflects and is informed by culture. The article deals with the intersection of language and culture through poetry reading. In his article he reports the results of a multi-year cross-cultural poetry-reading study. In the Literature in Practice section, in an intimate recounting of his successes and failures with introducing students to peer review, **Atsushi Iida** ultimately provides us with ways to incorporate activities for reviewing L2 poems into the first-year college English classroom and proposes practical guidelines for teaching poetry review in groups in the Japanese EFL classroom. Finishing up, **Morten Hunke** examines the “mechanics” of teaching second language learners how best to recite poetry. He reports on his efforts to introduce students to drama pedagogy, phonation, voice coaching, and simplified concepts of target language prosody.

As always, member contributions are very welcome. Should you have some ideas you would like to share, please do get in touch. For example, from 2015 it is hoped that in one issue per year, your well-reported Students’ Work will become a regular section.

We would like to extend my thanks to the patient contributors and to those who have taken the time out of their busy schedules to help in the editing and proofreading process. Going

forward, we hope to be able to call upon you again. Thanks to the efforts of readers, reviewers and members of the editorial team, this current issue of our journal is certainly well worth reading.

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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Flowing toward solutions: literature listening and L2 literacy

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Abstract

University students in Japan often admit during self-introductions in reading classes that they don't like to read, in English or even in Japanese. Getting to fluent, unimpeded reading for pleasure in English is undeniably a challenge but can be surmountable. Especially since the beginning of the 2000s, increasingly sophisticated research on acquisition of reading L1 and L2 has brought new understandings of what is happening in the brains of readers. We can incorporate these findings into our support of our learners, developing effective scaffolding to encourage their success in bridging the gap from "decoding text" to fluent enjoyment of authentic reading. Audiobooks paired with books can decrease intimidation and increase time spent with the language as well as facilitate skilled reading. This article touches on the challenges, introduces some of the research, and shares a series of class projects and evaluations from learners in the process of gaining reading fluency.

Many children tell us that learning to read is hard, and if the first language is English, the telling will be vehement. Some second language readers of English work their way up to a dry plateau of slow, painful, and rarely-accurate sounding out, and their desire to read perishes there. Why are learners around the world faced then with textbooks parched of interest, instead of drawing from intrinsic human abilities and desire for stories?

Stories are hardwired into humans; telling stories aloud, and then with literacy, in print as well (Boyd, 2009; Cron, 2012). Judge (2012) writes: "Storytelling is part of our makeup as human beings. It is one of our oldest and most important forms of communication" (Judge, 2012, p. 13). The intrinsically social nature of stories offers connections to learning and Dornyei and

Murphey (2003, p. 4) suggest that learning is best done with human social nature in mind. The value of parents reading to their children is well established (Clark, 2007; Duursma, Augustyn, & Zuckerman, 2008; OECD, 2002), and for L2 English learners, stories are engaging, and if shared socially, all the more so. Iida (2013) provides a valuable overview of current empirical research on the positive roles literature plays in the L2 classroom, citing studies that show benefits across the spectrum of L2 learning targets, and concluding that literature helps “develop L2 linguistic knowledge and language awareness, communicative competence, cultural knowledge of the target language, critical thinking skills...motivation, and...emotional engagement” (Iida, 2013, p. 9). Bibby (2012) also writes that teachers choosing authentic literature for their learners may be offering students “context” (Bibby, 2012, p. 7) with which to engage with their L2 when the language is largely absent outside the classroom.

Despite literature’s demonstrable role in EFL learning, there seems to be sparse research on oral literature’s possibilities for EFL learners, even though oral storytelling could be considered the original form of literature, and certainly endured as the primary method of sharing stories until literacy became widespread, and books became both affordable and available in ordinary society (Chartier, 2002, pp. 136-138; Lai-ming, 2008). Research specifically on the potential of audiobook-listening to support fluent L2 reading development and literature enjoyment also seems sparse, but closely relevant published research from Taiwan is showing extremely encouraging results in listening fluency and comprehension gains from experiments pairing extensive listening and reading (Chang, 2009, 2011; Chang & Millett, 2014).

In this article I would like to make a case for taking a proactive approach to helping learners at a particular point of L2 reading: learners who are able to read by visually decoding, but are not yet able to enjoy reading fluently in their L2. Oral literature offers an accessible bridge between our hardwired, innate brain skills (Wolf, 2008, Chapter 1) and reading, and can provide a *critical mass* of input in listening to support development of fluent reading (Isozaki, 2014b). Providing this bridge is particularly crucial when the target L2 is not prevalent in the learners’ surrounding environment (Stephens, 2011a; Walter, 2008).

Research

Writing on the history and neuroscience of reading in *Proust and the Squid*, Wolf (2008) explores the development (and challenges) of humans learning to read: while listening

and speaking are innate in the healthy brain, reading and writing are wired up later – these skills are not in our genes (Wolf, 2008, pp. 10-11). Once the connections for smooth reading are built, and information is flowing without conscious effort, it's easy to forget the process (Wolf, 2008, p. 114), but new findings from many quarters are now teasing out exactly what happens in the brain as these processes get wired and activated (Wolf, 2008, Chapters 5, 6).

For L1 English reading, the research increasingly points to benefits for reading skills and comprehension from developing a strengthened sound-sense of the language at many levels. In their 1990 publication of *Phonological Awareness and Learning to Read*, Goswami and Bryant assert that “English is a capricious orthography” (Goswami & Bryant, 1990, p. 26) and explain that though readers depend partly on correspondences between written letters and their typically assigned sounds, the “English script is too unpredictable ... we cannot read by simply translating ... individual letters into sounds” (Goswami & Bryant, 1990, p. 30). Comparing the challenges of learning to read in English to learning to read in other languages, Goswami, with Ziegler, notes again that English is “exceptionally inconsistent” due to the difficulties it poses for new readers in matching letters to sounds, and vice-versa as well (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006, p. 430). Wolf, in comparing English to German, Finnish, and Italian, makes a similar point (Wolf, 2008, p. 152), as do Perfetti and Dunlap in comparing sixteen languages including Welsh, Korean, Lao, and Khmer (2008, pp. 18-19).

Ashby (2006), in an L1 English reading experiment, tracked the eye movements of university students reading silently and fluently, deducing that their reading has prosody. Good readers are *mentally hearing* syllables and stress as part of processing for comprehension while reading, as well as the letter-sound correspondences of phonological awareness (Ashby, 2006, pp. 328, 331). Whalley and Hansen (2006), in an L1 reading experiment with children of ages eight to ten, experimented to see how awareness of stress and rhythm help distinguish meanings and provide “chunking” for thought groups and “highlighting” of information to build comprehension (Whalley and Hansen, 2006, pp. 288-290). They also found evidence that, in addition to phonological awareness, English reading fluency development requires prosodic sensitivity (Whalley & Hansen, 2006, p. 297). They point out that there is a “paucity of prosodic information provided in written [English] language” (Whalley & Hansen, 2006, p. 291) and that “the reader must supply the prosody intended by the writer, which is only sparsely captured by

punctuation, to understand fully the context of the passage and its intended message” (Whalley & Hansen, 2006, p. 299).

Catherine Walter’s (2008) seminal research on verbal working memory and the “phonological loop” examines the process in which input, both heard *and read* from text, is stored briefly *in audio form* in working memory, to find a sound-match in long-term memory, enabling comprehension (Walter, 2008, pp. 458-459). L2 learners who cannot comprehend well while reading – who are not fluent L2 readers yet – are not getting reliable, accurate, fast sound-matches between their working memory and long term memory, and that time lag inhibits comprehension (Walter, 2008, pp. 458-459). Walter therefore advocates that learners build up their L2 memory storage by getting more input and practice with the target language’s sounds (phonemes and syllables), stress, and vocabulary. Among other recommendations, she suggests having students “read books at their level while listening to spoken word CDs” (Walter, 2008, pp. 470-471).

Bringing the research from alphabetical languages closer to the situation faced by learners in Asia acquiring L2 English literacy, research reported in Koda and Zehler: *Learning to Read Across Languages* documents that many languages such as Korean (see Perfetti & Dunlap, above) are reliable for decoding. With English so much less consistent, another layer of unfamiliar challenge is added to efforts toward L2 English literacy acquisition for learners, beyond the matters of, for example, differing scripts. Yet Koda also reports consensus among researchers in every language examined, including across the Asian region, that phonological awareness is key for learning to read in each language and literacy acquired (Koda, p. 224), and that even with Chinese characters the issue may not be the existence or not of phonological activity but the timing of processing; that is, rather than solely visual recognition, the reader mentally hears the characters they are reading but with slightly different timing than in alphabetical language-reading (Wang & Yang, 2008, citing Perfetti et al., p. 139).

Meredith Stephens, in Japan, reminds us that children acquiring L1 English get “exaggerated prosody provided by their caregivers” [e.g., by reading stories aloud], which builds their ability to sort the flow of language into understandable patterns (Stephens, 2011b, pp.70-71). Her reference to “caregivers” suggests substantial time and repetition, factors likely to be crucial for all ages. Stephens also suggests that extensive reading for English learners should be done with audio, especially for learners whose L1 is “distant” from L2 English (2011a).

Considering Steven Pinker's observation regarding the distance between Japanese and English: "Japanese and English are looking-glass versions of each other" (Pinker, 1994, p. 111), Stephens' suggestions for audio to support acquisition of English reading fluency seem especially applicable in Japan. Japanese, when written in either of its two alphabets, katakana or hiragana, does correspond directly to the intended sound of its words, but the overwhelming number of homophones in the language interfere with understanding when texts are produced only in those alphabets. Mixing in adopted Chinese characters (kanji) aids greatly in distinguishing between meanings, but most characters in kanji can be read in multiple ways and these must, thus, be learned by schoolchildren with a great deal of *ondoku*, or repetitive oral practice of target reading passages with feedback and corrections from teachers and parents, to gain competent literacy in Japanese. Writing Japanese with the roman alphabet has not offered a solution either, because additionally to the homophones issue, competing transliterations from Japanese to roman lettering still exist and hamper teaching and learning written language correspondences to intended sound in the roman alphabet as well. The respective orthographic-to-phonemic challenges of both English and Japanese, therefore, make them each strong candidates for listening work providing support for gaining full, enjoyable L1 literacy. Certainly, given the considerable differences between the two languages, audio listening to scaffold reading may help support bridging the distance between them for L2 literacy development (Isozaki, 2014a).

Experimental classroom research

Chang (2011) reports on a two-semester project with high school students, in which seven students using audiobooks paired with graded readers showed notable gains in vocabulary and listening fluency and comprehension compared to a control group. Perhaps equally notable were the gains this experimental group showed in motivation and enthusiasm; in the second semester of the voluntary project the students increased their book-audiobook borrowing rate eighty-one percent, and all participants moved from choosing exclusively graded reader-audiobook sets to borrowing an authentic and challenging ungraded series as well (Chang, 2011, pp. 54-55, 58). Clearly, even for high school EFL learners intimidation can be overcome with encouragement and complementary scaffolding support, to the point of independently choosing and enjoying ungraded literature. In another experiment, this one with college students, Chang (2009) found student feedback on combining listening and reading to a story to be, in the

students' own opinions: "interesting," with the majority reporting that they were able to pay attention better, that their comprehension was high, and that the stories were "just right" in challenge level, whereas the comparison single-input condition elicited far lower ratings (Chang, 2009, pp. 659-660). Chang emphasizes from her 2011 experimental results that the "key to the success of the RWL [reading while listening] group thus can be attributed to the large quantity of aural input and the support of the written form... which made the input more comprehensible" (Chang, 2011, p. 53).

In a study based in Japan, Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua (2008) mention that an argument for pairing extensive reading with listening is that it may facilitate catching "meaningful sense groups" (Intro, Reading-While-Listening). Student feedback on the three methods experimented with in the study (solely reading, solely listening, or reading and listening together) showed a majority of students (72%) preferred reading and listening together (Brown, Waring & Donkaewbua, 2008, table 15).

Integrating the research with practice

Research published to date seems mainly to have focused on simultaneous listening and reading, and the results have highlighted various important points of reading skills development, or listening comprehension development. There may be some considerations, however, to justify experimentation with complementary approaches for helping learners take the next steps toward fluent reading. First, natural speech rates in English are reported variously, ranging from 111 to over 200 words per minute (Yuan, Liberman & Cieri, 2006). Mental assimilation of words can be slower (Chang, 2011, p. 45- 46) or much faster, and reading speeds also will naturally, during the course of a reading project, be changing. When the speeds of an audio recording, the learner's reading, and the learner's listening comprehension are different, it can be more natural and enjoyable for learners to separate the activities rather than tolerate doing them together, especially through a book of any length.

Unpressured listening can build background familiarity to connect with when later reading the printed text, whether it is phonemic-to-orthographic awareness being developed, as some of the research above seems to suggest, or a learner's sense of the characters and story line, as experienced and reported by some learners: "knowing the general flow of the story, personalities of characters and major events helps ... to visualize the dialogue and become much

more engrossed in the text” (R. Rowland & N. Rowland, personal communication, February 22, 2014).

Psychology of happiness and fulfillment researcher Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi, well-known for using the term flow to describe “a state of heightened focus and immersion” and “stepping into an alternative reality,” (recognizable to any reader engrossed in an involving story), suggests flow can occur when:

...you know that what you need to do is possible to do, even though difficult, and sense of time disappears, you forget yourself, you feel part of something larger. And once the conditions are present, what you are doing becomes worth doing for its own sake. (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008)

This may be relevant to understanding why some second language English readers enjoying stories report flow experiences, even when they do not understand every word at first. In an interesting case study by Nishino (2007), high school students who had initially been reading graded readers outside their schoolwork to strengthen their L2 English skills chose to read *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Nishino supported the students’ reading project in several helpful ways: by being a participant-observer (Nishino read the same stories), by preparing vocabulary support, and by being physically present and available to the students if questions came up during their reading (Nishino, 2007). The students had also familiarized themselves in multiple ways with the *Harry Potter* series, building strong background knowledge before reading the (then) newly published and untranslated one. One student said, “From seeing the movie and reading three books [in Japanese] from the Harry Potter series ... I can imagine the settings, and I can guess what a person wants to say ... This helps me guess word meanings”(Nishino, 2007). Nishino noticed strong evidence of flow in the students’ reading, with strikingly long periods of absorption (Nishino, 2007, appendix C). One of the participating students commented:

Even if the level of an English book is higher than our reading abilities, we can read it if we have knowledge about the topic. Of course, it depends a lot on the vocabulary level whether the book is accessible or not, but if a topic is familiar to us, we can read a book even if the vocabulary level is a little higher (Nishino 2007).

In a *TED* Talk, Csikszentmihályi says: "...Arousal...is...over-challenged...but you can move into flow fairly easily by just developing a little more skill...[it's] the area where most people learn from, because that's where they're pushed beyond their comfort zone and...*then they develop higher skills*" (Csikszentmihályi, 2008, italics added), strengthening the case made by Nishino in her research observation of flow experiences in learners and her support of learners' choosing challenging, authentic literature for themselves.

Some classroom projects and learner feedback

In a small university in Japan, students in first and second year listening and reading courses explored a number of possibilities for learner-controlled listening and reading with full novels and audiobooks. Below is a brief description of some of the listening-to-reading projects and learner responses. The primary goal of the instructor was to learn if extended interaction with an authentic English novel or memoir and its audiobook through the course of a semester would be a positive experience, and if learners would feel improvements in their English skills. The projects were viewed by the instructor as a collaboration with the students: the overwhelming majority of them had never read a full English novel nor had ever tried listening to an audiobook. Therefore, in asking for the substantial extra effort from students, the instructor frankly explained the research available and the questions that remain unanswered. The students were asked to make self-observations during the project since their observations and comments would be requested at the end, and their experience and advice could be helpful for other learners in the future (Appendix A). The anonymous feedback sheet used by participants had a number of questions, the most critical of those intended to ascertain if a project was, in their view, worthwhile: Would they want to try another book in the future? Also, what changes, if any, had students noticed in their feelings about reading, about listening, and about their English skills in general? (Feedback form: Appendix B).

Initially students borrowed individually on a voluntary, extra-credit basis from the instructor's collection of books and audiobooks; mostly high quality young adult stories such as Newbery award winners, or manageable bestsellers like *Tuesdays With Morrie*. The instructor suggested that students experiment with different combinations of listening and reading and asked for feedback on what worked best for them (see Appendix B). Through two university semesters, 2011-2012, four reading and listening classes were offered the instructor's collection,

and approximately half the twenty members chose to participate in each class. Feedback to the instructor from these participants was highly positive, such as: “Resistance to reading a long story vanished,” “I thought reading in English was a study, but now I enjoy reading in English,” and especially encouraging: “Please let new student to do this project.”

Other researchers have described small group discussions about literature having many benefits; as cited in Iida (2013), a classroom study of “literature circles” by Kim (2004) “showed that literature discussions had the potential to engage students in enjoyable reading, enabled them to practice the target language through active social interactions, and gave them the opportunity to express themselves meaningfully in English” and found that overall, “literature circles ... promoted their L2 communicative competence” (Iida, 2013, p. 7). A number of student comments to this instructor such as, “I want to talk about the books we read in the class and to compare our opinions,” instigated explorations of group work. *Tuesdays With Morrie*, popular in individual borrowing, became a second-year listening class project, with several meetings of approximately five-member “book clubs” discussing the story as it progressed over the course of the semester. Comments from students in feedback showed that all liked the story, and felt that their English skills had improved: “*Tuesdays With Morrie* changed my way of thinking. ‘What’s life?’ ‘What’s love?’ ... There’re so many things to learn!”

Further explorations of combining listening and reading literature projects with small, in-class “book-club” meetings incorporated strategies developed by Chutatip Yumitani (2013), who reported on learner-creation of notebooks with drawings and memos about novels students were reading. In the process of making their “picture books,” her L2 learners are encouraged to “visualize” rather than mentally translate the stories (Yumitani, 2013). During semesters of university English courses, students reading novels such as books from the *Harry Potter* series consolidate their grasp of the stories by this creative artwork integrated with writing, easing confirmation of content and plotlines with their instructor (Yumitani, 2013).

Modeling on Yumitani’s method, first-and second-year students in three semester-long courses were asked to create notebooks to record their impressions and understanding while listening to and reading Ann Brashares’ popular novel, *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. The student notebooks, with their succinct texts and easily understandable drawings, provided tangible visual aids during learners’ “book-club” meetings and visibly improved small group collaboration; the notebooks facilitated naturally in mutual confirmation and for learners’ sharing

of thoughts and feelings about the novel in their discussions. End-of-semester feedback from the eighteen members of the first year class indicated that nine had listened to the audiobook once; the other nine reported listening through from twice to “many” times. All students felt the project had been helpful in improving their general English listening skills, and all students wanted to try another book in the future. Seventeen of the eighteen felt their reading had improved. A typical comment:

I thought I cannot read it, at first. The book is very long and many vocabulary I don't know. But I read the book and listen to CD. I can read the book without any trouble at all. I find reading English book is fun.

This student volunteered also that she had raised her TOEIC score by two hundred points during the semester this project took place. Due certainly to other, concurrent English courses as well, fifteen of this course's members reported strong growth in their scores (Isozaki, 2014b).

A strong majority of the members of the two classes of second year students reported enjoying listening to and reading the novel, feeling improvements in their listening and vocabulary, and wanting to try another book in the future (fourteen of sixteen in one class; fifteen to eighteen out of twenty in the other.) Excerpted from second-year student feedback:

Before I took this reading class, I had never used an audio-book. Also, this was my first time to read a long English novel (except extensive reading books.) Therefore, using “Sisterhood of the traveling pants” [sic] told me that reading and listening at the same time help improving me to deepen my understanding of the novel. Maybe, I can't finish reading the book if there was no CD. I felt that this method is really suited for me.

Another learner shared: “Thanks to ...a project of sisterhood, more and more I love to read them. I feel the change of my attitude to read English book is the biggest. I would like to read more long English books.”

Conclusion

Research in combining listening and reading for EFL learners is recently increasing and particularly, Chang's and Chang and Millet's work has been documenting impressive listening

comprehension gains for learners with paired extensive listening and reading materials in both graded and ungraded literature (Chang, 2009, 2011; Chang & Millett, 2014).

Experimental research focusing especially on reading fluency outcomes, with greater participant numbers than reported here, still needs to be done. The exploratory class projects with literature in combinations of audiobooks and print shared in this article do not yet offer clear answers to questions such as optimal combinations and timing for listening and reading. They do however offer encouragement to continue exploring these questions. In the projects thus far, learner-controlled pacing of listening and reading and open choices between simultaneous and separated listening and reading were at least felt to be beneficial by the participants, according to the high proportions of reported positive experiences and outcomes in learners' comments and written feedback.

One potential drawback to this report is applicability. The university at which these projects took place is noted for highly motivated students, reliable in their efforts both in and outside the classroom. This level of personal and university-wide commitment may not be a situation all university instructors can assume will be present. Exploring similar but less-demanding projects is underway, however, in another setting where English is at the periphery of the curriculum. Students there generally have not had positive experiences in the past with English, but active participation is high and their comments have been positive. This will be the subject of a future paper; at present it is mentioned because it appears that a good story in a manageable presentation of combined listening and reading can also be motivating for previously discouraged English learners.

With the progress in experimental and theoretical research by other researchers cited above and the learner satisfaction regarding self-experienced growth in skills, confidence and pleasure in reading expressed by student-participants in these shared class projects, this instructor hopes to continue and deepen classroom research toward better understanding of how to help L2 English learners become empowered, fluent readers.

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advice and encouragement, and JALT PSG's Loran Edwards for excellent constructive criticism, greatly improving the final version of this paper.

Author Note

Literature; *stories* are a crucial joy, intrinsic to language and culture... not a new or original thought, but Anna Husson Isozaki is delighted to find LiLT SIG members who share this conviction. She's been teaching in Japan since 1992 and her belief in sharing stories motivated her co-translations of *Crossfire* by Miyuki Miyabe and *Beyond the Blossoming Fields* by Junichi Watanabe as well as her persistence in bringing English stories to her learners. She's currently teaching reading and listening, journalism, and media studies in Kanto, and completing an MA TESOL at Kanda.

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Appendix A

Hi,

In these recent few years, a lot has been learned about the brain and learning language. Now we know we need to listen a lot to build the base for reading. By practice, we more quickly connect what our eyes see with the English we "heard" before and stored in our brains in audio form.

But---

Around the world, language teachers are debating how to help improve reading with help from listening, and we have not really answered "how" yet! You are the new challengers and the experts because you have been trying to do it, and trying different ways of doing it. Please let me know what you think.

Appendix B

End of semester book reading and listening survey *(please feel free to write more on the back!)*

1. What English books did you **read or listen to** this semester?
 2. How did you arrange timing? For example: Did you try listening and reading together?
Did you try listening, then reading later?
Did you try reading, then listening later?
 3. Which way was best for you?
 4. How did you listen – computer, CD player, music player? In train, while walking...?
 5. Every **week**, how many hours did you **listen** to a story? 毎週何時間。。。
 6. Every **week**, how many hours did you **read** a story? 毎週何時間。。。
 7. How many times did you listen to and/or read your entire book or books through? 合わせて、何回その本を聞きました、または読みましたか?
 8. Did you **like** the story or stories?
 9. Do you have any changes now in your **feelings** about **listening** in English? Please explain what ways they've changed:
 10. Do you have any changes now in your **feelings** about **reading** in English? Please explain what ways they've changed:
 11. Were the "book clubs" (meeting to discuss stories) useful?
 12. Do you think you will want to **listen to** another book in the future?
 13. Do you think you will want to **read** another book in the future?
 14. Did this project help with any of your other university listening work?
- Did you feel any "side effects" like more power for:
15. catching the story better than before, even just listening?
 16. or vocabulary power up?
 17. Any other thoughts, comments or suggestions for me about this?

Content and context: A university L2 course using George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Abstract

The author describes the reasons for introducing a literature-based course, using a single literary text, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Particular attention is paid to pre-reading activities to build the necessary relevant schemata - the conceptual and language tools required to understand the text at surface level and as an allegorical text. A range of spoken and written 'during-reading' Reader Response activities are described in detail. Specifically, a reading log is used as the backbone of the course. The article offers a balance of practical and theoretical considerations when using a single L2 text within the EFL classroom.

Keywords: content-context model, content-based learning, CLIL, literature, Animal Farm

The course described within this article arose from teaching Policy Studies majors at a large private university in western Japan. In seminar discussion classes, as conversations developed and more complex topics arose in classes, it became clear that all too frequently students lacked rudimentary political knowledge. This was surprising and appeared problematic – policy studies students were apparently studying in a conceptual vacuum. For how can one be engaged in policy studies without any understanding of politics? This appeared to be an egregious deficit, and I considered how I may be able to try to remedy this in the creation of suitable elective courses.

My first try was to teach a current news topics class. The course appeared successful but appeared an impractical choice as such a course requires constant updating to remain relevant, and a complete overhaul every semester to remain up-to-date. I alighted on the idea of teaching

some politics through literature: using George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, not simply as a book to read but as a vehicle for delivering some 'Introductory Politics 101,' while also offering what I hoped would be stimulating and meaningful reading content for class discussion and learning. As I have noted prior, this is an example of the content-context model for using literature in L2 language classes (Bibby, 2012). At a relatively short 128 pages in the Signet edition, the ten chapters comprising only ten to fifteen pages each, this text seemed like it would be a comfortable fit for the span of a fourteen-week university semester.

Levels of reading and understanding

Reading at surface level

Students first need to read on a surface, literal level, something that applies to L2 and to L1 readers too. For *Animal Farm*, indeed there are animals on a farm, and what happens there? I did warn students at the outset that they should not necessarily expect a Disney type happy ending to this tale. Everyone does not live happily ever after. Readers are likely familiar with *Animal Farm*, and know that what occurs is considerably bleaker. It was written as a sustained allegory, events within the text paralleling key events within Russia in the early twentieth century. However, I considered that just leading students through a straightforward one-to-one parallel reading of the novel as a *direct* political allegory would be a significant disservice to Orwell and to the text, and to my prospective student readers. The text offers a great deal as a much broader 'life allegory,' transcending the direct time-place parallel. I wished students to engage with the text and to relate happenings and themes therein to themselves, to their own experiences, to Japan, and to wider society.

Introducing allegorical readings

Allegorical parallels will not be apparent to students reading for the first time, and we cannot expect this - undergraduate students in Japan aged 19-21 are naturally not assumed to be familiar with Russian history one hundred years prior. To try to assist students in achieving an allegorical reading, and before a connection is made to an outside (historical) reality, students must first be helped to gain some understanding of events and personages. The difficult decision for a teacher when using this text is when and how to seek to impart this extra information – that the text is an allegory and, to provide the allegorical parallels. Additionally, even having been assisted in the learning of allegorical aspects, it should be noted that the cognitive load is already

weighty when reading in L2, processing the text bottom-up from words to sentences, from sentences to paragraphs, to following the whole story. This is a considerable psycholinguistic challenge (Iida, 2013).

Providing relevant schemata

I considered that early content schemata-building activities were essential. The value of providing effective schemata for L2 reading is well-documented, notably by Coady (1979) who asserts the import of background knowledge, serving to motivate and counteract syntactical deficiencies that the reader may suffer from (p. 12). In addition, there is the very practical consideration that many students arrive at the first or even the second class without the designated text, which requires suitable early-course activities which are not dependent on possession of the text. The first two lessons were thus set aside largely for preparing students to more effectively read the text, and to enhance their ability to discuss it.

Language work: vocabulary

As previously examined by this author (Bibby, 2014), L2 lexis (for present purposes, basically vocabulary) and syntax (structure) are both liable to pose difficulties for students. Whereas students are able to look up individual words, multi-clause sentences may remain impenetrable as there is no ready means of assistance. Lengthy sentences containing multiple clauses can thus prove difficult for students reading in their L2 (McKay, 1982). Anticipating this as a potential challenge when choosing class texts enables a more informed choice of texts, and is the solution in itself.

The original version of *Animal Farm* was used, not a graded text version. As such, inevitably there is a certain amount of low-frequency vocabulary present. The teacher has several options regarding vocabulary provision and, again, anticipation and providing ahead of time is key. Teachers can provide lexical support in advance via some straightforward dictionary work prior to reading the chapter ('Look up these words for next week'). Alternatively, students may be directed to write example sentences, other forms of the word, and/or meaning in their own language, but whereas this is ideal for an Academic Word List vocabulary, this seemed inappropriate for low-frequency vocabulary – it is not time well spent as the words are unlikely to recur in conversation outside of this reading. Another EFL standard is for students to match more 'difficult' words with easier (near) synonyms, definitions or illustrations.

I chose to provide a glossary, typed up and amended from something I had found in a US high school teacher guide, to fit the needs of Japanese EFL learners, adding example sentences to place words in understandable context. I provided the whole glossary in advance, broken up into the ten chapter sections. Upon teaching this class again, it would be productive to research the extent to which students used the glossary or what other techniques they had for dealing with unknown vocabulary. As teacher-researchers, we can make our materials more effective and streamline our materials by determining students' preferences and choices. Should there be a further iteration of the course, I would provide words directly in advance of each chapter, providing ten words in the lesson prior, offering higher frequency synonyms and/or with brief explanations of meaning. This would be a suitable task at the end of a lesson, feeding into homework.

Conceptual understanding

Essentially, teachers have two choices: to discuss as particular ideas arise in the text, or engage in some prior schemata-building. I sought to prime students with ideas that would directly arise within the text later, and ideas that surround the text, such as religion, power, individualism, equality, corruption, protest, scapegoating, propaganda and lying, and dictatorship. Having chosen to build schemata prior to reading, I produced worksheets inviting students to agree or disagree with these statements:

- All humans are born equal
- All people have freedom of speech
- A dictator has complete control of his country,
- People who cannot read are easier to control than those who can read;
- People are always free to make their own choices
- Power corrupts those who have it
- You should never question those with power or authority
- You should protest if the people in power are corrupt or evil
- If peaceful protest does not work, violent action is acceptable
- Japan is a free country; I am free to make my own choices.

Students were required to circle 'Agree' or 'Disagree,' then write their ideas underneath each

statement next to ‘Response.’ I designed this activity with several thoughts in mind. Students were introduced to some key vocabulary: *dictator/dictatorship, corrupt, protest, violent*, then required to write a comment for each section. Students were then directed to discuss any of the issues they wished in pairs then in groups of three. Originally planned only as a relatively short activity, this took on a life of its own, and students engaged with considerable gusto, and at great length, in making detailed notes of their own views, then in discussing and debating with peers. Plainly stated, students have opinions, and they wish to share those opinions about issues that are relevant to them.

Cultural/Geographic/Historical

Bibby (2014) discusses a number of problems that readers have due to the paucity of local knowledge. Adding a personal example to the earlier discussion, in my early teens I struggled with a number of cultural references when reading US novels, ostensibly in my L1, as an Englishman. When reading Stephen King novels I remember struggled to envisage such cultural items as Chevies, diners and high school proms. These gaps occur even with a shared L1 and within two cultures that share many commonalities.

To give students a brief introduction to the historical parallels, I prepared a worksheet for students entitled ‘A Brief History of Communism in Russia.’ I provided key terms: *capitalist system, socialist, communist system, Czarist government, deported, idealistic, totalitarianism* and had student pairs match their definitions. Key terminology and ideas were bolded in the text to assist ‘noticing.’ Additionally, illustrations of the real-life allegorical figures were provided: Tsar Nicholas II, Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, UK/USA. Each was titled with his real name, and the names of corresponding in-text allegorical figures were included underneath the picture. Students were directed to the importance of four key points: Karl Marx, Russian (Bolshevik) Revolution, Lenin versus Trotsky, and Stalin.

The first class ended with homework questions assigned for completion to assist initial comprehension, an explanation of the reading log, and a completed example, and reading logs handed out for all students to complete. Within the second class we continued with more schemata work: a single information sheet providing reference reading for students about the term ‘allegory’ plus discussion of the text as Fable, and as Satire. We then continued with further conceptual schemata work. For example, *All people are created equal* and *Society would be*

improved if everyone earned equally. The format differed only slightly from earlier in that students also had to record a partner's views in addition to their own, to aid the exchange of views and to hopefully have their own ideas pushed a little further and deeper by the need to explain and discuss them.

During reading: 'Reader Response'

Once students had acquired copies of the text, by the second class we were underway with reading, and ready for during-reading Reader Response style activities. Reader Response originated within literary criticism (Hirvela, 1996). Theorists deny authorial dictatorship of textual meaning, and reader interpretation is considerably valued within this conceptual framework. Hirvela notes the divergence among literary critics in the relative assignment of interpretive responsibility, varying from a fairly equal split (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938) and responsibility largely or entirely with the reader (Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1970).

Louise Rosenblatt's (1938) distinction between *aesthetic* and *efferent* reading has proven enduring. She differentiates between efferent (from Latin, 'getting carried away'), where the reader seeks meaning to 'carry away' from the text, and aesthetic, which is reading for pleasure. To offer examples for clarity, efferent reading might be that of a student reading a physics textbook to gain information about that subject, or in the case of a clunky reading comprehension activity, a text would be searched for answers to a set of questions. Aesthetic reading would be you reading a novel for pleasure (perhaps leant up against a tree in the park on a sunny day). Thus, readers interact with texts differently, depending not just on the type of text, but also on what they bring to the reading, and what they may seek to take away from a text.

The inauthenticity of reading comprehension

The relevance of this for the teacher is that for any particular text, personal relevance and understanding derived cannot be guaranteed for all students, and will not be at the same 'level.' Additionally, it will be advisable to aim for differing points along the efferent/aesthetic continuum while choosing texts, and in designing the choice of activities. A common failing of teachers and materials designers is over-reliance on basic reading comprehension questions for more aesthetic texts. Such 'basic information' questions can serve as an initial help, ensuring students understand the essential happenings, but only as a starting point. Approaching texts in such an inappropriate fashion has been criticised by Widdowson as 'a lack of authenticity' (1980,

p. 80). Aesthetic reading requires a personal engagement, a human interaction/transaction between author and reader through the text, and as a speaking activity, via discussion among fellow readers.

Implementing 'Reader Response'

There are some differing ways in which Reader Response may be implemented: written responses to the text in a reading log (Benton and Fox, 1985; Carlisle, 2000, Kasper, 1996); a response journal (Sheridan, 1991); questions as writing prompts (Pritchard, 1993); self-questioning, whereby students create their own Q and A (Davis, 1989); drama: performance, role plays, dramatic re-enactment, writing letters (Baxter, 1999; Elliott, 1990); providing a narrative or answering questions from a character's viewpoint (Oster, 1989). Such are the ideas, and teachers can variously enact these creatively using assorted multimedia tools, for example by writing a short blog posting in character, or regularly microblog (with Twitter), recording video logs ('vlogs') of their opinions instead of writing, creating Facebook-type accounts for characters within free School Management Systems (SMS) like Schoology, Edmodo and Google Classroom. Students can dress up, or more simply wear a mask when being interviewed; these activities can be taken in many directions. Creative teachers can consider how best to engage and motivate in this regard.

The course backbone: Using reading logs

Of these, I opted for weekly written response in a handwritten log. Cornell-style note-taking sheets were provided for students to complete, comprising two columns. On the left were these headings: Characters, Setting, Plot, Your Reaction, Two Questions, Vocabulary, and Your Prediction. On the right were spaces for student responses. With *Animal Farm* as the assigned text, students were assigned to read one chapter each week, and complete the reading log accordingly. As a practical consideration, I had students handwrite at the time, but it may be better to have students type them up, ideally within a shared environment such as within Google Drive for three reasons. Google Drive enables easier tracking of submissions, means less paperwork piled up for the teacher, and ensures that students cannot scribble in comments at the start of class because they failed to complete their logs in advance.

With one chapter per week, I gave students a short test at the start of the following class. The reason is less for assessment (although I did incorporate this into the grading) than to push

students hard to read what was assigned, due to the “threat” of testing. Questions pertained to general understanding – key characters and happenings of the chapter, and were made to be easily answerable for those who had read as directed. After the test, students were put into groups of three, and directed to exchange reading logs, then briefly discuss the chapter, and the whole text. Exchanging provided genuine readers of the logs and offered speakers some scaffolding for their discussion. During discussions I would move between the class groups, joining in discussions, checking logs, and helping out with any misunderstandings regarding the events within the text. One example of how students helped each other in co-constructing was in a misunderstanding of Napoleon’s scapegoating lies about Snowball (in allegory, Lenin about Trotsky). Whereas some readers took the lies at face value, others questioned the veracity of these assertions, quite correctly. A practical point to note is that a group size of three to four students probably works best. Pairs may not work, as inevitably some students forget or do not complete. More than four students leaves too much time reading, not enough time discussing. I advise groups of three as the optimum.

Classes 1-2

Schemata activation activities, as described above.

Classes 3-4 Activities: The seven commandments

The reading logs provided the backbone of the class. The short test and the reading log exchange occurred at the start of each class. Having already noted that the first two classes were mainly given to schemata-building, within classes three and four we examined the pigs’ Seven Commandments, and students were directed to create their own seven commandments for their own perfect society. In week four, students presented these, poster-style. The class was divided, with half presenting and half viewing, then the two groups were switched.

Class 4-5 Activities: Rhetoric and propaganda

In *Animal Farm*, the character of Squealer is described as such:

“A small fat pig with very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements and a shrill voice. He was a brilliant talker, and when he was arguing some difficult point he had a way of skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, which was somehow very persuasive.”

Squealer represents propaganda in general, and in the direct allegory represents *Pravda*, meaning ‘truth,’ with a certain delicious irony, the Russian newspaper and official propaganda organ of the Russian state. Using Squealer’s speech in chapter three as a springboard, the next two classes were spent examining propaganda and rhetorical tools, as employed not just by politicians but by advertisers. As I remember, Osama bin Laden was killed during the last iteration of the course, and US President Obama’s speech offered an excellent example of the rhetorical skills we had been examining. I broke the speech up into twenty-four segments (the speech is very readily taken apart in this way), and had students match the segments with a summary of each section that I had made. Following this we examined the ideas within the speech, and the rhetorical tools used, before checking together in plenary. Students were set homework to prepare and deliver their own speech using the tools we had examined, to be delivered in weeks eight and nine, about a subject of their choice (checking with the teacher for appropriacy and relevance).

Class 6: Closer allegorical review

Within this class, we examined the allegorical elements more closely, tying together both characters and events. This was done via matching in pairs, using laminated cards. For example, Mr Jones (the farmer) equates to Tsar Nicholas II, and students would pair these. Students were allowed the remainder of the time to prepare for their speeches and for an interim test the following week.

Class 7: Interim test

The interim test contained sections on events and characters and their Russian parallels. This was followed by time for preparation and practice of the propaganda speeches.

Class 8-9 Rhetoric presentations

In addition to the regular reading logs and weekly tests, students delivered their speeches across these two weeks. Students were directed to self-assess via a rubric that had been provided in advance. Students were additionally grouped into sets of four peers, and group members were required to give peer feedback about their peer set.

Class 10 Literary technique - foreshadowing

At chapter nine, students were nearing the end of *Animal Farm*. I decided that this was a

good time to review the text so far, prior to the conclusion, and to do so via examination of the literary technique of foreshadowing. Students were directed to work in pairs for these challenging activities. The first activity was to match the event (provided) with the foreshadowing. Further to one matched model, I provided four events to match to the foreshadowing item of text. In the second section of the class task, I provided four questions for students to respond to in open text format: about old Major's speech in chapter one, the attack of the dogs on Boxer, possible foreshadowing at the start of chapter nine, and a final general question about the use and effectiveness of foreshadowing as a literary tool.

Class 11

Having finished the book, students were given a little extra time in their reading log discussions to review the text as a whole. In plenary I explained some key themes from the text via a slide-supported presentation, followed by a Jeopardy-style game with key themes, events and characters as categories, and questions to be answered in teams, designed to be a more entertaining means of reviewing. Students were given sets of discussion questions, grouped according to these themes: Power, Fear, Trust, Equality, Greed, Propaganda. After group discussions, students were directed to choose one question from each section for a written response to be submitted. In addition, students were directed to complete a character profile of a character of their choice. The sheet requires description of the character (five adjectives), a sketched image of the character, a description of what the character does, the character's objective (if this is apparent), and how others see this character.

Class 12: Comparing texts

Students expressed a desire to watch the movie version of the text. There are two movie versions, one from 1954, in animated format – and as the story goes, supposedly funded by the CIA, to clearly demonstrate the evils of US Cold War enemy, Russia. The second version was made in 1999, and includes a significantly more positive ending than that of the book. To aid viewing, some viewing softwares, such as VLC, allow the user to alter the speed of the movie. Depending on student level, slowing the movie is likely to assist listening comprehension. Providing subtitles offers a further aid, the teacher choosing between L1 and L2. My choice was to use Japanese subtitles, and the movie played at regular speed, but this is up to each instructor and the students.

Class 13 Final assessment

The test I gave students had three sections. As noted earlier, classes started with simple general comprehension quiz about each chapter. The first section of the test was similarly fashioned – easy for those who had read the text, but of course very difficult for students who had skimmed or not done so at all. The second section was the allegorical section – comparing events and characters in the text with their real-life Russian compatriots. The third section was a take-home short-essay section, to be completed and submitted within one week. Students were required to answer three from a choice of eight questions.

Class 14: Final review, grades

At the university in question, the last class of the semester was generally used as a wrap-up class, and I accorded with this. Following a brief overview of the text, a summary of themes and questions, papers were returned and grades provided.

Overview and final thoughts

Single texts versus multiple texts

Animal Farm proved suitable in terms of book length and subject matter for these university classes. However, I have not taught the course since 2012, instead having chosen to use multiple texts thenceforth. Not based on student feedback, but due to some post-course self-reflection, I feared that imposing a single text for the entirety of a semester may be excessive, and may trap students for a whole semester within a text that they may not be enjoying, as indeed happened to me at primary school, a vivid memory lingering of teacher-fronted whole-class reading tedium. Subsequently, I have incorporated literary texts in two ways, in each case using multiple texts – using the newly-published textbook for Japanese learners, *Real Reads - An Introduction to Literature* as described in the previous issue of this journal (Bibby, 2014), and within a Dystopian literature and cinema class, which will be discussed subsequently.

Author note

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

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Cross-Cultural Poetry Projects in a Japanese University EFL Setting

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Abstract

Recent research in second language acquisition has recognized the importance for learners of understanding how language reflects and is informed by culture. One important tool in understanding the intersection of language and culture is poetry reading. Reading target language poetry at appropriate levels, particularly in collaborative group projects, offers students the opportunity to explore universal themes common to all cultures and the role played by figurative language in animating these themes in the text. This article reports the results of a two-year study conducted in a Japanese EFL setting, concerning poetry reading in literature circles, online forums and group mind-maps.

The compatibility of literature and foreign-language learning has long been the subject of debate among EFL professionals with many educators questioning the ability of students of English as a foreign language to understand the culture-specific frames of reference underlying much poetry. But given that poetry from various language backgrounds often shares universal themes such as change, personal growth, loss, and filial love, poetry can be an excellent tool for facilitating student L2 communication in a cross-cultural learning context, particularly through collaborative learning activities such as literature circles and group mind-maps. In addition, given the unique power of poetry to stimulate reader-response and reflection, student-selected poetry and follow-up reflective writing exercises enable students to bring personal values and experiences into class discussions. Finally, the use in poetry of creative language play such as metaphor and imagery in encoding culture-specific schemas and norms offers students the opportunity to notice these values and explore them in class and online discussions.

This paper reports the results of a two-year study conducted in an EFL university setting concerning the impact of cross-cultural poetry study projects on raising students' awareness of metaphor and its role in introducing universal themes into poetry from different language backgrounds, and on developing students' expressive range in the L2 by fostering connections between universal themes in poetry and students' personal experiences. The study was conducted at Nagasaki University and included freshman Japanese non-English majors and exchange students from China, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Kenya and Turkey. The three main components of the study were: (1) literature circles and group mind-maps and (2) online multi-thread student forums as tools for increasing student discussion and reflection on universal themes in poetry; and (3) intertextual comparisons between English and Japanese poems.

Rationale for using literature and poetry for language learning

Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) argue that the benefits of using literature as a tool for language learning far outweigh the drawbacks. They note that while critics cite the culturally charged and context-reduced nature of literature as arguments against using it, these can be viewed as advantages. The way in which lines in literary text interrelate with each other to create an internally coherent meaning “engage the reader in interpretation, meaning negotiation and the generation of coherent discourse-based meaning” (p. 2). They also cite as benefits that

Meaning is the outcome of the interaction between the reader's experience and the text's language. It develops cultural awareness and serves as a stimulus for composition. It helps generate purposeful referential questions and provides for highly motivated small group work. (Bagherkazemi and Alemi, p. 2)

Widdowson (1992) emphasizes the value of poetry as an aid to cross-cultural understanding, arguing that “even if certain allusions are lost on a reader, this does not prevent them from making meaning out of the text in relation to their own realities” (p. 115) and that it “can provide the means whereby students, on their own initiative, acquire information about conventional realities other than their own” (p. 116). Widdowson (1992) suggests intertextual comparison and “grouping together poems about particular actualities or abstractions: animals, flowers, love, peace, loneliness, bereavement and so on” (p. 114).

Savvidou (2004) discusses three traditional approaches to using literature in the language classroom. In the cultural model learners consider the literary and historical context of a text. In the language model the linguistic features of the text are exploited for largely form-focused practice, disconnected from the literary meaning of the text. In the personal growth model, learners “make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text” (p. 5). She argues for an approach integrating all three of these as the best way to meet both linguistic and motivational goals.

Lazar (1993) explores a range of activities for use with poetry including having students brainstorm word associations, speculate on the symbolic meaning of a word and note down clusters of images/figurative meanings. She also suggests asking students to identify the two things being compared in metaphors found in a poem. She gives as an example, a poem which describes gulls flying “to the edge of the sea where the day’s fire is lit” and the comparison made is between the sun and “the day’s fire.”

Shelton-Strong (2011) argues that literature circles can improve students’ motivation to read and promote collaboration. The key roles and their adaptation to the poetry project in the current study are as follows: *discussion-director* writes down questions concerning the poems the group will discuss; *passage-picker* chooses passages from text that include figurative language, images, or are difficult to understand lines; *word-finder* check meaning of difficult words; *connector* connect the poem with universal themes, and with own (or classmates’) personal experience; and *reporter* takes notes of points raised in discussion and draws the group mind-map.

Carter (1998) argues that "our conceptual system is structured by metaphors" (138) and emphasizes the importance of metaphor in encoding cultural norms. Lakoff (1991) echoes this, stressing that in metaphor "we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (203). Deignan, Gabrys, and Solska (1997) define "conceptual metaphor" as "a connection between two semantic areas at the level of thought, such as ‘Anger is Heat’." They define *tenor* as the thing being described (anger), the *vehicle* as the word or expression used to convey the metaphor (heat), and the *grounds of likeness* are the similarities between topic and vehicle.

Background

The study was conducted in Nagasaki University's English Communication courses for first and second year non-English majors. The University Objectives for these courses strongly stress the importance of curricula focused not only on language, but also on cross-cultural themes. In the four years prior to the start of the current study, the author sought to address such themes by having students select an English text of interest and bring it to class to discuss with a partner. They were given the options of general information articles, quotations, English song lyrics and English poems. In all four years a large number of students, particularly at higher levels, chose English poems. Students said in surveys that they enjoyed reading English poems, but wanted to understand them better. Against this background, the author decided to begin devoting a small part of these freshman English courses to exploring English poems selected by students in previous years.

Research Questions

1. What sorts of learning activities are most effective in helping students gain better understanding and enjoyment of English poems?
2. How can poems be used to help students recognize themes common to all cultures?
3. How can student collaboration promote understanding of figurative language?

Participants

The first year of the study, which did not include the foreign exchange students, was confined to a single freshman English class of 45 students. The study group in the second year consisted of 35 freshmen and seven foreign exchange students in a cross-cultural communication class. In both years the freshmen were of upper-intermediate to advanced English proficiency. The foreign exchange students were all advanced and came from the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, China (two students), Turkey and Kenya.

Methodology

The study employs an action-research method, the key elements of which are (a) identifying and investigating problems within a specific situation; (b) evaluating and reflecting on outcomes to bring about change and improvement in practice, and (c) basing changes in practice on the collection of information or data (Burns, 1999). In the current study, problems

were identified and outcomes were assessed each year on the basis of quantitative surveys and assessment of learning outcomes through analysis of students' submitted work, reading logs, online student exchanges and group mind-maps.

Tasks and Materials

The set of learning activities each year of the study will be presented in this section and then the outcomes that gave rise to each new set of activities in the following year will be explored in greater detail in the results section.

Year 1: Group Brainstorming, Universal Themes, and Student-Created Metaphors

During the first year of the study only two of fifteen classes were devoted to poetry-related activities. In the first lesson students discussed W.H. Auden's poem "Funeral Blues" in small groups to raise awareness of imagery and metaphor. For the second lesson, students were asked to choose a poem outside of class and use it to make a language exercise such as a cloze exercise or jumbled-order exercise. Students also wrote about metaphor in their poems and about how their poem connected to their own experience.

Group Brainstorming

The students worked in small groups of four with the Auden poem. The aim of the exercise was to give students practice in brainstorming word associations as a way to uncover the metaphorical significance of images in the poem. Students were given four nature images, "sun," "stars," "moon," and "ocean," used in the final stanza of the poem and asked to brainstorm word associations with their group. Adjectives or actions associated with each were recommended as the most helpful in understanding the grounds of likeness between tenor and vehicle. The results of this exercise are shown in Figure 1.

Universal Themes

To give students another analytical tool to discuss the content of their poems and link it to their own personal experiences, the author introduced a set of universal themes found in poetry from a variety of language-backgrounds: change, time/aging, mortality/death, memory/persistence of the past, the unknown/risk, loss, family/filial love, romantic love, sexuality, isolation/ "aloneness of individual," society/community, ideal versus reality,

vision/inspiration/"the immortality of art," identity/reflection/self-consciousness, and communication.

Student-Created Metaphors

To help students understand that metaphors imply grounds of likeness between two objects, they were encouraged to make their own metaphors about an important person. Some examples of student metaphors are shown in Figure 2.

Year 2: Collaboration between Foreign Exchange Students and Japanese Students: Literature Circles, Group Mind-Maps and Native Poetry Comparisons

In the second year of the study, a number of changes were introduced. First, to encourage students to notice how the same image could be used in different poems to form different metaphors and explore different universal themes, the first author grouped sets of five poems sharing a common nature image. These nature images included flowers, water, stars, and trees/woods. Their selection was guided by an awareness of the salience of these images in classic Japanese poetry such as *100 Poems by 100 Poets* and also by their importance in the Auden poem. Also, given students' affinity in previous years for poems focusing on "love," "family," and "death," sets of poems with these common themes were also introduced (See Appendix 1 for a full listing of the poems). Second, an online poetry forum was introduced where students could share questions and impressions they had with each other. Third the seven foreign exchange students joined one lesson with the Japanese freshmen. For this lesson students had clear tasks to prepare according to literature circle roles outlined earlier. During the class each foreign student worked with the students to make a group mind-map summarizing all of the metaphors and universal themes in their set of poems. Finally students selected a native language poem and compared it with one of their English poems.

Results and Discussion

The results of each year's tasks are presented and discussed in this section.

Year 1 Results

A sampling of results from students' group-brainstorming activity for the Auden poem's nature-imagery is shown in Figure 1:

Sun	Lively, generous, keep us warm, give life, warm, bright, passionate, too powerful, blind if we look at, shining
Stars	Radiant, hopeful, small light in darkness, far away, twinkling, shining, eyes, give direction
Moon	Modest, sad, cold, quiet, silver, shine at night and disappear in daytime, keep an eye on us, calm, elegant
Ocean	Deep, wide, never end, mysterious, cover and drown us, powerful, storm, flood, give us power, hide many secret

Figure 1: Student Word Associations for Nature Images in Auden Poem

For the student-created metaphors, students were given the sentence frame “My-----is like-----to me. S/he-----and -----”. Some examples of student-created metaphors are shown in Figure 2:

<p>My friend is like the clear air to me. She is necessary always and refreshes me. My father is like bamboo. He can stand strong and adjust to various things. My mother is like the sun. She warms my heart and shows me the way. My boyfriend is like the ocean. He is deep and mysterious. My sister is like a cat. She is capricious and assertive. My father is like the sea. He is generous and big (fat).</p>
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Figure 2: Student-Created Metaphors

Student Survey

At the end of each year, the authors conducted a student survey on how each year’s learning components impacted students' understanding of metaphor and universal themes, and their overall satisfaction with poetry learning. Likert scale questions, the most widely used scale in survey research, were used (Brown, 2001). In the survey, respondents were asked to specify degree of agreement with a series of statements concerning each year’s learning-components. Students circled 4, 3, 2 or 1 with the descriptors *strongly agree*, *moderately agree*, *moderately disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Table 1 shows the year-one results. Seventy-three percent of

students reported that the group brainstorming helped them understand the metaphors in the Auden poem.

Along with these positive outcomes, several shortcomings were noted in the year-one results. Only 23% said they understood the metaphors in their own poem, and only 44% were satisfied with the poetry activities overall. In addition, students were given a large variety of universal themes to choose from, but largely confined their selections to poems focusing on “love” and “family.” This was not surprising considering that only 27% of students reported that they understood the universal themes “moderately well” or “very well.” And despite student success in brainstorming and producing their own metaphors, very few students produced any comments about specific lines or figurative language in their poems.

Year 2 Results

At the beginning of the second year of the study, the freshmen were divided into seven groups of five and asked to choose from the seven thematically-linked sets of poems. Each of the seven foreign-exchange students was also asked to choose a set.

Student Reading-Log L1 Comments on Poetry

In the first five weeks of the third year of the study both the pharmacy students and the foreign exchange students were instructed to read one poem a week and keep a reading log. The pharmacy students were encouraged to keep written notes of their impressions. After five weeks when students had completed their first reading of all five poems, their notes were collected to analyze students’ noticing of metaphor, imagery and other literary devices. To give the reader a sense of the range of students’ perceptions of figurative language in the poems, a sampling of these comments is shown in Figure 3. Comments were in English except those marked with an asterisk.

Poem	Metaphoric Line Cited	Student Comment
“Dreamland”	Where sunless rivers weep Their waves into the deep,	The waves wash over the lives of two people. The image of the waves breaking and disappearing on the beach is like the end of their lives. The couple feels their death when they see this. They feel their love for each other and death in same instant. It’s very sad and beautiful. *
“Fire and Ice”	The world will end in fire... the world will end in ice	The fire is the violent war and also the peoples’ hate. The ice is cold people who have no feeling.
“Nature – the Gentlest Mother is,	Her Golden finger on Her lip - - Wills Silence -- Everywhere	Just as the golden sun setting brings the quiet of night, nature brings our lives to a quiet, peaceful end.*
“On the Breakwater”	Playing its searchlight, puzzled, abrupt, over a streak of green	In love too, we trying to find our way.*
“Falling Stars”	the falling stars raced and suddenly leaped across the hurdles of our wishes	Personification of falling star he wished on jumping over the wish suggests the wish will not come true.*
“Mother to Son”	“Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair”	Crystal shows “rare, beautiful” thing. So we can’t find a dreamlike easy solution to problems in our life.
“The Mother”	You remember the children you got that you did not get, The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair	The “damp small pulp” seems human, but was dead. I feel so sorry for that.
“To the Virgins to make much of time”	For having lost but once your prime you may for ever tarry.	Like seasons for flowers, timing is important in finding love. If we just wait and wait, we die without knowing love.
“Those Winter Sundays”	What did I know of love’s austere and lonely offices?	All the time father was doing that hard and painful work, why didn’t the child see that it was father’s way of loving him?

<p>“Bread and Music”</p>	<p>All that was once so beautiful is dead yet your touch upon them will not pass... And blessed them with your hands and with your eyes.</p>	<p>Scenes he saw with love no longer look beautiful without her. Household objects touched by lover keep the lover’s touch on writer’s heart even after lover is gone. The writer’s things and the writer himself became special and “holy” after being touched by lover.*</p>
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Figure 3: Excerpts from Pharmacy Students’ Reading-Logs

Online Exchanges, Literature Circles and Group Mind-Maps

To prepare for the discussion and group mind-maps, students were asked to choose a role to perform in the group literature circle. Students referred not only to their own notes of the five poems, but also consulted their classmates through the online forum. Online exchanges between group members resulted in many students noticing figurative language and receiving guidance from a classmate. Figure 4 shows examples of these online exchanges. All questions and answers were in English except where noted by *; comments by Philippine student are noted with a double asterisk.

Student Question to Classmate	Classmate’s Response
<p>“How can they talk without words?”</p>	<p>“Talking” is “communication,” like a touch or a look or maybe a gesture.</p>
<p>“Why ‘playing’ searchlight? Why not ‘shining’?”</p>	<p>I’m not sure, but trying to find something like a “hide-and-see” game?</p>
<p>I’m confused. The poem says “spring” but then talks about “crystal” and “cup”? And then it says incline your lips to the “glass”. What is this?? *</p>	<p>I think these are metaphors. The glass is the surface of the water and “glass” also means “mirror”. The “cup” is the lake-bed and the crystal is “magic” water. These nymphs are Goddesses. **</p>
<p>What does “survive our thirst” mean?</p>	<p>There is almost infinite water so we can never drink it all. The same is true of love</p>
<p>How can there be too much love?</p>	<p>Sometimes we get tired from being loved.</p>
<p>What does it mean “knees were twisted by the water”?</p>	<p>They are looking at their reflections in the water. The reflection in the water changes the shape of their bodies. **</p>

What does “willing to die in the commonwealth of joy” mean??	It’s taking a risk to love someone. We see other people happy in love so we want to try.
What does “sleep while it flows through regions of dark” mean?	Our dreams and feelings of love deep in our minds are like deep-flowing water.
It says “One by one we drop away”. What’s “drop away”? *	Drop away means dying. It says “we drop away”. Do you see “away” used again in the poem? **
Yes, it says “All that’s beautiful drifts away like the waters”.	Right. It’s a metaphor. People drop away like water drifts away. **

Figure 4: Student Questions and Answers in Online Forum

The discussion director used many of these questions for the literature circle and many of the quotes appeared on the group mind-map.

Group Mind-Map

The foreign-exchange students participated in the literature circles to stimulate the pharmacy students’ brainstorming for the group mind-maps. Students were asked to follow a set format in making the mind-maps (Buzan, 1993). The theme for their group’s poems was to be written in the center. They then drew five branches connecting to each of the five poems they discussed. On these branches they wrote the universal theme(s) they believed each poem explored. From each of the five poems they drew two to three more branches connecting to metaphoric passages from the poem. On the top of each branch they wrote the tenor and under each branch the vehicle. Figure 5 shows the final mind-map produced by the “water” group. This group consisted of a Philippines exchange student, two advanced and three upper-intermediate Japanese freshmen.

For example, the students argued that the poem “On The Breakwater” dealt with the universal themes of “romantic love” and “the unknown.” One of the lines they cited as metaphoric was “sitting on the breakwaters, talking without words.” They argued that in this metaphor, the “silent flow of water” was being compared to “communication without words.”

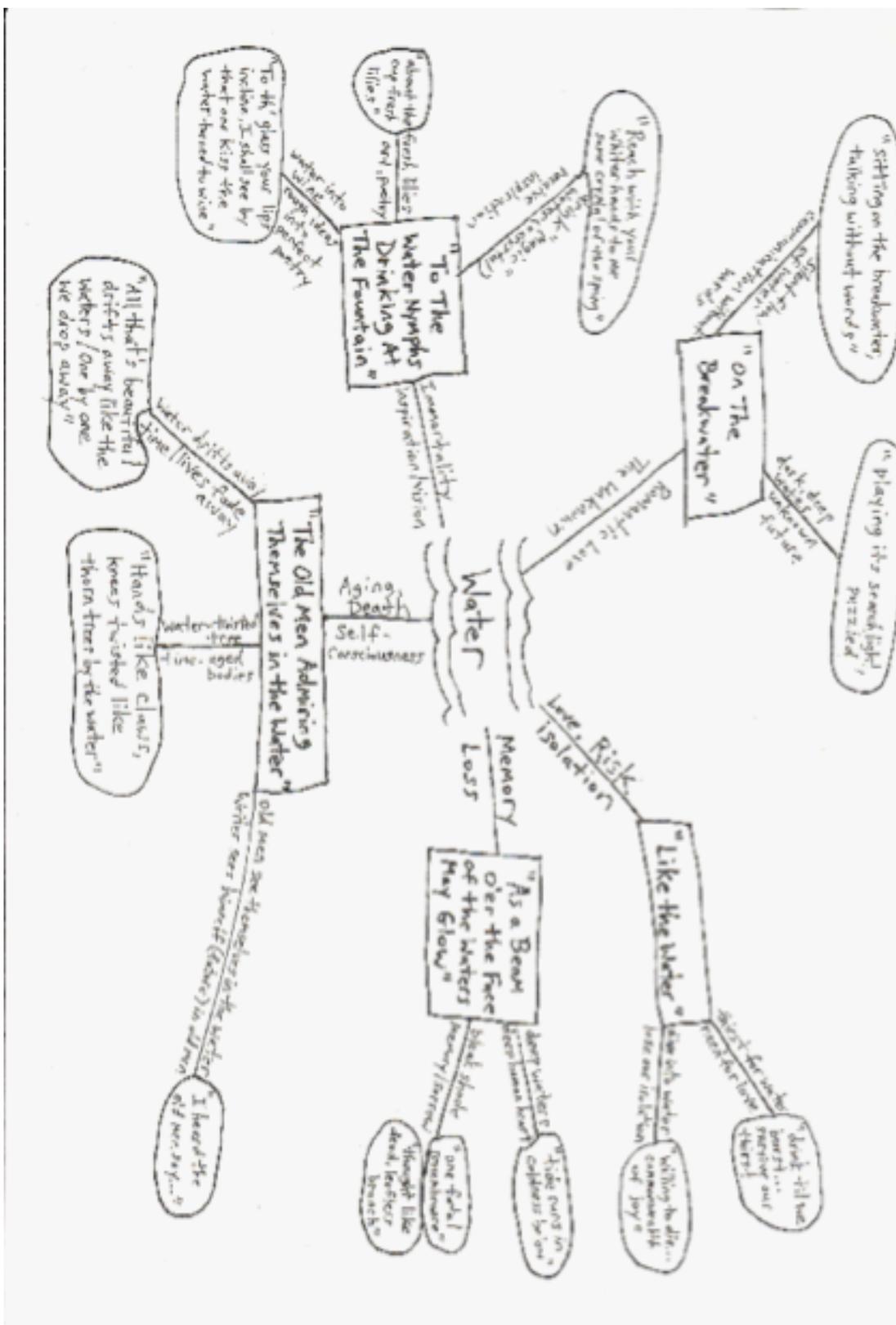


Figure 5: Group Mind-Map for "Water" Poems

Intertextual Comparisons with Japanese Poetry

To help students discover the universality of the themes, they were encouraged to search *100 Poems by 100 Poets*, a collection of classic Japanese poems with English translations. Students were asked to choose a Japanese poem with similar universal theme and similar imagery to one of their English poems. Figure 6 shows samples of student poem pairings and their comments. The complete Japanese poem is shown. All comments were in English.

Japanese Poem	English Poem	Student Comment
<p>Color of the flower Has already faded away, While in idle thoughts</p> <p>My life passes vainly by, As I watch the long rains fall.</p>	<p>“Nothing Gold Can Stay”</p>	<p>These poems both use flower to show themes of aging and mortality. The color of flower fading is like his life passing vainly. I think he feels no purpose in his life.</p>
<p>Oh, the foot-drawn trail Of the mountain-pheasant's tail Drooped like down-curved branch! Through this long, long-dragging night Must I lie in bed alone?</p>	<p>“Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening”</p>	<p>I think both of these poems express isolation. Both writers feel alone. The writer in the Japanese poem is lying still and can only think, but the writer in the English poem has a purpose so he doesn't feel lonely.</p>
<p>Like a driven wave, Dashed by fierce winds on a rock, So am I: alone</p> <p>And crushed upon the shore, Remembering what has been.</p>	<p>“Dreamland”</p>	<p>The waters breaking is an image of death in both poems. Both poems are about death. Death is peaceful like a “charmed sleep” in the English poem, but its violent and crushes the man in the Japanese poem. Japanese feeling is darker about death than English.</p>
<p>Like a mariner Sailing over Yura's strait With his rudder gone:</p> <p>Where, over the deep of love, The end lies, I do not know.</p>	<p>“As a Beam O'er the Face of the Waters May Glow”</p>	<p>In both poems deep water is a metaphor for deep human heart. But in the Japanese poem, it is about the writer's future with his love. In the English poem, the deep human heart is full of memories and loss in the past.</p>

Figure 6: Student Pairings of English and Japanese Poems

Analysis of the student reading logs, online forum exchanges, and group mind-maps showed that these activities were effective in increasing student discussion and improving understanding of metaphors and their role in introducing universal themes into poetry. Table 1 shows an increase in student satisfaction with the poetry learning overall (44% to 97%).

Table 1: Year 1 and Year 2 Survey Results

Survey Statement	I could understand the metaphors in the poem(s).			Overall, I was satisfied with poetry activities		
	Activity Type	Auden (Group) (brain-Storming)	Pair Poem Exchange (Student-Selected Poem)	Understood Universal Theme	Year 1	Year 2
Strongly Agree		9%	5%	7%	11%	54%
Moderately Agree		64%	18%	20%	33%	43%
Moderately Disagree		24%	53%	56%	60%	3%
Strongly Disagree		2%	24%	18%	9%	0%
MEAN		2.8	2.02	2.16	2.47	3.51
Standard Deviation		0.63	0.78	0.80	0.81	0.56

Table 2 shows the positive impact students reported for each of the four year-two learning activities on their understanding of metaphors and universal themes in their five poems.

Table 2: Year Four Survey Results

Survey Statement	After this activity I could understand the Metaphors (M) & Universal Themes (UT) in my group's poems. (Year 3 of study)							
	Reading Log		Online Discussion		Literature Circles		Group Mind-Map	
Metaphor/ Univ. Themes	M	UT	M	UT	M	UT	M	UT
Strongly Agree	11%	14%	23%	34%	43%	57%	54%	66%
Moderately Agree	60%	54%	66%	57%	57%	43%	43%	34%
Moderately Disagree	29%	31%	9%	9%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
MEAN	2.83	2.83	3.11	3.26	3.43	3.57	3.52	3.66
Standard Deviation	0.62	0.66	0.58	0.61	0.50	0.50	0.56	0.48

Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the increasing the variety of collaborative learning exercises improved students' understanding and enjoyment of the poems. The group brainstorming activities and student-created metaphors in year one of the study proved useful in improving understanding of metaphors in the Auden poem, but did little to aid students' understanding of their self-selected poem. Following the expanded role of collaborative learning in year two, survey results showed a steady increase over the four learning activities in the percentage of students saying they understood the metaphors and universal themes in their set of poems. Student's produced many purposeful, referential English questions concerning metaphor in their reading logs and online exchanges, receiving detailed responses in English and to a smaller extent Japanese. All seven groups were able to produce a mind-map that addressed the interplay of metaphor, imagery and universal themes in their five poems. Finally, the students'

ability to identify similarities of metaphor and theme between an English and Japanese poem suggests the project enabled students to recognize the universality of themes and metaphors across the two cultures.

There are a number of limitations and areas of concern with the current study. The small number of students in the study limits the ability to infer from the findings a general accessibility of English poetry for EFL students. And while the samples of students' reading log comments, online exchanges and group mind-maps were representative of the class as a whole, the limited scope of the study precludes a fuller presentation of student work which would strengthen their value as empirical data. Future research should present the students' personal connection compositions and evidence of noticing and interpretive hypotheses of metaphorical language in fuller detail.

Author note

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Appendix: List of Thematically-Linked Poems

Love Poems

Opal Amy Lowell

Bread and Music Conrad Aiken

i carry your heart with me E.E. Cummings

Poem 22 Emily Dickinson

I Am Not Yours Sara Teasdale

Family Poems

The Song of Old Mother William Butler Yeats

Those Winter Sundays Robert Hayden

Nature – the Gentlest Mother is Emily Dickinson

Mother to Son Langston Hughes

The Mother Gwendolyn Brooks

Flower Poems

Nothing Gold Can Stay Robert Frost

To The Virgins, To Make Much of Time Robert Herrick

Music, when soft voices die Percy Bysshe Shelley

There is another sky Emily Dickinson

I wandered lonely as a cloud William Wordsworth

Water Poems

Like The Water Wendell Berry

On The Breakwater Carl Sandburg

As a Beam O'er the Face of the Waters May Glow Thomas Moore

The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water William Butler Yeats

To The Water-Nymphs Drinking At The Fountain Robert Herrick

Star Poems

Stars Robert Frost

Lost Star Rabindranath Tagore

When the Shy Star Goes Forth in Heaven James Joyce

Stars, Songs, Faces Carl Sandburg

Lightly stepped a yellow star Emily Dickinson

Falling Stars Rainer Maria Rilke

Trees/Woods Poems

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening Robert Frost

The Road Not Taken Robert Frost

A Girl Ezra Pound

On a Tree Fallen Across the Road Robert Frost

A Poison Tree William Blake

Death Poems

Dreamland Christina Rossetti

Fire and Ice Robert Frost

For Whom the Bell Tolls John Donne

Growing Old Matthew Arnold

I Have Loved Flowers That Fade Robert Bridges

Responding to second language poetry: Critical self-reflection on peer review activities in the Japanese EFL classroom

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Abstract

Peer review is regarded as one of the useful activities in the L2 composition classroom. However, peer review seems to be a challenging task to Japanese college students and it does not work very well in the Japanese EFL classroom. The aim of the current study is to explore how teachers can involve second language (L2) writers in peer response in order to polish their L2 poems. This article begins with the reviewing the literature on peer review in L2 contexts and describes some challenges and issues of the activity while critically reflecting on the author's approach to incorporate peer response activities for reviewing L2 poems into the first-year college English classroom. It also proposes practical guidelines for teaching poetry review in groups in the Japanese EFL classroom.

Issues of peer review in second language writing research

A controversial issue in second language (L2) writing research is how the writing teacher responds to student writing (Casanave, 2004; Ferris 2002, 2013). L2 writing scholars have discussed the issue from different aspects: treatment of student errors (Ferris, 2002); teacher and peer feedback (Leki, 1992; Truscott, 1996); direct and indirect feedback (Mirzaii & Aliabadi, 2013; Paltridge, et al., 2011); oral and written feedback (Telçeker & Akcan, 2010; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Paltridge, et al., 2011).

One of the crucial perspectives in this area of research is how teachers can help students to improve their writing (Cansanave, 2004). Some L2 writing scholars believe that peer review (also called peer response and peer feedback) is an effective approach for improving L2 learners' writing skills in the composition classroom (Fujieda, 2007; Zhu, 2006). According to Liu and Hansen (2002), peer response refers to

“the use of learners as sources of information and interactions for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other’s drafts in both written and oral formats” (p. 1).

This is a type of collaborative learning through which one writer respects and empowers other writers, responds to their own writing pieces, and provides some feedback to improve their writing.

Paltridge et al. (2011) assert that there are three advantages of peer review in L2 contexts: raising awareness of writing issues, developing language proficiency, and community building. The first benefit is to build the sense of audience in L2 writing. A peer response activity allows L2 writers to receive immediate responses from actual readers. The second merit is that L2 writers can develop language proficiency in the target language. The task of giving and explaining comments in the target language to peers enables students to use English in authentic contexts with consideration to how they can communicate their messages to an audience accurately and appropriately. The third advantage is the building of community. Since a peer response activity is conducted with classmates either in pairs or groups, students are encouraged to work closely with their classmates. They can also get help, advice, and feedback from others in class and perhaps outside the classroom.

While previous studies have described some positive impacts of peer review on written performance in the ESL/EFL writing classroom, this activity seems to be challenging to Japanese college students and it does not really work well in the Japanese EFL classroom. There can be some assumptions of why a peer review activity among students does not work well. The first assumption is that Japanese students are unfamiliar with the notion of peer response; in this case, they do not understand the purposes, benefits, and reasons of engaging in peer review. The second assumption is that Japanese students, in general, have a faulty assumption that the first draft of their papers is the final one; in other words, they do not understand the value of revision. What happens in this context is that they are inclined to submit their papers as soon as they finish writing. The third assumption is that Japanese students are not good at critiquing other students’ papers. They may be afraid of bothering their classmates by providing critical (or negative) comments as their responses. This results in students simply praising peers’ texts and the writer

has no idea of how to use feedback for the revision. The fourth assumption is that L2 writers are heavily dependent on their teachers or tutors to improve their writing (Ferris, 1995). In this situation, they do not take peer feedback seriously as a form of literacy practice nor do they use it for their revision. Overall, L2 writers' lack of knowledge and experience of peer review may result in the failure of the language activity. From this perspective, it is crucial for the writing instructors to teach what the concept of peer review is and how to do it. However, how can they train L2 writers to make a peer review activity effective and meaningful?

The aim of this article is to explore effective ways for teaching and involving students in peer review in the Japanese EFL classroom through which students read their classmates' L2 poetry and provide feedback for the revision of their poems.

Critical self-reflection on peer review activities in the Japanese EFL classroom

This section is based on the author's critical self-reflection on his teaching practice of peer review activities in the Japanese EFL classroom. A personal narrative is used to analyze and piece together what was happening in my peer review sessions. The theoretical and methodological underpinning behind this narrative inquiry is the usage of personal stories as a tool for constructing meaning (Pagnucci, 2004) and "hearing voices and appreciating the diversity of lived experience" (Hanauer, 2010).

I have taught English to first-year engineering students in a coordinated program at a national university since 2011. As a course requirement, I assign my students to create a book of haiku in English. The series of processes to create the booklet is as follows: understanding the concept of haiku by reading a Japanese traditional haiku; reading English haikus written by both ESL and EFL learners; composing haikus in English; revising the poems; designing the book of haiku. In order for the students to revise and polish their haikus, once a semester I have a teacher-student conference to meet each of my students and discuss their own haikus. In addition, I incorporate a peer review activity into my 15-week lessons.

In the 2011 spring semester, which was my first-year teaching in Japan, I held a peer review activity in class. I explained the concept of peer review and described a step-by-step process for the activity on PPT slides before my students actually did so on their own. The description of the peer review activity was as follows:

Make groups of 4-5 students. Swap your notebook in your group. Now, you have a classmate's notebook. Choose one haiku and then read the poem carefully. Then, write YOUR UNDERSTANDING or INTERPRETATION of the poem in Japanese.

(My PPT Slides, May 19, 2011)

I walked around the classroom to check how my students were working in groups. I checked from one group to another and I realized that they were literally doing peer review but their approaches were different from what I had been expecting: one student corrected misspellings or grammatical mistakes; the other gave such comments as “This is great!” or “I like it”; still others read the haiku, but left no comments in their notebook. I just wondered what was going on in the classroom. In this lesson, the peer review activity did not really work out.

After the lesson, I reflected on my pedagogy. There were three possible reasons why the peer review activity had not worked well: my students were not familiar with peer review and did not understand what they were supposed to do; it was difficult for them to read haiku critically and give constructive feedback; and they might have misunderstood that they had to write something good for the poems as their responses. There might be other reasons that made the activity unsuccessful, but I believed that my explanation was not clear enough and I should have provided more explicit instruction with examples.

In the 2012 spring semester, I had a chance to teach the same course again. I designed exactly the same lessons as in the previous year: a peer review session was incorporated into the course after my students finished writing their first haiku. Reflecting on my experience of conducting a peer review session, I added a few slides to illustrate beneficial and weak examples of feedback. I defined a “beneficial” comment as one which helps a student (or writer) to revise and polish a haiku. Some examples of beneficial comments were as follows:

- *This poem is nicely described, but it may be better not to use a word “happy” directly in order to express your feeling.*
- *This haiku describes the situation when you are very surprised to watch Tsunami on TV and it frightens you.*
- *This haiku is too general, and you should focus on a particular moment. For example, you describe the moment when you look at the ocean in Okinawa. Is Okinawa's ocean different from the one in Niigata? If so, describe the difference.*

(My PPT Slides, May 23, 2012)

On the other hand, I defined a “weak” comment as one which is useless in revising a haiku.

Weak comments were as follows:

- *This is a good haiku.*
- *This is perfect!*
- *No mistakes!* (My PPT Slides, May 23, 2012)

After teaching the concept of peer review with some examples of feedback, I explained what my students were supposed to do in the activity. This time, I prepared the following description to make a peer review session successful:

Make groups of 4-5 students. Swap your notebook in your group. Now, you have a classmate’s notebook. Choose one haiku and then read the poem carefully. Then, complete the following two tasks:

- 1. Use a dictionary to check the syllables and count how many syllables are used in each line. Write down the number of syllables in your notebook.*
- 2. Read the haiku again and write YOUR UNDERSTANDING of the poem in Japanese. However, don’t correct grammar or any mistake. Focus on the content: What is your interpretation? What FEELING or EMOTION does the writer try to express in the text?*

(My PPT Slides, May 23, 2012)

Some students still wrote judgmental comments such as “This haiku is good,” but contrary to the activity in the previous year, their comments mirrored their own responses for the haiku they read and could probably be used to polish the poem. However, in general, their feedback was very short, about one or two lines long. It does not necessarily mean that longer comments are always better, but writing our own interpretation may be longer than that. This peer review activity somehow worked out in terms of being able to draw their attention to content rather than grammatical accuracy in the poem, but it was not up to my expectations. I wondered how I could have my students provide longer and more meaningful comments. I thought it might be better to hold a peer review session all together in class before they were divided into groups: in other words, perhaps I needed to guide and lead my students in a peer review activity. More

specifically, by having students read a haiku, review it and discuss what comments could possibly be provided, in this way they could gain a better understanding of peer review.

Practical guidelines for reviewing L2 poetry in the Japanese EFL classroom

Various approaches for teaching peer review can be applied in the Japanese EFL classroom depending on the purpose of the writing activities. One of the key perspectives in the teaching of poetry writing is to put the writers and especially their voices at the center of the writing process (Hanauer, 2011; Iida, 2012). In addition, poetry writing enables L2 students to pay more attention to content than structure (Chamcharatsri, 2013). In this sense, a peer review, especially a poetry reviewing activity can provide opportunities for L2 writers “to see how an audience interprets and reacts to their voice and intent” (Iida, 2010, p. 32). Of particular importance in this activity is for the instructor to have students focus more on content than on grammatical items. Taking haiku as a genre of poetry writing, a peer review session is served in the following three steps.

Step 1: Instruction of peer review:

A peer review workshop starts with the discussion of the concept and purpose of the activity. As discussed above, just teaching the notion of peer review is not sufficient for Japanese students to engage in reviewing a haiku; instead, the instructor should train students in the review process by presenting a haiku such as the one below:

A bright red maple

Whispering among green leaves:

A start of new life

(Iida, 2010, p. 32)

The instructor asks students to spend 10 to 15 minutes doing the following tasks:

1. Count how many syllables are used in each line. Write down the number of syllables in your notebook.

2. Write down your interpretation of the haiku. The following questions may guide you to explain your understanding of the poem:
 - What is the season? What is a seasonal reference in the haiku?
 - What is a theme of the haiku?
 - What emotion does this poet try to express in the haiku?
 - What is the story behind this haiku?

After each student finishes reviewing the above haiku, the instructor explores it and discusses the poet's voice and intent. Doing so helps students to understand what is really meant in the poem. Then, the instructor asks them to work on the follow-up activity:

“You understand the poet's voice and intent. Go back to your notebook and carefully read your interpretation of the haiku. Compare the poet's voice and your interpretation. How different are they? If you find out any difference, how can you modify the haiku in order for the poet to express and communicate his voice more accurately? Write down your concerns in your notebook.”

Once students write their own thoughts in their notebooks, the instructor leads a class discussion to have them share their own comments for revising the above haiku. The purpose of this activity is to show students what can be changed and how to revise the haiku reflecting on peers' comments. The instructor also reminds them to provide constructive feedback consisting of their descriptive comments rather than judgmental responses. As Gebhard and Oprandy (2004) assert, taking a prescriptive and judgmental stance prevents teachers from exploring and improving their language teaching (and/or learning). This perspective is crucial in developing students' L2 literacy skills and it can be applied to peer review activities in poetry lessons. Descriptive and nonjudgmental comments provide students with ample opportunities to polish and improve their poems while exploring how to express their emotions more accurately. It is, therefore, necessary for the instructor to teach students to provide descriptive and nonjudgmental comments as their responses in the peer review session.

Step 2: Peer review in groups

As discussed above, the poetry reading activity involves textual analysis and meaning construction (Hanauer, 2004). In addition, it is important to incorporate structural analysis into

the peer review activity, because haiku is a three-line and seventeen syllable poem in which the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line has five syllables.

First of all, students are divided into groups of four, and two pairs are formed in each group. After they swap their notebooks, students engage in both structural and textual observations to understand the writer's voice represented in the haiku according to the following instructions:

1. Prepare a (electronic) dictionary and check how many syllables are used in each line. Write down the number of syllables in each line.
2. How do you interpret this haiku? Write your interpretation from the following aspects:
 - What is the season? From which word(s) can you determine that season?
 - What is a theme of the haiku?
 - What emotion is contained in the haiku?
 - What does this poet want to express in the haiku?
3. Next, a pair of students explains why they feel the way they do about the haiku. In so doing, they have opportunities to receive both oral and written feedback and understand how his or her voice is interpreted by a reader. This activity helps students to develop "a strong sense of writer-reader interaction" (Iida, 2010, p. 32). During this discussion, it is also necessary for the instructor to have students discuss and clarify how to revise the haiku to express and communicate their voices more accurately.

Step 3: Revising haiku

Once students finish discussing their own haiku, the instructor gives them 10 to 15 minutes to revise or rewrite it. During this process, the instructor reminds them to use some comments from their classmates for the revision. When students finish revising their haiku, they conduct another round of peer review with a different student in the group. The instructor may ask them to choose and read a haiku that is different from the one chosen in the first round of peer review.

Conclusion

The current study has explored effective ways to conduct a peer review activity by reflecting on the author's teaching practice in the Japanese EFL classroom. There can be various

teaching approaches for peer review sessions depending on the tasks and genres of L2 writing. One of the successful approaches for the peer review activity is for the instructor to explicitly teach the purpose of peer review and demonstrate how to review poems before students actually start to work on the activity in groups. More importantly, this study suggests that the instructor needs to counsel students to provide nonjudgmental and descriptive comments which can possibly be used to polish their poems in order to make peer review more effective and meaningful.

Author note

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Poetry in Motion – Revamping Literary Recitals

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Abstract

Speech and recital contests are not rare in the language learning landscape of Japan and elsewhere. However, preparations often neglect important aspects of a good delivery. Too often, student recitals are delivered either in a monotonous fashion with too little attention being paid to segmental phonology and prosody, or highlighting measures like pitch or volume are overused or inappropriately applied. At Aichi Prefectural University a special class has been developed in order to tackle this problem. For this class, a format piloted by Anke Stöver-Blahak at the University of Hanover in Germany has been adapted to the Japanese teaching context. Students are thoroughly familiarised with what is a successful spoken performance. Students are practically introduced to basic aspects of drama pedagogy, phonation, voice coaching, and to simplified concepts of target language (TL) prosody. Further, a strong emphasis is placed on identifying one's audience and adjusting the delivery accordingly.

The preliminary 'whys'

Becoming more proficient in a language is an arduous multifaceted process that is known to every language learner and language teacher. Improving students' ability in spoken language performance is a major challenge (not only) in Japan (Stephens, 2011). The choice of appropriate content and methodological formats for the situation at hand plays a vital part in this. Mere direct, skill-driven instruction is likely to be insufficient for students to consciously and cognitively acquire the complex systems governing language: that is, the interdependent correlations between grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and prosody when encountering a target language (TL) text. The study of languages in Japan has long been dominated by grammar-translation

approaches, dissecting the TL at the word and sentence level up until they have been rendered nearly unrecognisable to the native speaker/reader. It is epitomised in what Stephens (2011, p. 69) calls the “bottom-up approach.” Arguably, the best way to approach any foreign language (FL) text, is not by attempting to explain even the smallest of facets predominantly of morphology, syntax, and semantics through the medium of native Japanese. Especially, when looking at literature, the abyss between intellectually instilled *bottom-up* zeal in translating on the basis of word lists and grammar tables and being able to appreciate the communicative qualities of a speech performance has to fail spectacularly (cf. Ellis, 2001, Bibby, 2012).

More recent approaches aiming at enhancing communicative abilities are faced with at least one fundamental systemic obstacle in Japan: the necessity to study and teach with a view to passing examinations – often university entrance exams – with no or only marginal oral components (Stephens). And while neglecting any linguistic factor outright is not advised, “the consequences of not presenting prosody are an enormous burden on the memory to process written text without clues as to how to segment meaning.” (Stephens, 2011, p. 71). Therefore, a lot is to be said for teaching basic or even simplistic prosodic patterns for students to apply to the text themselves when reading or delivering it. Moreover, getting students to playfully explore the performance side of the prosodic marking of meaning is likely to further their holistic language experience and thus facilitate the learning of the multifaceted properties of the language studied (L2). There are those who argue that “[...] the use of literature should be a means, not an end in L2 education” (Iida, 2013, p. 9). But this is not to be understood as a contradiction to a holistic approach towards language. Rather, living language is so much more than mere linguistic form and pattern. Contrary to translation approaches of language learning, meaning is never self-evident. Understanding is a permanent process of formation, interpretation, and the negotiation of meaning.

And what better literary genre to choose for facilitating such an undertaking among students than poetry: “[...] the words (images) of the poem become vehicles that jog the students’ diverse memories and stimulate creative thoughts, which students as ‘the performers’ transfer to emotional, vocal, facial and physical reactions” (Elting & Firkins, 2006, p. 129). On a more mundane level, Stöver-Blahak (2012, p. 13) defines the act of speaking as *per se* communicative. Every speech act has an audience. Even the person dictating something into a recording device has to mould their speech in such a fashion that the prospective recipient can understand

appropriately upon listening to it. Thus, in Stöver-Blahak's understanding of “Ästhetische Kommunikation” [Aesthetic Communication] (2012) the audience becomes a major focus in speech planning and execution. Learning to presuppose features of one's audience and their needs, and to cater to them accordingly, becomes a highly desirable skill.

This is true for any type of speaking, but especially when speaking in public. For students in particular, this is a skill commonly required of them throughout their studies. For students of FL other than English, however, it is rarer in the Japanese context to ever be required to make a speech or give a presentation in the TL. If and when students are exploring academia in other parts of the world, namely on study abroad stays, they are quickly confronted with the reality of having to deliver a fair number of speech acts in public as part of their training and education (cf. Hunke, 2014a, p. 59). In order to improve students' speech delivery in the TL, a special class addressing the issues mentioned thus far has been implemented at Aichi Prefectural University.

The ‘how’ of the poetry performance class

In the poetry performance class offered, there were thirteen students who chose the course as a non-credit elective. These students were from years two through four. Out of the thirteen students, eleven completed the class.

Every session of the poetry performance class was started by drama-pedagogy-inspired exercises in order to get students used to actively and deliberately engaging their bodies – with or without speech components. The activities were further envisaged to build up trust and to promote a good class atmosphere and cohesion. Using the entire body, gestures and facial expressions were integral parts of these exercises. Further, activities featuring elements of voice coaching and phonation enriched every session of the course. Here, the focus was largely on practically exploring the German vowel inventory and to mimic intonation patterns and ways to mark stress. Segmental phonology was not the focal point. Walter argues that readers with an alphabetic first or native language (L1) “do not mentally see what they have just read: They hear it.” (Walter, 2008, p. 458) In the case of Japanese learners of an alphabetic language this process is likely to occur in a different fashion:

“There is evidence that learners whose L1 orthography is ideographic may store the immediate products of decoding in the visuospatial sketchpad, rather than in the

phonological loop; and that they may transfer this decoding practice to the reading of an alphabetic L2, at least initially.” (Walter 2008, p. 460)

In an important study on the matter of L1 orthography interference in L2 acquisition with languages featuring differing types of written representation, Chikamatsu (1996) infers that for Japanese native speakers the situation is more complex than for native speakers of other languages with ideographic systems. In Japan, the writing systems acquired in school are first the two syllabic alphabets *hiragana* and *katakana*, to be superseded by ideographic characters known as *kanji*. Simultaneous to the other three writing systems, *romaji*, meaning Latin letters, are also learned, often through the medium of the EFL classroom. Stephens purports further that L2 learning cannot replicate the settings for L1 acquisition, but that a certain aspect of the latter ought to be adopted: the principle of exposure to (exaggerated) prosody (Stephens, 2011, p. 68f). For Walter, comprehension by FL learners is presupposed by qualities not tied to either the L1 or L2:

“In other words, comprehension is not linguistic: It is not *in* the first language (L1), so it cannot be *transferred* to the L2. Rather, readers of L2 who comprehend well do this because they have reached a point where they can access, from the L2, their existing skills in building mental structures” (Walter, 2008, p. 456).

In the next step, a number of ‘training’ poems were used to exemplify and practise features of German dynamic and contrastive stress. Students were also introduced to rhyme – a phenomenon not found in Japanese poetry at all. “Rhyme would be unimportant if reading were just a matter of grapheme-phoneme conversion, but that is certainly not the case” (Goswami & Bryant, 1990, p. 103). Hirschfeld undertakes to define what properties are most crucial for mastering speech performances in stress timing languages: “For stress timing languages like English or German, this means mastering dynamic phrasal stress in order to make what is being said more intelligible to the (native) listener (2011, p. 42f).”

After initial practice with the ‘training’ poems, students each chose their own poem from a selection of German poetry covering several hundred years of German poetic history. The reasoning behind this is eloquently summed up as follows:

“Because of poetry’s rich language resources, its indeterminacy and multiple levels of meaning, it can provide a unique opportunity for [language] learners to become agents in the construction of meaning. Armed with a basic understanding of the text, students can arrive at a new understanding of language as a living, breathing, artistic material.

Introducing drama to embody the personal and creative response to the poem rather than privileging a particular authoritative or monologic interpretation of the poem can extend this understanding” (Elting & Firkins, 2006, p. 129).

Students engaged intensively and extensively with their self-chosen poem over the course of large parts of a semester. They were required to do scripting with their own poems, meaning re-writing their own poem or rather copying it, but with the potential to visually display it differently or add some meta-information aiding the performance delivery. Where possible, poems were divided into performable parts (Elting & Firkins, 2006, p. 131f); occasionally a line-by-line re-scripting was also undertaken. Although, by and large, the performances were the major focus, like in Elting and Firkin's classroom project, line-by-line scripting was still permitted. This was seen as an extra set of scaffolding, with respect to the presupposed “visuospatial sketchpad” being more prominent with native speakers of ideographic writing systems (Walter) rather than the phonological loop used by speakers of alphabet-based languages. Students should make use of any aid possible in developing their own understanding and sense of ownership of the poem. At first, students were asked to apply a simplistic type of phrasal stress to their poems, identifying pauses – often marked by punctuation. Then a main stress in between these hesitations was to be identified. Students were made aware of the fact that their choice of stress may shift in future performances, given a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the poetic qualities to be developed over time. In cases of line-by-line re-scripting, students were shown how to use stylised intonation curves to graphically represent the movement of pitch in each line.

The recital performance required the deliberate usage of body posture, gestures, and facial expressions. “By placing the emphasis on dramatizing the poem, the aim in the [...] classroom is less about an understanding of the author’s exact meaning than on students’ personal and creative interpretation – making use of the gaps in meaning left by the poet in the text.” (Elting & Firkins, 2006, p. 130) This was worked on intensively, as were phrasal stress and intonation. “Ideally, the skill of producing an utterance in the TL by correctly weighting and

reducing syllables and by applying deliberate overall phrasal stress is also acquired [...]” (Hunke, 2014b, p. 111). An important lesson to be learned was that even incomplete understanding of the content does not necessarily impede a good delivery. Students were strongly encouraged to develop a vivid mental picture of the poem as they understood it and to mould this into their recital performance.

Four of their recital performances were videotaped. These were made available to the students for feedback purposes. They regularly and continuously received feedback on aspects of their performance from fellow students and their teachers. Per session each student performed parts of or the entire poem multiple times. Initially, students were allowed to read out the poem. By the third recording only occasional prompts were allowed. The poetry performances all had to include the deliberate usage of body posture, gestures, and facial expressions alongside a speech delivery that met the prosodic characteristics outlined above. A final recording was made at an end of semester event – open to the public and with students asked to invite at least three friends – at the Multilingual Language Learning Centre iCoToBa.

Findings and lessons learned after the first poetry performance class

The first semester of the poetry performance class has been completed and the second class is currently under way. The retention of 11 out of 13 students in the first, already completed class, is encouraging, especially as the class is a non-credit elective. Students stated they appreciated the opportunity to work with the spoken TL through the medium of literature – a genre they otherwise often only encounter in order to translate into oblivion. The format chosen gave students both a lot of scaffolding and offered numerous challenges along the way.

An important scaffolding element for Japanese learners in particular was the mere canned or fixed nature of the text. Having a text to hold onto gives even insecure learners a chance to engage with the text at their own time, in their own space, and at their own pace. Further scaffolding could be offered through repeated feedback on performances and video recordings.

The challenges grew gradually, as the course progressed. Students were required to have moved away entirely from the written text and have memorised at least part of it by the third video recording. In particular, standing in front of the camera and the entire group when performing for the recording was a big step for some participating students. The four students

from year-group two especially needed more time to adjust to not only having to recite, but to performing their poem. However, all but one of these students continued until the end.

For all the students a developing sense of identification with their text was noted. Markedly, the way their performances improved became evident in the video recordings. The facial expressions, gestures, and body posture chosen often aided rather than hindered the process of continuously improving every aspect of their delivery. Above all, the students from higher year groups displayed a growing in-depth negotiation of meaning and a vivid engagement with their interpretation of the content.

The first semester of running the class was sufficiently encouraging to run a follow up, that also offered a chance for the improvement on a few minor issues. The scope of the drama-pedagogy-inspired activities could be widened. Students' uptake of some of these exercises was at times hesitant. Students usually responded to the task at hand, but occasionally displayed a certain discomfort with freer, mingling activities. Some students also expressed the desire to work more intensively still on particular vowel sounds and certain selected consonant phonemes. Both are easily expandable or implementable although the latter issue will be best tackled on an individual training and feedback basis.

The class is likely to go into being offered a third time running next spring despite the fact that only four students enrolled this semester. One of these students is even participating for the second time. This student's dedication as well as the other students' enthusiasm are justifying the demand for running classes on performance aspects of speech acts.

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Author Note

Morten Hunke was educated in Germany, Ireland, and Sweden. For many years, he has been using literary formats creatively with students.

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Literature in Language Teaching Conference: The Heart of the Matter

September 7th, 2014

Aichi University, Toyohashi Campus

“...Every monologue sooner or later becomes a discussion.”

— Graham Greene, *The Heart of the Matter* (1948)

The *Literature in language teaching conference: The heart of the matter* was held on September 7th, 2014 at Aichi University, Toyohashi Campus. Co-sponsoring SIGs for the event were the Materials Writers SIG, the Extensive Reading SIG, Global Issues in Language Education (GILE) SIG and Gender Awareness in Language Education (GALE) SIG. 15 presenters discussed a range of topics which included Plato, poetry, classic literature, creativity, extensive reading, global issues through literature and film-as-literature. The conference theme, *The Heart of The Matter* was taken from the Graham Greene novel of the same name. Although Greene’s protagonist contemplates life in a somewhat melancholy way, this tone was not reflected in the lively atmosphere of the LiLT conference. A number of encouraging and thoughtful discussions resulted in lively responses from audience participants. Each session was 40 minutes long, giving presenters and participants time to delve deeply into the topics and cover an impressive amount of theory and practice while leaving opportunities to discuss points with the session participants afterwards. The standard of preparation and presentation was high. Some themes from the conference which stood out clearly from the day’s presentations were 1) creativity in adapting and using literary texts in a range of ways 2) intertextual connections with classic and modern texts and 3) literature integrated language learning, with appropriately scaffolded materials for second language learning. We encourage all members of the LiLT SIG community to consider joining the next literature-themed event.

Plenary talk

In the conference plenary talk by Marcos Benevides, *A lexical approach to developing western cultural fluency*, the presenter began by defining his terms and then proceeded to present a strong case for learning language and culture through literature. The perspective of this talk, that of utilizing a *lexical approach*, is taken from the world of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Benevides recognises that not all literature courses are explicitly EFL, although the application of this principle is appropriate as a framework. Next, the audience was invited to take a literary journey through several thousand years of writing, and in this way encouraging students to see the cultural “big picture.” In doing so, taking in the Bible as literature as well as Greek and Roman myths, Benevides demonstrated how it is important to understand the foundational cultural layers of meaning in literature in order to create fluency and smooth, clear understanding of modern texts for discussion inside and outside the classroom. By merging these two approaches, Benevides described that just as language can be learned in chunks, so too culture can be learned in this manageable way. Benevides demonstrated the use of cultural fluency to negotiate meanings in a number of texts, one of which is Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, which requires some understanding of Christianity as well as gender identity. When students can make connections across texts and cultures fluently through literary references, this is evidence for developing a stronger sense of the “big picture.” Overall, in looking at a cultural fluency from a language learning perspective, the educator can make an impact on learners which lasts long after the classroom has ended. The LiLT SIG thanks Marcos Benevides most wholeheartedly for his support of the SIG and the plenary talk at this event.

Summary of presentations

In the first session of the day, Simon Bibby gave a talk entitled *Plato in The Matrix: Mixing old and new in a literature and cinema class*. In this presentation a number of texts with a shared dystopian theme were introduced with reference to the intertextual layering present in each. Bibby teaches this course as a film-as-literature content-based elective class. The aims of the class, course content and a discussion on learner benefits were all shared. Participants in the session could gain insight into the creativity in building a web of literary references in a fast-paced and engaging course for students. Gareth Jones’ presentation on *Knowing through doing: Literature, learning and practice-as-research in the creative arts* was a cross-disciplinary

approach to learning and utilising literature in a creative arts context. The aim of the presentation was to show how practice-based research within the literary arts field could be exploited in communicative classes. This was done effectively while illustrating ways that this approach could help inform critical and creative thinking as well as cross-cultural awareness in language classroom settings. In making this case, Jones strongly put forward a case for greater cross-pollination amongst creative arts practitioners and the language learning teaching environment.

In the second session, Thomas Bieri used an extensive reading classroom setting to discuss various versions of the same literary text in his talk *The Secret Garden: Blending versions*. In this highly user-friendly talk, Bieri outlined some ways to introduce original excerpts alongside adapted graded readers and a film version of the classic children's literary text "The Secret Garden" by F. Hodgson Burnett. A number of activities were described which aimed to raise language awareness and encourage discussion about the decisions made in modifying texts for language learners. For example, some examples of comparison would include use of critical thinking skills to evaluate the successful adaptations of original texts. The Oxford bookworm version was introduced alongside the listening text, and participants completed a gap-fill listening task to illustrate the type of activity which can help to spend time repeating material. Emphasis was given on the value of preparation. Participants left with practical ideas on blending versions of the same text. With a focus on young learners in particular, but with relevance across the curriculum, Kristin Ormiston brought her topic to life with music in her presentation *Poetry for young children: The power of repetition through movement*. Building on the assertion that children's neurological development is assisted by learning through movement, Ormiston illustrated ways in which movement and participation can become central elements in an early-years curriculum with good effect. Using examples from the classroom, music and storytelling, elements of language highly suited to a movement-based approach were demonstrated for audience participants in a dynamic session. Creativity was once again a strong feature of this talk that gave participants ideas about how to compose and perform original poems and verse participation stories for use in the language classroom.

Next Chris Davanzo talked about a blended approach to using adapted literature as a type of enhancement in reading classes in EFL settings. In his talk, *Utilizing graded readers to enhance reading classes*, a number of practical suggestions were made which could be used by educators in a number of different contexts, making this a highly practical session for

participants. Cameron Smith gave a talk entitled *Creativity research and its relevance to the language teacher* bringing an extensive range of research and theoretical evidence together in a motivating talk framed through the creativity lens. In foregrounding research and making its connection to teachers prominent, this thought-provoking talk helped participants reflect on their own creative practices also.

In the afternoon the concurrent sessions continued, beginning with a talk entitled *Reactivating the classics* by Heather Doiron. In this session, a strong emphasis on finding new ways to approach well-loved texts was given, using examples from classics which teachers may adapt for classroom use in a number of ways. Kevin Stein gave a presentation via Skype in a virtual presentation. In his talk, *Short poetry: Helping language learners find their voice between the words on the paper*, a combination of practical teaching ideas and examples from student workshops helped participants in the session consider some ways to get students writing, developing personal identity and language proficiency at the same time.

Next Morten Hunke brought into focus the topic of poetry recitals in a specially adapted series of lessons designed to develop presentation skills amongst Japanese university learners of German. In his presentation *Speaking of fluency - revamping poetry recitals*, a number of ideas involving voice coaching, drama pedagogy and phonation were applied in a specially designed course at Aichi University. Applying a model of speech recital piloted in Hanover, Germany, and using video recordings of progress over time, Hunke's recital performance classes focused on learning through recital. The results of action research from 2014 were presented in this original and motivating talk.

Sue Sullivan introduced student poetry and poetry blogs as a way to connect the dots between creativity, language learning, and creative expression. In her talk *Student poetry, student blogs: The melding of creativity, technology and analysis* a highly practical session was filled with example class materials. One reason for doing this was to focus on showing the work of students and allowing their writing to be read by peers. Another purpose was to help encourage participant production of poetry and the teaching of metaphor, onomatopoeia, alliteration and so on. With a strong focus on learner-centred pedagogy, Sullivan gave participants a wealth of ideas from which to choose when planning creative, imaginative language courses.

Following this, Anna Isozaki talked on listening extensively using literature in her talk *Bridges to literature: New research and approaches*. Using her own language learning story as a beginning point, Isozaki talked about the benefits of listening to stories, in her case while learning Japanese. Although the technology has changed now and language learning no longer requires the use of cassette tapes, instead with the help of Youtube, extensive listening with literature is simple and easy to arrange. Talking about some recent research on the topic of learning through listening, particularly cognitive research, Isozaki gave a strong case for the foregrounding of listening in any EFL program.

Roehl Sibling gave a presentation on the value of critical thinking using discussions, in his presentation *Discussion skills through literature in EFL education*. There was a strong focus on ideas for classroom activities in this practical session, using literature as a beginning point for classroom discussions. Concepts and principles connected to critical thinking were described in detail and then some suggestions were given on how to connect these principles with second language speaking activities. Overall, this was a highly useful session for curriculum designers and educators in a range of settings.

In the final session of the day Tara McIlroy described developing a course in global issues through literature, with the presentation *The heart of any balanced programme: Integrating literature into a four-skills course*. In this presentation the curriculum design model by Paul Nation and John Macalister (2010) was adapted for use in literature-based content classes at the university level. Examples of classroom materials were provided and a discussion on the balance between elements such as fluency and grammar were discussed. In the concurrent session, James Venema spoke about a wide variety of children's texts put to use in the language classroom in his presentation *Fables, fairy tales, and the English classroom*. Beginning with Aesop's fables and going on to describe a number of activities using Snow White, Cinderella and others, the presentation was framed around the view that storytelling, in its different forms, is constantly under constant metamorphosis and as such makes for engaging materials for students today. The presenter also provided some ideas for adapting materials into other classroom settings also.

Round table discussions

During the first round table discussion, *Finding the muse with literature: Continuity, teaching and professional development*, three presenters shared their thoughts on finding good texts to use with students and keeping involved in professional development through learning with literature. Simon Bibby introduced the Literature in Language Teaching SIG and some reasons for setting up the SIG. Before 2011 there was not a place amongst the JALT SIGs for teachers interested simply in literature and through setting up the LiLT SIG this missing element has been found. Gregg McNabb talked about motivations for teaching literature, particularly with students who have low levels of motivation and may be in need of scaffolded learning to approach literature texts. Tara McIlroy on motivation for teaching literature from the perspective of using students' background knowledge of Japanese literature, and in some way harnessing this to approach literature in translation and thus make connections between Japanese and world literature. A number of questions and comments from the audience were also addressed which made for a lively discussion on the topics raised.

At the second round table discussion of the day, *Literature in ELT: Past, present and future*, Marcos Benevides, Cameron Smith and Tara McIlroy gave perspectives from their various backgrounds on some current changes in ELT and the session ended with an open invitation to the participants to share their ideas about how current trends may shape future developments in the field. Benevides is interested in the ways in which technology is changing the reading and availability of literature, and how this will continue to shape the educational contexts for ELT practitioners in the future. One example of how new ways to read are developing is the multi-path stories which Benevides is creating with his crowd-funded project Atama-ii Books. Smith talked from the viewpoint of creativity research and creative writing, which requires particular elements to be present for production of creative uses of language. This interest in creativity is something which will continue and, Smith hopes, gather more interest in the future. One piece of advice for teachers engaging with students through creative writing was to respect their best efforts and appreciate that what they create is new or original for them. McIlroy reflected on her own experiences as a high school literature teacher in L1 settings and compared this with current experience in the tertiary setting. Some aspects of literature teaching seem to stay constant across cultures and languages, although the need for a grounded

background in literature for an all-round liberal arts education may be more important in these uncertain economic times than ever.

Acknowledgements

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Announcements



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

Issue 4.1 will accept a broad range of articles such as feature articles, literature in practice, academically grounded presentations of student work and interviews. Further information is available from the LiLT SIG website <liltsig.org> and from the editors of this journal via email to liltsig@gmail.com

Editorial Policy

Literature in Language Teaching Journal, the refereed research journal of the Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) Special Interest Group, invites previously unpublished 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 eight 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 and others of note: 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) Well-grounded presentation and discussion of student work as it relates to learning language and literature. Up to 3,000 words.
- (6) Conference reports by attendees at literature-themed events.
- (7) Comments on previously published *LiLT Journal* articles (*Talk back*).
- (8) Book and media reviews (*Reviews*).

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

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

Style

The *LiLT Journal* follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition. Authors are advised to consult the APA Manual and/or recent copies of *JALT Journal* or *TESOL Quarterly* for examples of documentation and references.