

Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG newsletter

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Contents

- 2 And now a word from ... the Teacher Education SIG Coordinator
Anthony Robins
- 3 Teacher Beliefs and Error Correction Behavior in the L2 classroom
Takeshi Kamijo
- 10 A Week of Teacher Supervision with the Pink Slipper Fairy
Ben Backwell
- 20 A summer day's training in Shiga
Anthony Robins

BREAKING NEWS!

Teacher Education SIG Annual Retreat
Saturday October 2 and Sunday October 3

The TE SIG will hold its annual retreat this year at C Hills, Sumikin Training Centre, Kashima, Ibaraki Prefecture. We will begin from midday on October 2 and continue through the afternoon of Sunday October 3. The theme of the Retreat is:

**Developing co-operatively:
Professional development through non-judgemental discourse**

This is a great chance for professional development, so please join us. Further information will be e-mailed to all TE SIG members shortly. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact the Retreat Organiser, Colin Graham, at <colin_cd2001@yahoo.co.uk>.

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And now a word from ... **the TE SIG Coordinator**, Anthony Robins

I hope that everyone has had a good summer, albeit an undoubtedly hot one if you have been in Japan. As I have seen this year particularly, it is not a time when teacher education comes to a halt. Many groups take advantage of a little welcome spare time to organise workshops. This year I have been involved with one for senior high school teachers (see article in this issue) and a couple for elementary school teachers, as they get to grips with developments in that area. They have been rewarding occasions which have given an insight into others' teaching and learning environments.

Attending the JALT Executive Business Meeting and Ordinary General Meeting in early July on behalf of our SIG was another opportunity and one which gave me the impression that there is now far more agreement than disagreement within JALT. A previous decision to offer a free SIG to members who join or renew has proved successful. Our SIG is among those who have benefited. As of early August, we now have more than 110 members.

At those meetings, I had an opportunity to talk with Sayoko Yamashita (Pragmatics SIG coordinator). She suggested that we join three SIGS (Pragmatics, Teaching Children and Teaching Older Learners) in the 2005 PanSig mini conference whose provisional theme is 'Lifelong Language Learning from Kids to the Elderly' to be held in Tokyo in May 2005. I hope that members feel that this will be a positive opportunity to promote our SIG and an opportunity to bring members together. The call for papers is likely to be in September, so do consider presenting!

The JALT meetings took place at the same location as this year's JALT Conference will, Tezukayama University in Nara. There will be more about our involvement in the next issue of this newsletter. However, one event I would like to mention now is our forum. The title is 'Cohesive Teacher Education for Elementary and Junior High School'. With the involvement of a panel of five, including newly qualified teachers, it will focus on how these areas of English education, established and new, can be better connected.

I would like to thank Robert Croker for his work on putting this issue of the newsletter together. He is now kindly assisting our new editor, Simon Lees. As the conference, and with it our A.G.M., approaches, do consider this kind of involvement yourself. Nomination forms will be being sent out and new officers can of course add much to a group like ours. It could be you!

Anthony

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Teacher Beliefs and Error Correction Behavior in the L2 classroom

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1 Background of the study

In the 1970s and 1980s, major studies on teacher-student interaction and the role of error correction focused on the practitioners' point of view, providing implications directly relevant to the classroom teacher (Nystrom, 1983; Chaudron, 1986; Allwright and Bailey, 1991). Since the 1990s, however, research has shifted to researcher perspectives on error correction and learner outcomes of learning (Carroll and Swain, 1993; Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Lyster and Ranta, 1997).

Recently, Mori (2002) undertook research on teacher beliefs and error correction on two teachers in the US ESL context, and refers to the needs to develop further study in this field,

SLA researchers have tended to provide teachers with research findings in the belief that teaching will be improved and learning enhanced if teachers act on those findings. Thus the research approach has been top-down. In addition to this type of research, however, ... researchers also need to take a bottom-up approach, tapping into and codifying the epistemological and experiential reservoir that exists behind the teachers' teaching behavior (p.66-67).

2 This study and research questions

This study focuses on two experienced EFL teachers' beliefs and behavior in the L2 classrooms, based on the 1980s research and Mori's more recent study. The following questions guided the research:

- 1) What beliefs regarding language teaching and error correction techniques did the two teachers have?
- 2) Were their beliefs and behavior consistent with SLA theory?
- 3) What error correction behavior did the two teachers apply to their classrooms?
- 4) Was teacher behavior strongly affected by beliefs about error correction?
- 5) What conclusions should be drawn from these results?

3 Research methods

3.1 Participants

The two participating classroom teachers are highly experienced EFL teachers, and both TEFL qualified. Teacher 1 has an RSA DELTA, and has been teaching for 7 years. Teacher 2 has an UCLES DELTA and has been teaching for 19 years. Both teachers are male, native speakers of English, and grew up in Britain.

Each teacher taught four one-hour one-to-one grammar lessons to a Japanese female lower intermediate adult learner, from the end of May to the beginning July 2003. Of the eight lessons, four were selected for data collection and analysis because they included more grammatical learning items for error correction. In Teacher 1's two lessons, future possibilities such as 'might', 'definitely', and so on were taught. In Teacher 2's two lessons, the second conditional and relative clause were taught.

3.2 Using multiple source of evidence

I undertook semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and discourse analysis of classroom interaction, over the same six-week period.

1) Semi-structured interviews on teacher beliefs regarding error correction

Two one-hour interviews were scheduled for each teacher after the lessons. One interview was a semi-structured interview where the researcher asked each teacher about their beliefs concerning classroom interaction and error correction. The other interview was also semi-structured one, but utilized retrospection. Each teacher was asked to comment on their use of error correction.

2) Classroom observation on teachers' error correction / error correction type

As a researcher and a non-participant observer, I took field notes, and audio-recorded the lessons. The recorded classroom talk of two lessons for each teacher was analyzed later to study error correction types used, and to analyze how each teacher's beliefs was reflected in their error correction behavior (from Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Mori, 2002). Please refer to table 1 for the definitions of error correction types.

Table 1 Error correction types and definitions

Error Correction	Definitions
Explicit Correction	The teacher supplies the correct linguistic form.
Recast	The teacher implicitly reformulates all or part of a students' utterance, minus the error.
Metalinguistic Feedback	The teacher indicates that there is an error made in the students' utterance and provides direction as to how to repair it using metalinguistic language.
Elicitation	The teacher attempts to have the student provide the correct answer by focusing on specific problem and directly asking the students to answer.

3) Discourse analysis of error correction behavior in the lessons

Classroom discourse analysis was applied to understanding learner errors, teachers' error correction, and learners' repair from teachers' feedback on errors. Extracts from one typical lesson of each teacher were selected. Teacher 1 taught 'future possibilities', including grammatical items, and Teacher 2 taught the 'second conditional'. In each extract, types of error correction were identified and how learner responded to the errors analyzed.

4 Results of the study

4.1 Teacher beliefs regarding error correction: data from interviews - Teacher 1

In the interviews, Teacher 1 referred to the experience of teaching English and also the experience of learning a foreign language to develop his view toward teaching. Teacher 1 believed that self-initiated correction would be one of the key matters essential for learning new language forms:

I think it is a combination of my teaching experience and also my

learning experience as a student am--- a sense of achievement that I get ---- if I can get, actually --- ‘don’t tell me, don’t tell me --- ah this? yes, yoshi!’--- you know, that kind of feeling, I imagine that is the feeling everybody must feel themselves to a certain extent. Everybody must feel if they can do it themselves, am then it must be satisfying a feeling, the feeling I get, and its I think the feeling is only --- I mean some students need a lot more guiding and some students just, this and that and they get it, others--- what, mn--- still don’t know, and help them a little bit more, some need a lot, a lot more guidance. (Interview: Teacher 1, Interview 1)

Also, Teacher 1’s view of self-initiated learning was related to the self-development capacity for learners to learn new language forms: the attempt to develop their language skills through the ‘sense of achievement’. This approach was in consistent with a socio-cultural perspective. As he mentioned:

-----But I still think that even if you, in the end, *almost* give them the answer, but don’t quite, they kind of give it. It’s still better, I think...for them, for their sense of achievement. (Interview: Teacher 1, Interview 2)

In the above comment, Teacher 1’s view clearly supported the error correction within the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development, ‘the domain of knowledge or skill where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning, but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994).

4.2 Error correction types: data from classroom observation - Teacher 1

The distribution of error correction type was well in accordance with the beliefs of Teacher 1. In Lesson 1, Teacher 1 applied elicitation (69.7%), recast (18.6%), and explicit correction (11.6%). In the lesson, Teacher 1 provided the context for the language, so that the learner would clearly understand the meaning of ‘might’ as undecided future. Distribution of error correction in the Lesson 1 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of error correction – Teacher 1, Lesson 1

Feedback type	Teacher 1 Lesson 1 (n = 43)	
Explicit error correction	5	11.6%
Recast	8	18.6%
Metalinguistic feedback	0	0.0%
Elicitation	30	69.7%

In Lesson 2, Teacher 1 found ‘definitely’ more difficult to elicit than ‘might’. Although Teacher 1 initially attempted to provide elicitation, he found that elicitation alone would not work well for the learner. So he decided to include more explicit error correction or recast to allow the learner to notice these more difficult grammatical items. Distribution of error correction in the Lesson 2 is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Distribution of error correction – Teacher 1, Lesson 2

Feedback type	Teacher 1 Lesson 2 (n = 36)	
Explicit error correction	5	13.8%
Recast	10	27.7%
Metalinguistic feedback	0	0.0%
Elicitation	21	58.3%

4.3 Error correction behavior: data from discourse analysis – Teacher 1

In the Lesson 1, the main utterance taught was ‘future possibilities’. From the beginning of the lesson, Teacher 1 utilized inductive teaching. Through meaning-based elicitation, the learner was guided to understand the word related to ‘undecided future’ in the conversation.

Extract 1 – Teacher 1, Lesson 1

1 T: OK, Shall we look at your book? This conversation in your box. A and B

(indicating the part of conversation practice between the teacher and the student) What're you doing next weekend?

2 S: We haven't decided it yet. We ---- We are ---

3 T: We go to Wales or We ---- go to the South Coast.

4 S: We ----

5 T: What're you doing next weekend? Mn -- We haven't decided it yet. Wales?

South Coast? So mm decided? Or not decided yet? Maybe --- Wales?, maybe--- South Coast? (Transcription: Teacher 1, Lesson 1)

Extract 2 – Teacher 1, Lesson 1

1 T: So, we --- will --- go to Wales sounds ---

2 S: We will go to ---

3 T: We --- Not sure not decided it yet, Maybe Wales, maybe south coast, -
--

We ----- We ----- might go to Wales or ---

4 S: Ah ---! We might go to Wales or we might go to South Coast.

(Transcription: Teacher 1, Lesson 1)

Rather than giving the form, the learner had opportunities to activate her thinking for 'undecided future'. As Teacher 1 finally gave the correct form 'might' through explicit error correction 'We --- might go to Wales or ---' (line 3 in extract 2), the learner said 'Ah--!' (line 4 in extract 2), showing she noticed the form 'might' well through this interaction.

4.4 Teacher beliefs regarding error correction: data from interviews – Teacher 2

In his interviews, Teacher 2 indicated that being a teacher trainer was a valuable experience affecting his view. Basically, Teacher 2 shared a common view of error correction with Teacher 1, that self-correction is essential for learners' interlanguage development. Nevertheless, Teacher 2 also referred to the different approaches in error correction during class.

-- the underlying principle is the same, --- it's a self-correction technique, drawing attention to which bits are wrong, --- trying to elicit the correct form without giving it. If they work it out themselves it's more memorable. ----- There is also that kind of indirect, what in my background terminology is called 'gentle correction', which is the way you simply say sentences with the correct form, the student hears it and may say it again. (Interview: Teacher 2 Interview 1)

Although Teacher 2 regarded standard error correction to be elicitation, student self-correction and teacher correction, he believed that implicit teacher-guided error correction, recast, would especially be useful for learners in smaller classes or a learner in one-on-one class to lessen the pressure level and sustain their L2 production.

-- in the sort of standard approach, if you're doing a lesson presenting or revising functional and situational language, during the presentation stage and during the controlled practice stage, the students are supposed to get the full sentence correct. And eliciting technique, self-correction, peer correction, and ultimately teacher correction if necessary are used. But I found especially one-to-one, you have to judge from the student's reaction, body language and general feelings. Is this going to be too stressful if with every sentence I keep stopping and eliciting mistakes to get them right. So I tend to play it case by case. (Interview Teacher 2 Interview 1)

As Teacher 2 had extensive experience with Japanese beginner and lower intermediate learners, he developed beliefs that these learners should develop their readiness and motivation to learn before they develop a capacity for self-correction.

4.5 Error correction types: data from classroom observation – Teacher 2

The distribution of error correction type matches very well Teacher 2's beliefs. In Lesson 1, Teacher 2 applied recast (71.4%), then elicitation (20.0%), and explicit correction (8.5%). In Lesson 1, the researcher realized that Teacher 2 tried to give much supportive error correction. Distribution of error correction in the Lesson 1 is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Distribution of error correction – Teacher 2, Lesson 1

Feedback type	Teacher 2 Lesson 1 (n = 35)	
Explicit error correction	3	8.5%
Recast	25	71.4%
Metalinguistic feedback	0	0.0%
Elicitation	7	20.0%

In Lesson 2, Teacher 2 assessed the learner's capability regarding the learning items, and provided more orientation for facilitating learner's self-correction through elicitation. The distribution of error correction in Lesson 2 is shown in the table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of error correction – Teacher 2, Lesson 2

Feedback type	Teacher 2 Lesson 2 (n = 30)	
Explicit error correction	1	13.8%
Recast	11	27.7%
Metalinguistic feedback	0	0.0%
Elicitation	18	58.3%

4.6 Error correction behavior: data from discourse analysis – Teacher 2

In Lesson 1, Teacher 2 gave the presentation of grammatical expressions inductive manner. In this lesson, use of ‘second conditional’ was taught through conversational practice and recast for the learner error in the conversation.

Teacher 2 taught ‘second conditional’ with ‘What would you do if you ---?’ In the beginning stage of the lesson, the target language form was presented in the inductive manner. The use of second conditional was difficult for the learner.

Extract 3 – Teacher 2, Lesson 1

1 S: What do you ah --- What do you do see a ghost?

2 T: Now we are just thinking, just imagine, --just imagine seeing a ghost. What would you do ---

3 S: What would you do

4 T: What would you do if you saw a ghost?

5 S: What would you do if you saw ghost?

6 T: Very good. Now let’s do a second bit. If you saw a ghost.

7 S: If you saw a ghost.

8 T: Good. If you saw a ghost.

9 S: If you saw a ghost.

(Transcription: Teacher 2 Lesson 1)

In the above extract, the learner made an error ‘What do you do see ---’ (line 1 in extract 3). Teacher 2 briefly gave the learner the elicitation by saying ‘just imagine, just imagine seeing a ghost’ (line 2 in extract 3). Then realizing the difficulty, Teacher 2 provided the learner with right utterance by recast ‘What would you do ---’ (line 2 in extract 3).

In addition, Teacher 2 gave another support by recast ‘What would you do if you saw a ghost?’ (line 4 in extract 3). In this manner, the learner was able to follow Teacher 2’s speech in the use of second conditional (line 5 in extract 3).

5 Summary and Conclusions

Teacher 1 believed that elicitation would be effective for developing learners’ self-correcting capacity. Teacher 2 believed that self-repair would also be desirable, but implicit recast would be useful for beginner level students. The interviews indicated that the two teachers’ beliefs in error correction were in congruence with the approach suggested by SLA researchers.

Teacher 1 utilized elicitation effectively for the learners’ self-repair, while Teacher 2 adjusted his error correction flexibly for the learners’ learning and its difficulty level, as

indicated by classroom observation and discourse analysis. As a result, the researcher concluded that the two teachers' beliefs concerning error correction were well reflected in the error correction behavior observed in the lessons.

Despite some limitations of the study, this research has two major implications. Firstly, the need to increase awareness of teacher beliefs and their error correction practice. Secondly, teachers should assess the teaching approach in their own context, so that they would theorize error correction from their own teaching. In this sense, action research approach may be considered an appropriate teacher education approach.

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A Week of Teacher Supervision with the Pink Slipper Fairy

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This article describes a graduate student's experience of one week of teaching observation and supervision by his graduate school teacher. Thanks to this experience I hope to offer teaching information that is useful to language teachers at all levels. I also include two concrete ways to improve teaching and deepen the understanding of the learning/teaching cycle, which are affective even within the space of a day.

I am an English teacher at Nanzan Boys School in Nagoya. Last summer I started my graduate degree in teaching language at The School for International Training (SIT) in Vermont, America. The degree programme consists of two summers spent in Vermont. Each on-campus segment lasts eight weeks and they are very intensive. Sandwiched in between the two summer trainings is an Interim Year Teaching Practicum (IYTP).

A key component of the IYTP is supervision week. My graduate school promises that a student wherever he or she may teach in the world will be visited and supervised for a week. Last August at the end of the first summer of studying I met with my IYTP supervisor. Her name is Bonnie Mennel and together we decided mid-November 2003 would be the best time for her visit. Bonnie explained that the week would not be a test to check I had remembered and used everything from the summer course. Many valuable elements of the course did indeed appear during our time together however the main point was for the supervisor and student to collaborate on whatever occurred during that week of classes. This ties the supervision experience into the concrete everyday reality of teaching.

I returned to Nagoya for the beginning of the autumn term and continued teaching the Junior High 2nd and 3rd years. In late September as expected Bonnie sent an e-mail requesting a report on my month back in the classroom. The report consisted of three sections:

1. A description of my teaching context and a description of each class I teach.
2. A review of the goals I had set for the interim year.
3. A general check in. This was a space to write about anything of concern in my teaching at that time.

A video of one of my classes was sent in addition. Bonnie asked that before I sent the video I should watch it and add any further comments. Three weeks before her arrival she e-mailed the report back to me. In between my paragraphs she inserted her thoughts on the video, suggestions on what might be useful for us to work on during supervision week and a couple of relevant English teaching books to look at before her arrival. These responses to my report also showed a sensitivity to the teaching situation such as an understanding of the pressure to test at Japanese Junior High schools. Bonnie stressed that "we will be looking closely at your daily classroom practice the nuts and bolts of your teaching".

Although this work had started as a report it had developed into a dialog in which my supervisor gained a better understanding of my situation and teacher thinking. Likewise I now had a clearer sense of the type of suggestions, questions, advice and thought

provoking comments she raised.

Arranging such a week does of course involve a few vital logistical points; reserving a hotel, confirming times of arrival and departure and of course explaining the situation to my school. It was very reassuring that both my head master and the other teachers at Nanzan graciously welcomed her visit. So by the time Bonnie's arrival rolled around on a Sunday in mid-November everything seemed in place.

That evening we met and discussed a little more about my context. We also looked at a top ten list of teaching topics that I wanted to focus on during the week. Included were topics such as security in the classroom, assessment of oral and written work and student correction. I also wanted to work on how to interweave the teaching methodologies I had studied at SIT Vermont into my daily teaching at school.

Bonnie then asked me what were my expectations for the week. It was the one question that caught me totally off guard. This might seem naive but I hadn't consciously thought out my expectations. I knew from the summer course that my school did not always give the answers to questions. Instead teachers posed another question thereby encouraging student autonomy. I therefore didn't expect to easily get all the answers to the secrets of teaching from her. I did however expect to be a better teacher and to know myself better as a teacher but this all sounded quite vague. It was at this point that I realized how much of a new experience the week was going to be. Teachers who have been observed know that just having another teacher sitting in your class is a strange experience and this observer had flown from the other side of the planet to work with me in my teaching reality. I felt as if I had just slipped and was falling off the side of the world. I was falling through darkness.

On Monday after Bonnie had introduced herself in the morning staff meeting we went straight into class. The schedule consisted of five consecutive 2nd year lessons teaching the same material. They started with our usual greetings where students stand up and we say good morning to each other and ask the question "How are you?" In each class Bonnie gave a short self-intro. Every intro was slightly different to the last one. Sometimes she drew a map of Vermont and the U.S.A on the board, sometimes she asked the students questions e.g. how is the weather today? She encouraged students to ask her questions although most were reticent. Then she went to the back of the class, observed and took detailed notes on what happened. The students knew there would be a visitor to watch our lessons. Generally they behaved as normal although it was not normal to have a foreign female with long wavy grey hair and sporting pink slippers sitting at the back of the class.

We used the ten-minute break between classes to discuss what had taken place. Our routine was that I spoke first about the class whilst Bonnie once again took notes. Secondly Bonnie responded to my comments and then we entered a dialog. During these short intervals we planned at least one way to improve the next class. After the first class I noted that there hadn't been enough time to complete the lesson plan. One point Bonnie raised was how long I spent explaining an activity. She invited me to just model the activity with a confident student. This gave the clearest example of what I expected the students to do. It also freed up more time for the students to get on with the activity and more time for me to evaluate their learning. I worked on this in every

class thereby making my teaching smoother and more efficient as the day progressed. During the fifth and final class I shouted at two noisy students who had finished early and would not stop chatting.

After lessons had finished our discussion turned to developing security in the classroom and increased teacher awareness. If I sensed a student might create difficulties how about talking to him before a flashpoint occurs. Ask simple questions outside of lesson time such as how is the class going? Show them the teacher is aware of their presence in a non-threatening manner. Bonnie also offered a couple of ways to use the days lesson material but at a higher level therefore keeping the early finishers challenged and busy until everyone had completed the task. "All classes are multi-level," she said. "So it would be sensible to develop a repertoire of short activities to keep the higher level students challenged whilst others are finishing the original task."

Whilst on the topic of difficult students I said. "In the classroom everything speeds up when I don't feel in control". Bonnie immediately told me to write that down, stressing the importance of knowing yourself as a teacher. She recommended videoing a class as I had already done then choosing a topic e.g. security and making a list of what I do and don't do in the class to create a safe environment for students to develop their English. From the list then decide which behaviours to keep, which to modify, which to throw away and any new behaviours to introduce.

We had spent the whole day either in the classroom or discussing it and we continued over dinner in a nearby cafe. Towards the end of the evening I gave a rundown of Tuesday's classes; again five classes but this time with 3rd year.

That night I fell asleep quickly but woke up early the next morning with big thoughts on my mind. Attending this M.A programme would obviously help me build a career in education. But I also realized it had been a cry for help. During the previous year there were times when I had had little idea of where I was going or what I was doing in my teaching. So far this graduate programme had helped me find some answers in terms of goal setting, teacher awareness, methodologies useful activities and through the online section of the course community building.

The purpose of Tuesday's classes was to prepare students for the end of term oral test. Each student was given a list of questions on their October school trip to Hiroshima. This formed the basis of their speaking test.

The lesson plan looked like this;

1. Greetings.
2. Students read and understand test questions.
3. Students read my example answers.
4. Students write their own answers.
5. Hot Potato (a free practice oral activity using the test questions).

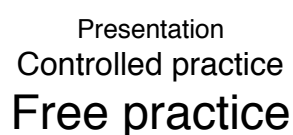
The students were expected to answer using 3rd year grammar and suitable vocabulary. I wanted them to see a good example first so I gave them handouts with my description of the school trip and they had to write answers to questions such as how was Ben's trip to Hiroshima? Once we had gone through the handout students wrote their own answers to the same set of questions. I walked around the class checking for correct grammar usage and spelling.

A few boys read their answers out and then we played Hot Potato, a game where pairs asked each other the test questions whilst throwing a paper ball to each other (please see my article in the spring edition of this magazine for a detailed description of the game). The aim of this activity was to get them speaking at a quicker pace without thinking. As the morning went by the short breaks between classes proved to be precious learning moments.

A major point of the day was how to integrate the three sections of the lesson;

1. Presentation (my handout)
2. Controlled practice (students write and read their own sentences)
3. Free practice (Hot Potato)

Bonnie drew a Pyramid diagram, with "presentation" at the top, "controlled practice" in the middle, and "free practice" at the bottom, like this:



The way we looked at the pyramid was that presentation came first and Bonnie thought it should take a relatively short time. This was then followed by controlled practice of the topic. During controlled practice I could see how well students were coping with the material. Finally the free practice enabled students to develop their self-expression whilst using set phrases.

Bonnie suggested two things. First, reducing the presentation part; and secondly, increasing the controlled practice. We did this so that when it came to the free practice of Hot Potato students felt more confident saying their lines. In the second class instead of giving each student a handout with my description of the Hiroshima trip I read the description to them and they had to orally answer the questions written on the board. The presentation section of the class had now been reduced whilst preserving its original intention of serving as a model for the students.

In the third class Bonnie and I looked at the controlled practice section. After students had written their own responses to the test questions. I wrote a framed sentence on the board e.g.

The best part of _____'s trip to Hiroshima was _____ .

One student read his answer and I filled in the gaps so it looked like this;

The best part of Hiroto's trip to Hiroshima was eating delicious seafood.

The students repeated this two times and then I erased half the sentence from the board. This time in their repetition the students had to remember the missing part. Finally I erased the entire sentence and the students said it from memory. This Bonnie explained is known as erasure technique and it is one way to develop students' confidence as they focus on intonation, rhythm and pronunciation. This whole section of controlled practice gave the students a chance to practice the structured phrases preparing them to say their own original answers to the test questions.

It was at this point in the week that I realized how much my teacher thinking had become dominated by the tests we have to give. Having taught 7 years in Japan the test culture had influenced me. I had forgotten about "real", unpredictable English. I just

wanted my students to pass the tests. A lot of my teaching did not encourage much spontaneity but rather rote replies or first note taking and only then speaking from memory.

An example of this was my class greetings:

How are you ?

I'm fine thank you, and you?

I'm fine, too.

I had always disliked such fixed sequences as a high school student in England. And now I had become a teacher who used them for the sake of getting the class started in an orderly fashion. Bonnie suggested one warm-up activity to get the students listening was just to give commands such as: *Anyone wearing blue stand up. Anyone with an older sister stand up. Anyone who had rice for breakfast stand up* etc. Once all students are standing then start the greetings. Of course the greetings themselves can be varied. *I'm hungry, how are you? You all look great. Are you feeling great? How's the weather? What did you eat for lunch?*

This was exactly what I wanted. Instead of going through the same greetings every class I needed something to wake the students up from the very start of class and get them into a communicative frame of mind. In the fourth and fifth class I started exploring the different ways to open a class. It felt so refreshing.

Bonnie said. "Teach as you test and test as you teach". It is important to name what is being taught and what is being tested. If I encourage student autonomy in class such as the framed sentences then why not make a framed sentence dialog taken from the textbook as the oral test. If I want to encourage spontaneity then develop varied beginnings to class as a way into the main bulk of the lesson and then have this reflected in the tests.

We had worked through the breaks and lunchtime. Bonnie actively listened to my comments on each class and then added her own. We had dramatically changed some parts of the lesson and fine-tuned in other areas. By the end of the day although it had been relentless work I still felt energetic, curious and had a healthy sense of development.

That evening before dinner I went through the notes Bonnie had taken during the day. When we met up I raised a few points that had come up in them. Topics of the day like rehearsed Vs spontaneous English, test preparation and building student confidence. By now, however, after two very full days of English teaching with the spotlight on me I was feeling tired. We switched roles and I asked Bonnie questions about her current challenges as a teacher and her teaching goals and history. It was fascinating to sit back and hear about her teaching experiences, which spanned several decades and countries. I got to know her as a person as well as a teacher supervisor.

Wednesdays schedule was empty. I taught no classes that day at the Boys School. Perhaps because Monday and Tuesday had been so intensely focused on my classroom situation on Wednesday we discussed wider topics such as developing a teaching community at Nanzan. Except for one Japanese teacher of English (J.T.E) there was a lack of communication between myself and my coworker Nick and the

other J.T.Es. Almost all the teachers were too busy or too tired for any extra meetings. Bonnie invited me to visit a J.T.E's class to see how the students were being taught in other English lessons. This could be the basis for a thought-provoking discussion on culture in the classroom and an insight into the J.T.E's goals and challenges. Showing an interest in other teachers' work may well be reciprocated one way or another. We also talked about sharing class handouts with other teachers. Simply put any class handout on the relevant J.T.E's desk thereby making my classes more visible to that teacher. The general idea was SHARE. She also asked me to consider the role students play in a teacher's growth. If students are seen as co-equals and intelligent people then their formal feedback or informal conversations in the corridor offer much value in gauging the efficacy of my teaching.

At one point in the morning I had a chat with a J.T.E around the staff room coffee machine. Usually, he commented, a student goes to the teacher. He found it surprising that this teacher came to the student. He expressed even more surprise that this teacher had travelled so far to work with the student. During the day I spoke with several teachers and it was clear that none of them had come across such personal teacher training before. It was my turn to be shocked when I learnt that in both the public and the private school systems there is minimal if no real teacher training. The other point a J.T.E raised was why did Bonnie come to ALL my lessons. Couldn't she just give you a grade after the first class and leave it there? Having experienced two days of continual teaching progression in my classes I tried to convey the importance of Bonnie attending all my classes but maybe the teacher would need to have seen it in order to fully believe it. Before Bonnie's arrival I too had wondered what exactly she could contribute to the fourth and fifth classes of the day. I had secretly hoped she would take the helm so I could see this master teacher work directly with my students. She never did this although we both agreed it was an available option. Having Bonnie's presence in the classroom felt like having my own fairy-god-mother of teaching to guide me. However knowing her in class supervision lasted only a week she encouraged me to guide myself as much as possible. The best example of this was her encouragement that I took brief notes DURING class. These two or three word reminders would at break time help me concentrate on what was working in the lesson and what wasn't. I took notes on topics such as how the students were responding to the activities and what they needed more practice on. Because I teach the same basic lesson plan in five consecutive lessons using this note taking method meant each class was different and improved. Within the space of two lessons there existed the potential to become a better teacher. Two months after Bonnie's visit it had become a firm habit of mine to walk into every lesson with a small piece of paper and a pen, whatever and whoever I was teaching. I predict it will be a classroom habit of mine until the very last class I ever teach.

We spent some time on Wednesday reviewing the week so far and then moved on to one of the points on my top ten list of topics: How to use the teaching methodologies I had learnt at SIT last summer in my classes. The three methodologies are Silent Way, Community Language Learning and Desuggestopedia. I was particularly interested in the Silent Way. We talked about Silent Way correction methods. We examined when to correct a student, the part correction plays in the classroom and how to correct so that the student feels no shame. Then Bonnie gave me many ideas on how to use Silent Way rods in oral language development. These wooden rods vary in size from the

length of an index finger to finger-nail size cubes. They also vary in colour. That evening I taught my adult learners group at city hall. One way we used a rod was during an activity called "all the voices in the circle". A question such as what is your favourite food was asked. The person holding the rod answered and then when finished passed the rod to the next student. The rod put more focus on the speaker. It helped to keep the other students listening. Other objects like a pen or stone would also suffice.

My favourite rod activity was when a student took a few rods and made a shape with them. We went around the group describing what we saw. Bonnie took some small white cube rods and let them drop onto the black table. One student saw spilt ice cubes, I envisaged spilt rice, another student imagined ant eggs and yet another saw a constellation of stars. Everyone found it fascinating to hear all these different imaginative interpretations of the same thing.

I wanted Thursdays classes to build on the work Bonnie and I had accomplished so far. I also wanted to use the dry, compulsory Nanzan English textbook. We started off with questions about Bonnie; *Who is she? What's her name? What colour are Bonnie's slippers? Why is Bonnie here?* In the beginning I repeated a student's answer because it was too quiet for all his classmates to hear. At first break Bonnie advised that I ask other students if the answer is correct.

In this way the boy answering had to speak louder and more clearly. It also developed a student's inner criteria for correctness. Students decided if the answer was correct and I could confirm this. A few students in the second period quickly became comfortable with this process. If the answer was correct and another student said so I stopped confirming and automatically moved to the next answer. In this way the student knew he had the right answer. This technique is part of Silent Ways checking for correctness and development of student autonomy. For most students these habits took time. Many students still answered in a quiet voice. Bonnie admitted that new habits do take time but if I valued student autonomy (which was on my top ten list at the start of the week) then my effort in the long run will pay dividends. Bonnie described it as a small change in habit but a huge change in student and teacher thinking.

By now I was quite relaxed having Bonnie in my classes. On Monday and Tuesday she had always sat at the back of class observing and note taking. Perhaps she sensed my comfort as a couple of times on Thursday she gave brief recommendations during class. Once she asked me to give a student a little more time to answer and in another class to let a student correct his own mistake instead of me correcting him.

The main part of the class centred around a textbook dialog. The dialog involved two students who were describing their new teacher. Vocabulary such as necktie, friendly and P.E was introduced in this exercise.

The plan we devised for teaching this dialog read;

1. Pre-listening activity.
2. Teacher reads the dialog. Students listen.
3. Students read and repeat the dialog.
4. Shadowing.

5. Students practice in pairs.
6. Students perform dialog in front of the class.

The day before we had discussed how to bring the textbook to life. Bonnie employed the phrase, “activating schema”. This meant before going into the body of the dialog, first set the scene. Make the textbook more alive by giving the characters names and qualities, invent a location too e.g. *“This is a conversation between two boys, Ken and Bob. Ken is a quiet but brave boy. Bob is a big boy who likes reading. They meet in their school corridor in England in the city of Liverpool. They’re going to talk about their new P.E teacher. This teacher always wears a necktie”*.

Holding up a pencil case I asked. *Is this a necktie?* Students said. “No”. Asking a confident student I asked him are you wearing a necktie? The boy said. “No”. *“Am I wearing a necktie?”* Students nodded. This took a little more time but the atmosphere it created made the students wake up and think for themselves. It also prepared them for the dialog and created intrigue about what they were going to study.

Then I read the dialog and students with their textbooks closed listened to my voice. During the second period Bonnie whispered to me to maintain eye contact with the students as much as possible whilst reading. After the class she said students don’t just listen with their ears.

For my students and I activating schema felt like entering a new world. The biggest change to our usual class structure however was shadowing. I had practiced shadowing as a university student in England. Probably for this reason I assumed shadowing was a practice exclusively for advanced students. Once they saw me model it with a student many of the boys comprehended they should speak in a soft voice whilst I spoke in a loud voice. Most, however, spoke too quickly or too slowly. It was chaotic at first. Again Bonnie asked me to be patient as this new practice took root.

As with the Silent Way checking method Shadowing now forms an integral part of my classes and both are fully understood and competently performed by the students. Through the practice of shadowing Bonnie had expanded my belief in my students capabilities. Another way she challenged me to push the students further was in the language I used in the classroom. I spoke about 60% English and 40% Japanese. How about trying 80% English? How about experimenting with 100% English? Bonnie, as an educator likes to “extend the boundaries”

That evening was the only evening in the week when we didn’t meet up for dinner to talk about teaching. We both agreed a break would benefit the process. I went home, ordered pizza, drank coke and slobbered in front of the T.V. It felt wonderful.

On Friday I taught no classes. This empty schedule provided a great opportunity to look at a few new topics, review the week and wrap up. First of all we exchanged views on oral testing – an important part of my job. Then we looked up web sites of English teaching organizations to check out their assessment criteria on spoken language.

Bonnie and I spent some time drawing and discussing a mind map with my name in the middle of it. From that centre branches sprouted out. Each branch had a topic that had

arisen during the week such as “connecting with other teachers” and “modeling - make the meaning clear” and another branch that stated “correction techniques”. This map with its short phrases was a summary of the week. Just looking at that one piece of paper triggered off a myriad of memories, methodologies and teaching ideas to experiment with.

As well as this extensive mind map I also received a copy of Bonnie’s notes on my classes that week. The notes totalled over thirty pages. Each one with fresh observations, comments and tips. One of Bonnie’s characteristics as a supervisor is her attention to detail. In her notes she jotted down the date, class and exact time e.g.

Thursday. 2nd Class.

10.09 Students practice dialog in pairs. As you go around the class what are you noticing? What are you assessing?

In another class she wrote. “*You are still choosing a student to model shadowing who sits close to the front.*” In a later shadowing demo she praised me. “*This was a good demonstration what you did with Masaki made it really clear*”. Bonnie also recorded valuable interactions between myself and the students.

S. Reads answer quietly.

T. Asks S to read again.

S. Reads a little louder.

T. *Yes. O.K. Next*

S. Reads answer.

T. *Again.*

S. Reads louder.

T. *Is he correct?*

Ss. *Yes.*

T. *Yes, correct. Next answer.*

In this way I very clearly saw the role I usually took in class and if so desired these descriptions helped me adjust my behaviour e.g. to increase student autonomy or simply to involve students sitting towards the back of the class in my modelling. The notes also made me realize how much goes on in my classroom and all classrooms. As Bonnie said, “I work on your awareness whilst you work on your teaching.”

My supervisor’s experience gave her great depth of knowledge and impressive flexibility in the classroom. Although there were some situations that appeared complicated or puzzling to me she never said. “Oh well, sometimes an activity just flops. Don’t worry about it.” Together we identified a problem, looked at potential solutions, chose one and then I tried it out in the following class. Our relationship was dynamic, humane and professional.

Her flexibility was illustrated in the fact that I was only one of three M.A students she visited in Japan. First she visited my friend in Nagahama who teaches in elementary school. After Nanzan Junior High she spent a week in Hokkaido supervising another classmate who teaches at the University level. An international supervisor must be able to adapt to a new culture, the week’s schedule, the level of the students and level of the teacher. Bonnie does this in countries around the world.

And so the next day Bonnie flew to Sapporo for her next supervising adventure. My supervision week however was not complete yet. A few weeks later I sent Bonnie a

report on my most valuable learnings of the week and classroom developments since then. Once more she replied to my thoughts in her positive manner. She encouraged my teaching growth, supplied new variations to my ideas and often peppered my teaching mind with simple and profound questions on my classroom behaviour and interactions with the students. In this way the cycle of reports and in class observation was fully realized.

It is difficult to calculate the influence a period of supervision can have on a teacher. We all react differently in certain situations and of course each teacher and each supervisor have their own original characteristics. Most teachers teach alone and this gives a certain intimacy with a class of students. A teacher may feel protective of this world he's created. An external visitor could be perceived as an unwelcome problem.

Two of the fundamental skills a supervisor needs therefore are excellent listening and communication skills. The presence of someone who wanted to listen to my classroom concerns and understand where I intended to take my teaching offered a very powerful, positive effect on my work life and desire to be a teacher.

In previous years at Nanzan sometimes I felt that teaching a class was like wrestling a giant. I came out of it weary and perplexed. I still feel the energy of a giant when entering a class of teenage boys but now I possess more skills in guiding that energy. I aim to lead them to a place that is both valuable for their education and suitable for their developing characters. For these fundamental skills in the art of language instruction I would like to thank my teaching supervisor for the precious role she played.

A summer day's training in Shiga

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Background

Being involved in teacher education gives us the opportunity for various kinds of experience, whether giving and receiving, organizing or participating. In this article, I would like to describe one recent occasion which certainly allowed me to 'give and receive', but where I was a participant rather than an organizer. An initial approach from a teacher in Shiga Prefecture who was organizing the workshops and acting as 'an instructor' led me to be involved in one day of a three day session of workshops for senior high school teachers of English who had completed ten years' teaching experience. Initially, I was to be involved for just half a day, but it was agreed that it would provide a more cohesive and fulfilling experience to be involved for the whole day. The teacher who was organizing it clearly stated his wishes that he'd "really appreciate it if you understand that we are trying to make this seminar attendant-centered." These participants were six teachers who had reached ten years' experience, the organizer plus two more teachers with longer service, and one newly arrived A.L.T. The workshop took place between 9.30 and 5.00 at a senior high school designated as a 'Super English Language High School (SELHi)'.

My Presentation

The question for me in preparing for the workshop was what kind of contribution I should make. Inevitably, we often confine ourselves to our niche, whether it may be elementary, junior high, senior high, or tertiary education. Being involved in each brings its own challenges and insights. Obviously, in teaching at the tertiary level, we see the results of what has already been received at those other levels. While tertiary education was once the apex of an educational pyramid, with wider access and the development of 'lifelong learning', this is no longer the case. One result is hopefully a great equality in status between educators at each level. Therefore, for my initial presentation, which came at the beginning after brief introductions from each participant and which lasted about thirty minutes, I decided to describe my own teaching environment, in terms of variety of classes, student numbers and coursebooks, if only to show that my teaching load was not too far below that of the potentially overworked senior high school teachers! I also decided to take a few related areas of interest and address them briefly under the banner of encouraging 'variety' and 'diversity' in lessons. The areas I chose were:

- 1: English as an International Language, with the need to expose students to non-native varieties or World Englishes (as featured in the Spring 2004 issue of this newsletter).
- 2: English as a Vehicle for Global Issues, as one positive way of providing 'content' in communicative language teaching.
- 3: Lexis, and the need to consider its role more carefully, to ensure that students more easily achieve a greater breadth of vocabulary.
- 4: Speaking out, through the use of strategies to encourage greater assertiveness and less passivity in language use.
- 5: Technology harnessed, through the ways in which developments can be used and including my own experiences working with classes on homepage production and with a computer camera (the latter described at JALTCALL 2004).

6: Testing to reprise, with testing less as a test of memorization and more as a way to truly reprise what has been studied.

7: Writing as a process, to suggest ways that writing can be more truly 'communicative', as required in current senior high school curriculums.

I hoped that I could make a connection with what the senior high school teachers were doing and wanted to do, but gave this presentation without having had the benefit of seeing what they were doing. That was to follow.

Classes on Video

Although there were six teachers, on this day just three presented videos of recent classes. That certainly proved to be an optimum number, avoiding the overkill that might have occurred had all six shown videos, but providing a suitable variety. Each was about twenty minutes in length and ten minutes was given for feedback. Perhaps time pressure for the teachers in making the videos necessitated that the lessons shown were not carefully rehearsed 'one-offs', as can sometimes happen, but genuine 'slices of high-school English life' and each teacher began by apologizing profusely for shortcomings. There was certainly variety. The first featured a 'one-shot' visit by a father and daughter from Australia who knew students through the school's homestay programme. Feedback focused on how much preparation should go into classes involving such visits, often by ALTs and how a balance could be achieved between shy students with better language skills and students whose curiosity outweighed those skills. The second, an 'oral communication' class, team-taught with an ALT, focused on talking about recent experiences, with feedback concentrating on how to assess and check understanding in such oral communication classes in 'real-time'. The third lesson, being a class with third-year students meant the overarching influence of university entrance examinations and involved an intricate dissection of a reading question in one such paper. While participants recognized the constraints engendered at this stage of high school education, feedback considered how more variety and not least, movement, could be achieved in such a lesson and how schema knowledge could be developed to enhance bottom-up skills.

Philosophies and Methods of English teaching

While exchanges of ideas and feedback continued during the break for lunch, the next formal session involved the three teachers who had not shown videos, providing a summary of their philosophies and methods. The first two shared much in common, with considerations of the need to always state each lesson's objectives clearly, to ensure reasonably equal involvement of all students in a class and to assess where the Japanese language is needed or not needed. The second teacher introduced the beneficial nature of '5 minutes of question time' in each lesson, where students have both the opportunity to ask her things they are not clear about and freedom to ask their neighbours. The final teacher provided a contrast. In introducing himself earlier, he had already talked about the challenges he faced at a lower-ranking high school where students might be more interested in smoking than in speaking English. While university entrance examinations may stifle teaching, they do provide motivation. In his case, the absence of the need to pass them can mean the absence of motivation. So, what does he do? Most of all, it is remedial teaching. What should have been learned at junior high school, hasn't been. Although it is nominally an 'Oral Communication 1' course, his response is to replace the assigned coursebook and focus on basic

grammar and dictionary skills. Most of all, enough time is given to allow students to understand, something which seems to have been denied them at junior high school. Feedback for him included ideas, particularly visual aids, for more varied input, projects that could improve motivation by producing 'a product' and a request to consider whether grammar had to be so dominant for lower-achievers.

Working Together

The final part of the day involved the six teachers working in two groups of three on how to teach a lesson revolving around a reading passage on 'dating', or more specifically 'Dating as an important part of growing up.' After time for the teachers to prepare, each group presented a half hour lesson with one of the members acting as 'teacher' and all other participants as 'students'. Although there were naturally variations in how the lesson was organised, both groups and feedback showed that the main objective was not the theme itself, opinions on the topic, or related vocabulary, but raising students' awareness of text organization. Participants certainly benefited from 'taking part', in a way in which they had not done until that stage of the day. Although the initially suggested time was extended, this stage, the most 'hands-on' of the day, might have benefited from more time.

Benefits

I hope that, as I intended, I fitted in with the equality and democracy of the day, in the same way as the longer-serving teachers successfully gave feedback from the standpoint of being 'in the same boat', but for rather a longer time. They managed to be supportive and avoided being over-judgmental. What could have been a nerve-racking time for the six younger teachers genuinely seemed to become a relaxed and enjoyable session. I had focused my initial presentation on 'variety' and 'diversity'. The organization of the day, with four distinct periods allowed this, while what the teachers said and showed, gave me a better insight into the variety of conditions and objectives at senior high school than I would have had just from one visit. It is a time of dichotomy - a period of education which is nominally elective but almost compulsory, and also a time when aims such as greater communicativeness and entrance examination pressures lie uneasily together. I hope that the most enduring legacy from the day will be to utilise my role in contributing to university entrance examinations to at least somewhat reduce that latter mismatch and enhance the development of senior high school English teaching.