

Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG Newsletter

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And Now A Word From...The Editor

Hello and welcome, particularly to any new members, to Volume 13, Issue 3 of Explorations in Teacher Education, the newsletter of the Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teachers (JALT).

In the past I have struggled to find enough articles for the newsletter but this time there were plenty of contributions. I have already received contributions for the next issue too. So thanks to all the members and non-members who have taken the opportunity to contribute something. I'd like to apologize to this issue's contributors because they have been subjected to extremely slow replies during August and September. I was traveling in Egypt and Malaysia where access to the Internet is not really reliable enough to conduct a satisfying editing experience.

This issue has been timed to coincide with the JALT National Conference 2005 in Shizuoka, so to anyone reading this at the conference I hope you enjoy yourselves and I ask you to support some of the TE SIG membership by attending their presentations. Recent contributors to this newsletter and members who are presenting include Anthony Robins (the SIG coordinator), Ben Backwell, Dave Barker, Jim Smiley, Mark Rebeck, William Matheny and Tim Murphey (former editor of this esteemed organ). In addition any members who wish to have a say in the running of the SIG should attend the AGM from 16:20 – 17:20 on Saturday in Room 902 and our forum, 'Can language and culture go hand in hand?', is on Sunday 9th October, from 13:05 – 14:40, in Room 902.

This issue we have four articles and a retreat report. The first article by Jim Smiley, my opposite number at the Materials Writers SIG, 'Testing Teacher Intuition' champions this sometimes-maligned tool. Next, an article by Jane Joritz-Nakagawa is about print on demand for your own textbooks. Darby Stands' article is entitled 'Invisible Hurdles: The role of pragmatics in cross-cultural communication'. The last article, 'Examination of Beliefs about Language Learning: The Case of Japanese University Students learning English', is by Nami Iwaki. The TE SIG Annual Retreat took place from July 30th to August 1st and was a great success. To find out more please read the Retreat Report by Anthony Robins. Membership information as of August can be found on page 10.

Hope you enjoy the issue and the conference.

Simon Lees, Editor.

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Investigating Teacher Intuition

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"Most ELT writers employ their own intuitions, writing textbooks much as they might write fiction." (Helgesen 2000 p13)

Introduction

Helgesen sums up a pervading opinion of intuition as it applies to English language teaching (ELT). Typically, intuition is contrasted with corpus-driven database type knowledge: it is the opposite of precise. This imprecision is to be treated with caution as it is deemed unscientific. When used alongside introspection as a tool for language analysis, any results forthcoming are to be treated with circumspection. Yet this imprecise, unscientific and unreliable tool is invaluable for teachers. Because of it: textbooks are chosen; students are entered into particular exam levels; classroom actions are selected. Given the importance intuition plays in the professional lives of teachers, it is perhaps surprising that the concept of intuition is relatively under-examined in ELT. This article aims to start a dialogue into intuition by presenting a discussion of what constitutes intuition, reporting on a method of measuring it and suggesting how such findings may be of use in developing intuition and grading skills in ELT teachers.

ELT Views of Intuition

A standard definition of 'intuition' gives the following, "Instinctive knowing without use of rational processes" (WordWeb). This definition is unfortunate as it is circular: 'instinctive' is similarly defined as "unthinking" which is synonymous with "without use of rational processes". Yet for all of the circularity present, this non-critical definition resonates as truth due to the juxtaposition of the key terms with that of 'knowing'. The claim seems to be that intuition is a kind of state of knowing which is reached without relying on cognitive operations. If this were to be accurate, intuitive knowing would be unavailable as an object for introspection. This is clearly untrue, and a distinction must be drawn between intuitive judgments and the processes involved in intuitive knowing. The reason for this distinction lies in the fact that judgments, i.e. the results of intuitive knowing, may be stored in the memory and reflected upon later. Intuitive knowing may not be anything more than ephemeral, but judgments based on intuition may serve as a valuable object for contemplation. In ELT, this distinction has not always been realised. Jeffrey and Hadley (2002 p3) contrast 'intuition' with

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'insight'. Their logic of premising the meaning of insight on reflection, and therefore the differentiation between insight and intuition, is appealing but, unfortunately, flawed as intuition is no less susceptible to reflection than is insight. They proceed to limit the boundaries of intuition to "personal assumptions". 'Assumption', therefore, is seen to be pejorative, presupposed to be based on uncritical, unquestioned opinion. Indeed, Jeffrey and Hadley equate assumption with inexperience in teachers and insight with experience. WordWeb offers four separate definitions for 'insight': penetration, clear or deep perception of a situation; a feeling of understanding; the clear (and often sudden) understanding of a complex situation; and grasping the inner nature of things intuitively. That the fourth item relates insight with intuitive processes emphasises the point that these two concepts cannot be prised apart simply. The second and third bring in the related concept of 'understanding'. Without delving too far into the various epistemological arguments surrounding the nature of understanding, knowledge, experience and how they are integrated, the arguments here are that the concepts of intuition, insight, awareness and perception cannot be meaningfully separated, and that as a general indicator of non-cognitive, immediately available information, intuition is as valuable a tool as any.

Murphey labels teacher intuition "professional guessing" (2001 p38). Entrance exam questions may be drawn from "analyse[d] test data" from which "questions [which] worked well" are selected, or they may be made up by professors "using their intuition". *Prima facie*, Murphey's system fits well with current moves to modernise exam writing by subjecting test items to rigorous analysis in the attempt to arrive at better exams. Yet, as with all kinds of analysis, a computer can only provide data. The actual choice of policy of how to use the data must be done by humans. This middle ground position may be restated as "Intuition is an important part of any decision but that intuition is enhanced when coupled with data" (Rudman 1989). Even when intuition appears to be given a more trusted position, doing so apparently must be within a controlled environment. Willis allows teachers to use their intuition freely in the order of the presentation of new lexical items but only after a strict separation based on corpus linguistics has decided upon which lexical items belong in which frequency groupings (Willis 1990 cited in Robinson 1998). Corpus linguistics has the authority, it seems, to place lexical items at the forefront of learning importance, and lexis, once assigned into frequency levels, is "sequenced according to no criteria that are discussed, apart from teacher intuition" (Robinson 1998 p9). Not everyone treats corpus findings as absolute: Cook voices a typical concern, "If the traditional concern of linguistics - language in all its cultural and psychological complexity - could be replaced by a neat computer bank of data, life would be much simpler" (1998 p57), adding a critical remark

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levied against lexis groupings based on frequency, "Something is not a good model simply because it occurs frequently" (p61). Cook's assertion that "this is why our intuition (in effect our random and incomplete access to our total experience of the language) can still tell us facts about the language which can not be evidenced by a corpus" (p59) resonates with the argument in this article both in sentiment and in his analysis of the elements of intuition.

The Value of Intuition

The value of teacher intuition may be seen from an elaboration of the process from which it is derived. Cook's definitional statement provides a useful overview of this process. Another method of viewing the process may be a metaphor taken from grammar instruction theory. The concept of the progress of grammar forms from the early stages of being noticed through being cognitively processed to being proceduralised can be used as a metaphor for the process of intuitive knowledge. The key assumption in this statement is the premise that intuitive knowledge was initially a product of a once realised thought. That is to say, there is always a cognitive basis for intuition. The claim, for example, that a particular level of student should be able to produce a given level of language - as an intuitive judgement - must be premised upon a prior knowledge of similar students and known levels of production. Murphey's "professional guessing" is based precisely on this. One's present intuitive, or "guessing", level is based on the level and quality of one's past reflected experience. If the level of reflection and experience is limited, the present intuitive level similarly will be limited. In process terms, just as a grammar form becomes proceduralised, one's knowledge becomes proceduralised to the point where decisions may be made instantaneously, without forethought, and labelled intuition. This view of intuition accepts the premise that all kinds of knowledge may be compacted and may interact at subtle levels. Another metaphor comes from music. A budding musician may spend literally hundreds of hours practicing scales and other technical exercises. Eventually, music appears effortlessly. This is not to be confused with a simple behaviourist account of physical training. Both the finger actions of the musician and the mental gymnastics of the student grappling with grammar are cognitive based as in both cases the trained psychomotor functions are employed to perform different realisations from the routines practiced. In other words, the application of the training extends to situations beyond the initial experience. The development of intuition follows a similar process where experiences become submerged in the psyche and make themselves felt through less cognitive means. If intuition is viewed as purely impressionistic, based on feelings only, then this cognitive view will not be acceptable. However, it is difficult to imagine intuitive feelings that do not have some basis in past cognitive experience. Dismissing intuition as baseless is analogous to dismissing a person's "total experience of the language"

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and, in our case, also their total experience of language teaching. Rather than do that, it may be far more informative for teachers and writers to value their intuitive judgments and subject them to serious reflection.

Hidden Routes of Intuition

It seems too obvious to say that any decision teachers make may be reflected upon later. However, two important issues may be inferred from this statement. The first refers to the possibility that decisions may not be subject to scrutiny after the event. A belief in diary studies as a method for teacher development (see Bailey 1990; Jarvis 1992; Lowe 1987; Numrich 1996; Woodfield & Lazarus 1998) centres on the need for reflection. It is through reflection that trainee teachers can better understand "their emerging role as teachers" (Numrich p132). Yet, what is missing from such studies is the recognition that unexceptional events, minor successes, procedural normalities and so on are potentially more career-shaping than diary-worthy failures, worries and surprises. Woodfield and Lazarus's purpose for their study was in part "to encourage teachers to establish links, through reflection, between theory and practice in the second language learning process" (1988 p316). From the point of view of intuition understanding and development, what is not remarked on in diaries may be just as or more revealing than what is. An empirical question opens up: is it the ordinary or the exceptional that informs our intuition more? I would suspect the former.

The second issue questions the need for reflection on 'actual' decisions. One main purpose of academic investigation is to analyse concepts without recourse to actualities. In doing so, potentialities may be mapped out before the event. Intuition may be observed not only on past judgments but also on present states. As a tool for investigation, we might imagine our responses to situations without actually needing to experience them. The removal of the necessity of experiential knowledge, replacing it with imagined responses is, of course, premised on the prior existence of experience, hardly suitable for trainee teachers. It is, however, eminently suitable for more experienced ones. Whichever method we adopt to generate source material for the investigation of our intuitions, a fuller analysis becomes more viable when it includes the usual and the unusual, the expected and the unexpected, the real and the imaginary.

In summary, intuition can be seen to be formed from two sources, a bank of unwittingly absorbed procedures and a set of products of prior cognitive states. It represents one's current state of submerged knowledge, and as such, is an immensely valuable guide to one's belief system. This article cannot possibly hope to outline even the most rudimentary uses of

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such knowledge: it can only ask that we question our present rejection of it in our academic lives.

Testing Intuition

Background

In the introductory paragraph, it was stated that pedagogic choices such as textbook choice, teaching method and so on might be based on decisions that are in part intuitive. To this list, we may add interpersonal interactions between students, beliefs about psycholinguistic processes, sociopragmatic choices and so on. The list is potentially endless. Any decision to test intuition, therefore, must be severely limited in scope. The test structure itself will most likely define the kinds of information derived from the study. Before looking at a study in which I test my own intuition, the reasons for such testing must be made clear.

Why should we test our intuition? The definition argued for intuition in this article claims that intuition represents a view of the sum total of our proceduralised experiences, as human beings, as language teachers. Knowing how accurate that intuition is in relation to precise situations must surely be a valuable resource. Even knowing how inaccurate our intuition is is useful as it serves as an agenda for teacher development. In personal discussions, other teachers have commented on how frightening the thought of testing one's intuition seems. This fear may be based on worries about one's confidence in performing professional abilities, or on fear for job security if poor results become public. Yet, the benefits of testing far outweigh fears if the negative points can be seen either in context, or kept private.

The testing structure I used came from the listening section of the TOEIC Bridge Test. Using such an exam limits the test of intuition by confining result data to how the exam itself defines the construct of language learning. In other words, the TOEIC Bridge Test defines language learning as developing a knowledge of simple grammar structures and syntax knowledge, simple collocations, basic socio-pragmatics and the related listening and reading skills associated with real-time cognitive processing of such information. Many other aspects of language learning are ignored including (taking as an example, the five aspects of communicative competence as defined by Celce-Murcia et. al (1997 p144)): at the discourse level, the ability to turn-take; at the linguistic level, the ability to produce language; at the actional level to include trans- and inter-actional (see Brown and Yule 1983), the ability to negotiate meaning; at the sociocultural level, the ability to discern that suprasegmentals indicate pragmatic meaning changes; at the strategic level, the ability to manipulate interlocutor interaction to manage the topic. Teachers will hold intuitive feelings on all of

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these and a great deal more: all of which will be untested although the possibility that intuition into these also plays a role in answering the TOEIC Bridge Test remains a possibility. Finally, the test must be performed in relation to a particular class, level, age, educational background and so on.

Method

The class used in this study was a conversation class with no reading component. This informed the decision to use only the listening section as I only had access to the group's verbal skills. This access was in the form of a 15-week course. The exam came on the last day. There are 50 questions in the listening section of the TOEIC Bridge Test. Students do the exam as normal. The teacher also has a copy of the exam booklet and answer grid. In real time with the audio, students answer the questions. The teacher has access to the same information, but rather than answer the questions, they mark on the answer grid the percentage of class members likely to get each particular question correct. If time permits, also note the likely percentages for the other options for each question. After the exam, collect the answer sheets and collate the marks as usual. In Excel, set up an equation that shows which percentage of the class got each question correct. Here is the one I used: "`=IF('raw_data_sheet'!D$2='raw_data_sheet'!D3,1,0)`". Where cell D2=answer grid, D3=1st student's answer to question 1, 1=if same, show 1, and 0= if different, show 0. Use the equation in a different sheet in the same file. The equation is then copied and pasted for all students and all questions. The result is a sheet showing just 0s and 1s for each student. In the original sheet, prepare a place holder for the A, B, C and D options the TOEIC Bridge Test gives for each question. For each A answer, use this equation, "`=COUNTIF(D3,1)`", for B, "`=COUNTIF(D3,2)`", for C, "`=COUNTIF(D3,3)`" and for D, "`=COUNTIF(D3,4)`". This will count all of the instances of each A, B, C or D score made. Below this, create another set of placeholders for the four options again, and in each cell, use this equation, "`=SUM(D35/31)*100`". ('D35= the cell in which the count of the A scores was placed. 31= the number of test takers.) This will calculate the percentage scores for each question for the class group overall. Compare this figure to the one you wrote down during the exam. By doing so, you can check if your intuition about each question matches that of the class and also the accuracy of your overall scores.

Results

My class scored a class average of 61%. My own intuition-based score for this class group was 57%. Overall, the result was pleasing. However, the generality of statistics obscures some more startling figures. Of the 50 test questions, my prediction was off by over 20% in 17 items and off by 40% in 4 items. The task then was to analyse these items and see what

kinds of knowledge my students had, or not, that I had assumed differently. The task in the long term is to test my intuition over a number of classes, class types, exam structures, ages, backgrounds and so on. In doing so, teachers can develop not only the proceduralisation of their explicit knowledge but also some very concrete knowledge bases which inform their active teaching lives.

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TE SIG Membership Information

As of August 2005 the TE SIG had 157 members. 120 of the members are foreigners, that is, non-Japanese. Five members do not reside in Japan, those members live in the UK, the US and Taiwan. The membership stretches from as far North as Hokkaido and as far south as Okinawa. The best-represented area is, of course, Tokyo with 29 members, while Aichi has 15 members.

Creating Your Own Textbooks The Easy Way

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Introduction

Many teachers like to create materials for the classroom that suit a particular course, their teaching style, and the objectives and learning styles of their learners.

Like other teachers, I have been creating classroom materials for many years. Some materials can be created easily and others take more time. However, I have found keeping track of many handouts and asking my students to keep track of various loose pages is sometimes hard work. Also, I often over-use or over-used the copy machine at school. Frequently, school copying budgets are limited, or copy charges come out of a teacher's own limited "research" budget if she works in a university.

When I give loose pages to students every week, rather than a bound book, students who wish to cannot "read ahead" to see what coursework is coming up. Also, when I wish to have the class refer back to something we did in a previous lesson, often students don't have with them the previous week's handouts, only the current week's, when we are working with loose pages that are easily misplaced or forgotten.

For reasons such as those above, last year I thought I wanted to try to bind my weekly handouts into a book form and present these to the students at the beginning of the term. Also, I thought that students might absorb the cost of handouts by buying the handouts in book form as they would buy a textbook, since our departmental budget for printing and copying is very limited.

I looked into various options but decided on using print on demand technology. I was introduced to Tokyo Shuppan Service Center (to be referred to as TSSC below), as one of its representatives is a former teacher who is a member of an academic society (JASCE) I also belong to. TSSC agreed to take on the work of doing the layout, printing and binding of my teaching materials, as well as cover and paper selection, getting an ISBN number, and working directly with my university bookstore to see that the books arrived when needed to be sold at our bookstore in advance of the term, etc.

Below I will give some information about the four textbooks I created or in one case helped create in a collaborative way.

Overview of four textbooks

To date I have made or co-made four books with TSSC. All of the books contain, minimally, readings in easier English plus classroom activities, in addition to some brief suggestions for using the books found in a preface. Classroom activities emphasize individual as well as cooperative or collaborative learning, active, learner-directed learning, and various multiple intelligences and Myers-Briggs cognitive types. All were designed for Japanese college students, although they might be useful for other learners as well.

Success in English communication

This book, the first I created, was a quickly compiled collection of handouts, thematically arranged, for EFL college speaking courses published under the title 'Success in English Communication' (hereafter, SIEC for convenience's sake). We used simple layout and design so the book could have a modest selling price of 500 yen, despite the small print run. (I receive/received no royalties. The selling price for this book and the ones described below were set to cover the costs of the company that produced the book. This article thus is not a "commercial" announcement.) The 12 chapters of this book had social and global issues themes such as the environment, animal rights, education, gender issues, materialism and others.

Learn to use English, use English to learn

Later, I expanded the first book (SIEC), above, in terms of the content to make it a four skills course, which also includes a listening CD featuring my voice and the voice of two friends, one male and one female. TSSC arranged for the recording of the CD and all the details requiring in producing it (my friends and I merely showed up at the allotted time to read the script) as well as, of course, the tasks needed to produce the printed textbook. This book has the title 'Learn to use English, use English to learn'. I am using it in my English classes this year. This book was the 3rd book I created with TSSC's help. The book price was (is) set at 1000 yen and the CD price 1000 yen, so if sold as a set 2000 yen. Making the CD available to each student allows them to practice their listening at home.

'Learn to use English, use English to learn' has 15 chapters with similar (global issues) themes as SIEC, above, with a few new chapters added and all chapters expanded to include all language skills. Another change was to make the chapters more uniform in terms

of activity types in each chapter, though having variety and balance in activities was kept as a consideration.

Language teaching approaches: current practice and future directions

The second book TSSC helped me with, which I am still using this year, is called 'Language Teaching Approaches: Current Practice and Future Directions'. I made this book because I teach undergraduate courses in language teaching methodology taken mostly by students who plan English teaching careers (also some students specializing in teaching Japanese as a second language can take the courses). I wanted to teach the course in English as much as possible, because these students benefit both from expanding their knowledge of teaching techniques and pedagogical theories as well as from additional exposure to English to help them with their English teaching – including the teaching practicum they do as fourth year students. However, most books available in Japan covering language teaching methodology are either written in Japanese, or are written for native speakers, especially native speaker or native speaker-English level graduate students in TESOL programs. The books geared for native or near-native speakers are a bit overly challenging linguistically for intermediate level English college students in Japan. The books written in Japanese are easy for students to understand, but reading Japanese language books does not help students with their English. Thus, I wrote a book in easier English for Japanese undergraduates enrolled in TESOL courses like my own. The selling price was/is 1000 yen per copy.

This book has 12 chapters. Themes include an overview of traditional language teaching approaches from decades past as well as newer approaches and ideas such as multiple intelligences applied to language teaching, stimulus-based teaching, cooperative learning applied to language teaching, learner autonomy, content-based and task-based approaches and others. Chapter activities require students to test their understanding of teaching ideas, approaches and techniques as well as apply that knowledge by creating such things as lesson plans, classroom activities and course descriptions.

Gender issues today

This book, to be printed and available in September 2005, was a collaboration with over a dozen other language teachers knowledgeable about gender issues. Though my motivation for creating the book was primarily to have a book for my own undergraduate course called Jendaa to shakai (Gender and society), other teachers will be piloting this book, as I will, this fall with their Japanese college students. This book is an intermediate level English introductory content course in gender studies written with Japanese college students in mind.

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The selling price will be 1200 yen per copy. The book has 15 chapters and the themes include gender in relation to poverty, education, language, violence, the environment, and others. The activities in each chapter are varied though each chapter has a uniform plan. Learner critical thinking and creativity are emphasized. Language skills include reading, writing, and discussion. The content focus is international.

Considerations for the teacher wanting to publish teaching materials in book form

I wrote above that I decided to use a print on demand company to handle the layout, printing and other details as described above for the four textbooks referred to above.

The reasons I chose Tokyo Shuppan Service Center, a print on demand company, were: a) I knew someone there and felt I could depend on the company; b) My role was mostly limited to providing an unlaidd-out document via email and proofreading it; c) The turnaround time from the step of providing finished electronic copy to having books printed and delivered is fast (a couple of weeks); d) The company arranges for an ISBN number and other details such as cover design, and working with my school bookstore to handle small or large orders (individuals can also order single copies directly from the company) and e) I could control the content of the finished product, versus having to rewrite the books to fit the demands of a book company that might be different from the needs of my particular teaching scenario. All print on demand companies are not the same. They have various arrangements, so a teacher can shop around to find one which meets her or his needs best.

There are also alternatives to print on demand publishers. One is to go to a printer. In this case however you would have to do more work yourself, including, for example, arrange to have a camera ready copy to be printed (arrange to have the layout done yourself or do it yourself).

Some teachers approach conventional publishers. If you approach a conventional publisher you will need to allow more time for your idea to be printed up as a finished product. Also, you will need to work within the publisher's wishes and guidelines in order to have a finished product acceptable to the publisher.

As mentioned above, the current arrangement I have with TSSC does not allow for any payment for myself (or my co-author/editor collaborators in the case of 'Gender Issues Today'), but my (our) motivation for creating the books was not economic. The book selling

prices could perhaps be reduced in the future if the books would be ordered in larger quantities. To date only modest print runs have been done for these books.

Considerations for setting the selling price were to give as low as possible a cost to students but with reasonably attractive and easy to read design, and, of course, cover the time and expense of materials and personnel needed to do the layout, printing, etc. The teacher who is working with a print on demand company, or a printer, in order to keep the cost to the student down can adjust the design, type of cover etc. -- the plainer, the cheaper, and the less staff needed (the more the teacher can do on her own), the cheaper the product can be.

Student feedback on the textbooks

I received very positive student feedback on the three textbooks (the fourth one has not yet been used with students at the time of writing, but is expected to be used for the upcoming fall 2005 semester, so no feedback is yet available for that one book). Student comments referred to the three books being easy to read, easy to understand, useful and fun to use.

My own satisfaction with the textbooks

Of the 3 books, which I have been able to use to date, I am very satisfied with the results. Although it did take time to prepare the text for the books, during the school year I did less making of handouts and our school university budget is less taxed; my students and I do less work than we did organizing loose pages; and students who want to can easily review previous lessons or look ahead to future ones by having a bound complete set of handouts at the onset of the term, versus weekly loose pages of handouts. Also, I have had a good experience with this company; they have proved to be reliable for my needs.

Conclusion

I recommend any teacher wanting to provide self-created materials in book form for her students to consider a print on demand company or use a printing company if: the materials are needed quickly; economic gain, prestige and publisher company marketing efforts on behalf of the book are not considered important/essential; and, the author wishes to have control over the content of the published work. However, teachers with other concerns might consider a different approach to getting her/his classroom materials published.

If anyone wishes to obtain a copy of any of the books above, single copy and bulk orders can be ordered directly through Tokyo Shuppan Service Center via Mr. Kawamura. His email address is <kawamura@c-enter.co.jp>.

Invisible Hurdles: The role of pragmatics in cross-cultural communication

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Language teachers are recognizing more and more the importance of helping students acquire the essential skills and awareness of the pragmatic characteristics of a target language. It is widely accepted now among linguists that sufficient knowledge and command of pragmatic aspects of a language, together with proficiency of syntax and vocabulary, is indispensable for speakers to communicate their intended meaning successfully. Likewise, in the role of listeners, students sensitive to the pragmatic characteristics of a language can more accurately decipher the intended illocutionary force of a speaker and thereby diminish the chances of miscommunication. Additionally, social relations may proceed more predictably and effectively when interlocutors have a mutual understanding of the speech events and speech acts that are conventionally tied to a particular language and by extension to a particular culture.

Although investigation into grammatical structures and vocabulary of various languages has a long history and has produced quite detailed accounts, researchers are still challenged by the seemingly more complex task of identifying specific pragmatic characteristics and functions. The difficulties are compounded by the fact that pragmatics deals partly with parameters of speech, such as pitch and intonation which, until relatively recently, could not be as accurately measured or recorded as sentence structure or individual words. Perhaps more significant is the fact that it is much harder to extract or isolate pragmatic features from their relation to wider cultural values and practices associated with the language. This point presents a challenge to the teachers as well. In order to facilitate development of a learner's metapragmatic ability (cognitive ability to rationally assess how and why particular pragmatic features are employed in a given context) it may be necessary to reveal for the sake of analysis and comparison, beliefs and values held by learners.

A learner's meaning is especially vulnerable to misinterpretation if he or she is quite competent with grammatical features of the language but lacks appropriate pragmatic proficiency. Many listeners would presume the speaker has the ability to 'say what she means'. The listener would not recognize pragmatic failure as such and the speaker's intended meaning would be misjudged. An example of research related to this, involving native speakers of Japanese and Korean will be given below.

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Following are some of the ideas stemming from linguistic and social studies that have contributed to the development of pragmatic theory, in particular those which have been applied (or misapplied) to cross-cultural situations. Generally, I follow the meaning of 'cross-cultural' defined by Thomas (1983) as "any communication between two people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background. (Thomas 1983:91). For this paper the focus however, will be on situations involving native, non-native speakers with some examples of exchanges in which pragmatic failure occurs between native speakers of Japanese and English and a description of one study involving speakers of Japanese and Korean. In order to discuss the possible causes of such miscommunication, some points of comparison and contrast between cultures will also be briefly, and tentatively, outlined.

To more accurately identify the types of pragmatic failure which can occur, I follow the classification outlined by Thomas (1983) that categorizes such failure as being either of a *pragmalinguistic* nature (her term) or a *sociolinguistic* type (from Leech 1983:10-11). She defines the terms in the following manner:

...while pragmalinguistic failure is basically a *linguistic* problem, caused by the differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force, sociopragmatic failure stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate behavior. (Thomas 1983:99)

In the final part of this paper, a few pedagogic considerations regarding both types of pragmatic failure in connection with learners of foreign languages are discussed.

The 'Cooperative Principle' as introduced by Grice in the 1960's and the Gricean 'maxims' which have come to be associated with it, have often been used since then as one basis for analyzing or helping to describe the processes that take place in speech events and speech acts. The general assumption of the principle is that people are inclined to be cooperative when communicating. However, Green (1989) among others, has pointed out that it is more accurate to describe cooperation as occurring simultaneously at 'surface' or 'deeper' levels, meaning that people may appear to be cooperating outwardly but in fact have opposing goals or purposes which are not immediately apparent. This is one of many factors that potentially cause miscommunication especially in cross-cultural situations. *Which* conduct or behavior would be considered 'cooperative' is also relative.

The maxims are descriptions of the characteristics of speech in conversation that reflect the principle being enacted in rational conversation. The maxims described by Grice ((1975) quoted in Green 1989:88,89) are: Quantity - 'Make your contribution as informative as is required', Quality- 'Try to make your contribution one that is true', Relation - 'Be relevant', Manner - 'Avoid obscurity of expression'. The wording of the maxims in this manner might suggest that conformity to these 'rules' somehow involves or requires conscious effort on the part of the speaker. In fact, it is more generally the case that speakers *habitually* follow the speech conventions and particular social patterns associated with the culture of which they are members.

It has been observed that speakers are just as often in violation of the maxims as they are in conformity with them. A partial explanation for this is that speakers rely on speech strategies that allow them to maintain prescribed social relations. If asserting your meaning in a direct manner would cause a breach of social etiquette and consequently fail to produce the desired result or effect, another way must be used.

In theory, all participants engaged in conversation tacitly understand and abide by the cooperative principle. If that is so, using a strategy of *implying* meaning, by speaking in a manner that obviously violates one or more of the maxims (and thereby the cooperative principle), could have more success. By recognizing that the speaker has in some way violated a maxim, the listener can then consider why the speaker did so. Implicature also gives the speaker room to affirm or deny a listener's interpretation of the meaning intended. Of course it is possible the listener will misinterpret the speaker's implied meaning, however in conversation involving people of a similar cultural and language background, the chances of miscommunication are somewhat reduced. In cross-cultural situations there is a much higher probability of error in correctly interpreting a speaker's meaning. Reasons for this will be discussed below.

Grice's maxims as originally presented were at first considered general enough to also be applied cross-culturally. However more current research, especially in the area of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, argues that cultures do not necessarily value equally all the qualities of speech defined by the maxims. For example, whereas in one culture 'directness' is considered appropriate, in another *indirectness* may be more highly esteemed. In addition to variation in speech strategies, another frequent point of difference between cultures is the concept of what, in fact, constitutes 'a speech event'. Moreover, what are the driving forces behind the conversation? For example, is the priority of the participants

to uphold a perceived social status, to save face or to avoid commitment?

Pragmatics is concerned with language use and how meaning is created and conveyed between participants in particular contexts. Sociopragmatic failure can occur when a speaker's conventions for language behavior are based on different values or beliefs than the listener's. They are culturally conditioned to regard certain speech acts and events as appropriate. Differences may involve concepts of politeness, social status, group association and others. Language learners often filter their use of the target language through concepts and assumptions on which their native language is based.

One convention of speech in Japanese requires the use of a more polite form of speech when taking one's leave of a person of 'higher' status. Status of a listener in relation to a speaker is determined in a variety of manners and to various degrees in Japanese society. The positions of status are not in every case fixed and may change over time. Status can follow along the lines of age, position in an organization, family, how long or how well one has known the listener and many others. Specific forms of speech including vocabulary, grammar, intonation and pitch are associated with relative degrees of politeness.

In some instances where a speaker will depart in order to do something, it is polite to relate that he or she will do so by using a question form. The question would *appear* to be a request for permission to leave. "Kaimono ni itte kitte mo ii desu ka?" "Would it be alright if I go shopping?" In fact there is no call for the listener to *grant* permission to the speaker. A response might be "Itte rasshai" "So long, see you later". When a Japanese speaker maps these concepts of politeness and speech onto English, "Is it all right if I go shopping?" English-speaking listeners often understand this as a request for permission and are perplexed with the need to be asked. A listener might respond with "Well, sure. It's okay with *me*." The listener would equally be taken aback on hearing this response and know some kind of miscommunication has occurred.

Another point of cultural difference involving relative social positions and conventions of speaking revolves around the idea, very prevalent in Japan, of people belonging to either an 'inner' or 'outer' circle in relation to the speaker. All people with whom the speaker is associated fall into one or the other of these categories. Family, friends and co-workers could potentially be included in one's "inner" circle. The conventions of speech used to address these people are less formal than those used with members of the "outer" group. For example, with an inner group member, one might use an informal, simple form of a verb

('iku'=to go) and informal question marker (no). "Doko ni iku no?" "Where are you going (?)" With an outer group member a more formal, polite style is required. "Doko ni ikimasu ka?" What is potentially confusing for the learner of Japanese is not so much the forms of grammar required, but trying to figure out *which* group (inner or outer) people belong to. Using the improper manner of speech with either group can cause awkwardness or misjudgment of the speaker's intentions. On the one hand, it could strike the listener as being quite rude or on the other, sound as if the speaker is trying to create more social distance between herself and the listener.

Pragmalinguistic failure results when speaking conventions, used to convey meaning or illocutionary force from the learner's native language, are mapped onto the target language. Specific articulation of pitch and intonation in speech is sometimes crucial to accurately express meaning and illocutionary force. Pitch and intonation can signal speaker's emotions as well. A particular intonation of a sentence in a speaker's native language could signify anger, frustration, elation and so on. If the speaker maps this intonation pattern onto speech in the second language, there is a potential for miscommunication. The same intonation pattern in the second language could signify a different meaning or emotion. A speaker's illocutionary force is misinterpreted. Consequently, the listener's reaction might not be what was expected. The listener also might feel confused or emotionally hurt. As stated above, misinterpretation is even more likely to occur when speakers' proficiency with grammar and vocabulary is high, but they lack sufficient knowledge or control over aspects of pitch or intonation.

A study by Kai et al (2000) looked at problems of intonation and pragmalinguistic failure involving Japanese native speakers of Japanese and learners of Japanese whose native language was Korean. The study was designed to see if the students were able to correctly judge the illocutionary force of recorded utterances of native speakers. In further research (not yet published) the ability of the learners to accurately reproduce the intonation patterns was investigated. The Korean students all had a high degree of proficiency with Japanese grammar and vocabulary.

The utterance 'Awanai no' in Japanese can have numerous meanings according to the intonation it is given. It could be a question or a statement. Particular intonation patterns of the utterance also indicate, to native speakers, specific emotions of the speaker. For the first study, a number of native speakers were recorded saying the utterance, using different intonations to give it the following illocutionary force:

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- as a declarative with dissatisfaction
- as an interrogative with criticism
- as a simple declarative
- as an interrogative

For the follow-up research, the learners were likewise asked to say the utterance in a way that they *believed* would convey the specified illocutionary force.

The results of the experiments indicated in the first place that the learners could not in many cases distinguish accurately the illocutionary force of the native speakers. Secondly, the students often did not produce accurately the intonation required to convey a specified meaning. Native speakers listening to the learners' utterances then misjudged the intended illocutionary force because it was not spoken in an accepted, conventional way. The data were also analyzed by comparing the differing intonations by measuring their waveforms. The authors suggested that the experiments indicate a need to devote more time and attention to practice with pragmatic aspects of Japanese if learners are to communicate successfully with native speakers.

Kaspar (1984) has suggested that students need to focus on developing skills related to top down analysis of the context and content of a speech event when involved in conversation. Instead of interpreting from a word meaning level and building up, the student starts with clues associated with pragmatic features of the language. Kaspar also suggests the importance of students being able to activate 'frames' of reference that pertain to the various divisions of context mentioned above. By activating frames of specific knowledge about things such as cultural conventions of speech events or speech acts, learners can more accurately analyze the situation. They would then have a clearer idea of how to speak and behave.

Another idea for increasing students' ability to control pragmatic characteristics of intonation or pitch advocated by some instructors is to have students act out dramatic scenes in which specific control of speech is required. This brings up another issue that attention to specific speech behavior is more time-consuming especially if individual assistance is given. It might not be feasible with a large class.

As yet there is no conclusive evidence that students are any more sensitive about pragmatic

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correction than correction regarding, for example, syntax. Teachers nevertheless need to stress to students that it is only *awareness of* these culturally- bound features of speech acts and events that is crucial in building overall language proficiency. Whether or not the values and beliefs to which these pragmatic features are bound are in any way deficient, morally questionable or invalid is not an issue.

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Examination Of Beliefs About Language Learning: The Case Of Japanese University Students Learning English

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study that investigated the beliefs about language learning of first year Japanese university learners of English. The primary aim of the study was twofold: (1) to describe the beliefs about language learning of first year Japanese learners of English; and (2) to compare the belief difference between high and lower-level students.

Introduction

Language learners bring “a complex set of attitudes, experiences, expectations, and learning strategies” (Sakui and Gaines, 1999, p. 474) into the classroom when learning a foreign language. One of the most significant variables that they bring to the classroom is beliefs about language learning. This refers to learners’ beliefs or opinions regarding various aspects of language learning, including “foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation” (Horwitz, 1987, p.121). Young (1991) cited learner beliefs about language learning as a major contributor to language success. She noted that when unrealistic beliefs and the reality of language learning clash, students experience frustration that could lead to anxiety.

Learner beliefs influence learners’ behaviors, use of strategies, motivation and their affective states such as anxiety and confidence. As Ellis (1994) suggests, beliefs affect both linguistic outcomes, for example, changes in competence, knowledge and skills in some aspect of the target language and non-linguistic outcomes such as changes in reactions to the target language, the situation, and factors associated with the target language. Studying learners’ beliefs about language learning is important because these may be the basis of students’ expectations for and commitments to successful language learning.

To investigate student beliefs regarding how best to learn a language, Wenden (1987) interviewed twenty-five adults in advanced level ESL classes. She categorized the responses into three main groups, and found that each group represented a distinctive approach toward language learning. Statements in group one stressed the importance of using the language naturally and regularly. The major concern for this group was the authenticity of language

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use. In group two, on the other hand, statements reflected personal factors such as emotional aspect and motivation. The last group seemed to be concerned with the importance of formal language learning. These results led Wenden to conclude that learners use learning strategies consistent with their beliefs. For example, students who emphasized the importance of using the language tended to use communication strategies while those emphasizing the importance of learning about the language focused on cognitive strategies and their main concern was studying grammar and memorizing vocabulary. This study indicated that beliefs have profound effects on some language learners.

It is said that an individual's personal experience such as having been abroad, previous language learning experience, and familiarity with the target language also influences learner's beliefs (Tanaka and Ellis, 2003). Experience of learning a language in a different environment may lead learners to adapt different beliefs, learning styles, change their existing beliefs, or form a new one. In other words, the relationship between beliefs, behaviors, and learning outcomes is an interactive and dynamic one. Studies also have found that beliefs are culture-bound. According to Foss and Reizel (1988), beliefs derive from cultures, families and are also picked up unconsciously from life experience.

Several studies have been conducted with Japanese EFL learners (Sakui and Gaines, 1999; Tanaka, 2000; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003). Studies reported that Japanese university EFL students thought that English classes should be enjoyable, but in general, they did not find them so. The students also believed that listening to the radio or watching TV in English was important for learning English. However, many students also reported preferring traditional teaching methods involving a teacher-centered approach and a focus on accuracy. Also, they indicated that speaking English made them nervous, and they held negative beliefs about how successful they could be.

With English being the international language and schools stressing the importance of English more than ever, knowledge of the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning (in this case, English) will provide teachers with a better understanding of their students' expectations, commitments, and all other beliefs related to English achievement. This research examines some of the beliefs held by first year Japanese university EFL learners at the beginning of the year. The research questions are: (1) to describe the beliefs about language learning of first year Japanese learners of English; and (2) to compare the belief difference between high and lower-level students.

Method

The Participants:

Participants in the research were first year university students majoring in English at a Department of British and American Studies in central Japan. All students are required to take an oral communication course, which is held three times a week. The survey was conducted in the oral communication class at the beginning of April when the first semester at the university began. One hundred and twenty-seven students, one hundred and four female (81.9%) and twenty-three males (18.1%) completed the questionnaires designed for this study.

Instrument

To identify language learners' beliefs in a systematic way, Horwitz (1987) developed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). This scale intends to measure 1) Foreign Language Aptitudes, 2) The Difficulty of Language Learning, 3) The Nature of Language Learning, 4) Learning and Communication Strategies, and 5) Motivation in the Foreign Language classroom. It consists of thirty-four statements, each of which is answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (a) strongly agree, to (c) neither agree nor disagree, to (e) strongly disagree. All students enrolled in Oral Communication I were given a BALLI in during class time.

To compare BALLI results by means of test scores, students were streamed into three proficiency groups based upon scores from the past forms of the Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension (1972) that they took at the beginning of the year. Students who were one standard deviation below the mean were designated as the low group while those who were one standard deviation above the mean were classified as the high group. All others were placed into the middle proficiency level.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What beliefs do Japanese university students have about learning English?

As Table I indicate, with respect to the mean scores of the responses to items in the BALLI questionnaire, item 20, "It is important to practice in the language laboratory" was the highest. Since students must take language laboratory class three times, and are told that it is a demanding class, students agreed that it is an important part of their English learning to practice in the lab. This was followed by item 16, "It is important to repeat and practice a lot". They support the traditional view of importance of repetitive practice for learning. A third item

reflects the fact that with English being the internationally used language of communication, students know if they learn to speak English, they will have many opportunities to use it- for example, making English-speaking friends, traveling, or even watching or listening to English movies and songs. This item may also reflect how having English skills help one to find a job in Japan. Many companies require high English test scores and conversation skills for sending people overseas, promotion, or just getting a job. Therefore, these students are aware that if they know English, there will be a better opportunity of finding a job.

The fourth item reflects the age/language acquisition relationship. Many students believe that it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. Indeed, research has indicated that older learners may perform more poorly than young adults on a variety of cognitive tasks and that the capacity to speak a second language without an accent severely deteriorates with age (Salthouse and Somberg, 1982). The reasons for these are that adult learners tend to be more cautious and they tend to place greater emphasis on accuracy than younger learners.

Order	Table 1. Beliefs with Higher Mean Scores (N=127)	Mean	SD
1	20. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	4.72	0.49
2	16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	4.68	0.47
3	22. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	4.57	0.61
4	1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	4.13	0.79
5	7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the FL	4.10	0.80
6	10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	4.09	1.02
7	5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	4.01	0.84

A common belief among language learners and educators is that the best way to study a language is to live in a country where the language is used. The fifth and sixth items illustrate such a belief. This is reflected in the large number of Japanese that go to English-speaking countries to study English every year. Also, many Japanese universities have established study-abroad programs that “combine a period of residence in another country with classroom-based language and/or content area study” (Freed, 1995, p.5) in order to improve students’ language ability and academic knowledge as well as their cultural awareness. The last item, “I believe I will ultimately learn to speak English very well,” points out that this group of students is quite optimistic and has an ideal image of themselves. Teachers should keep this enthusiasm in mind and make efforts not to let these attitudes deteriorate.

Table 2 shows the beliefs of students with lower mean scores, from greatest degree of disagreement. “You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly” was the lowest of all the items. Japanese schools’ English courses used to be criticized for putting too much emphasis on structure-oriented and grammar-based lessons. Since these lessons lack communication activities and interactions among students, students were often reluctant to speak in English. To compensate for this, the Ministry of Education launched a new English program composed of Oral Communication to all the high schools several years ago to encourage students to cultivate more positive attitudes toward communication in English. All students who now attend universities have received education under the newly introduced system. The fact that item 8 scored the lowest may reflect this aspect.

Order	Table 2. Beliefs with Lower Mean Scores (N=127)	Mean	SD
1	8. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	1.28	0.51
2	28. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning FL	1.82	0.84
3	32. Japanese are good at learning a foreign language.	2.28	0.69
4	13. If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years,	2.50	1.05
5	5) You cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day 27. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	2.72	1.00

However, this group of students did not believe that Japanese are good at learning English. This contradicts with item 5, since students seem quite optimistic about learning English. How to interpret this result is difficult, but this could be understood as Japanese may not be good at English, but through studying and hard work, they will “ultimately learn to speak English very well.”

The results also reflected that fact that many students are quite realistic. They disagreed with item 28, “People who are good at math and science are not good at learning FL” and also 13, “If someone had spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?” In Horwitz’s survey in 1988, 37% of the students believed it would only take them one to two years to become fluent in another language by just spending one hour a day. Also in Kern’s (1995) study, 40% of students agreed that they would learn a foreign language within 1-2 years. Such unrealistic and incomplete ideas about the language learning process can deteriorate the students’ motivation when their expectations go unfulfilled or when the preferred learning strategies fall short of producing desired results. However, this study

showed this group of students does not hold such false beliefs (for the full result, see Appendix A).

Research Question 2: Does any difference exist between high and low proficiency students?

T-tests were conducted to examine the differences between the low and high proficiency learners. Studies have shown proficiency affects learners' motivation, attitudes, and beliefs (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). However, for this study, there were only few differences among the different proficiency level students. Of 33 questions from BALLI, only 7 questionnaires were found to have a significant difference at $p < .05$. For most of the questions, differences were not significant (see Table 3).

Table 3. Means by higher (n=44) and lower (n=41) students			Mean	SD	t (85)
	1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	low	4.05	0.71	1.96*
	high	4.34	0.71		
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a FL.	low	3.05	1.02	2.36*	
	high	2.57	0.85		
3. Some Languages are easier than others.	low	3.32	1.08	2.01*	
	high	3.75	0.99		
4. English is: 1) a very difficult language 2) a difficult language 3) a language of medium difficulty 4) an easy language 5) a very easy language	low	3.68	0.76	2.93*	
	high	3.19	0.79		
14. I have an English aptitude.	low	3.22	0.76	2.53*	
	high	2.77	0.86		
25. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English.	low	3.27	0.84	2.42*	
	high	3.70	0.82		
28. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning FL	low	1.59	0.59	2.03*	
	high	1.95	1.03		

* $p < .05$

Discussion

In this study, there were two findings concerning the beliefs of EFL learners. First, this group of students generally seemed to hold relatively realistic beliefs about learning English. They believed that they will ultimately learn to speak English very well and everyone can learn to speak English eventually. They seem to know that this does not come easily, but through studying. They also think it is better to study English abroad and it is necessary to learn the culture in order to acquire English skills. They also seem to be motivated about learning English as well as foreign cultures and studying abroad.

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One of the reasons for their motivation toward English is due to their will to learn English. These students belong to the Department of Foreign Language Studies, and they chose to learn English. To them, English was not an elective course that many students take unwillingly for their credit. Since oral communication teachers are all native speakers of English, learning English by means of interaction with native speakers may have also motivated them to learn English as well as being interested in learning their culture. This also reflects the current language pedagogy, such as the communicative approach. Although learners who were motivated do not always seem to do their best in learning English despite their wish for learning, the same relationship has also been demonstrated in other research (Takanashi, 1990; Tanoue, 1995). Another interesting point that Green and Oxford (1995) implied is that women like authentic and social communication more than men. Since the subjects for this study were mostly female students, their explanation may apply to this, that learning English may be attractive and fashionable.

On the other hand, however, students had a pessimistic view of their own aptitude, such as scoring low on "I have English aptitude" and "Everyone can learn to speak English." These results support some of the previous investigations of Japanese university students having a negative attitude or the tendency to underestimate their ability (Takayama, 2002; McLaughlin 2001). In a study of Japanese students' foreign language anxiety, Hojo (1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996) found that most of her Japanese subjects, no matter how well prepared they were, reported speaking anxiety. This tendency was consistently observed in her later studies with different subjects learning English at university.

Concerning the second research question, no significant difference was found between the high-scored students and low-scored students. This result was interesting, since studies have shown proficiency affects learners' motivation, attitudes, and beliefs (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). The reason for this may be due to the time the questionnaire was administered. Since BALLI was handed out at the beginning of the year, nervousness due to unfamiliar surroundings had a much stronger affect on them than considering about beliefs when answering the questionnaire. Results might have been different if the questionnaire were administered after students had got used to the class.

Conclusion

In this study, the beliefs of EFL learners were investigated. First, the study found that students had quite realistic beliefs about learning English. On the other hand, in spite of their

will for learning, it was assumed that they did not believe in their ability to learn. No belief differences were found between high and lower level students. Kern (1995) conducted a study with the BALLI to see if his learners' beliefs changed over time. He found very little change over the whole semester and concluded that learners' beliefs do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods and that learners' beliefs were "quite well entrenched" (p.76). This may apply for the result where there was no difference between the two groups of students who had similar beliefs, regardless of how different their proficiencies were.

Awareness of the assumptions that learners bring to the classroom can help teachers to become realistic in setting goals and understanding students' frustrations and difficulties. Recognizing such beliefs could allow teachers to provide more effective guidance to students in their efforts to learn a foreign language. Studies on beliefs suggest that there's sometimes a belief gap between teachers and students. While beliefs have profound effects on all aspects of language learning on students, it is just as true for instructors, suggesting that students and teachers together bring their unique set of beliefs to the classroom. When learners and instructors hold different beliefs about language learning, it may result in failure to understand each other correctly in the classroom. In Japan, many English teachers are native speakers of English. Some grasp of this study's results of the Japanese students' beliefs may help teachers to reduce potential classroom conflicts that may stem from mismatch in teacher-learner language beliefs.

Further study on factors such as gender, overseas experience, and their previous language experiences should lead to deeper understanding of students' beliefs toward language learning.

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Appendix A: BALLI full results

	M	SD
20. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.	4.72	0.49
16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	4.68	0.47
22. If I get to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	4.57	0.61
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	4.13	0.79
7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the FL	4.10	0.80
10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	4.09	1.02
5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	4.01	0.84
33. Everyone can learn to speak English.	4.00	0.89
29. In my country, people think that it is important to speak a foreign language.	3.91	0.87
12. It's o. k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	3.65	0.78
18. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be hard to get rid of them later on.	3.62	0.86
3. Some Languages are easier than others.	3.62	1.06
30. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.	3.56	0.99
23. It is easier to speak than understand English.	3.54	1.12
21. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	3.52	1.09
25. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from English.	3.50	0.85
17. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	3.47	1.06
4. English is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) A language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language	3.45	0.73
26. If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.	3.31	0.96
24. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.	3.24	0.95
6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	3.17	1.04
9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language	3.17	0.93
19. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	3.10	0.85
15. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	3.09	1.00
31. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	3.08	0.98
14. I have an English aptitude.	3.02	0.82
11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speak English	2.97	0.95
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a FL.	2.89	1.03
27. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	2.72	1.00
13. If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) You cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day	2.50	1.05
32. Japanese are good at learning a foreign language.	2.28	0.69
28. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning a FL	1.82	0.84
8. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	1.28	0.51

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The Teacher Education Summer Retreat

Anthony Robins

This year's summer retreat took place in Aichi on the last two days of July, with the first day, a Saturday at Aichi University of Education and the second, Sunday, at the Aichi International Expo. The timing was not to everybody's taste but it did succeed in one of its aims, which was greater inclusivity allowed by this 'window' in the busy schedules of Japanese schoolteachers. The retreat was attended by 16 participants made up as follows:

Japanese: 11 Foreigners: 5
University and college faculty: 7 Schoolteachers: 5
Past students: 1 Current students: 3

I opened the Saturday session by introducing some of the key issues to be addressed in the subsequent presentations and discussions, as well as the Expo visit. The key issues included the effect on teaching cultures resulting from the changing role of English for learners, as the language is increasingly seen as 'a lingua-franca' used between non-native speakers rather than just as a means to communicate with native speakers. Related to this is the risk of marginalization of other foreign languages and their cultures, such as German, which have traditionally been taught in Japan. The issue of what depth and type of cultures can and should be taught was also raised, in relation to the move away from 'high culture' to 'popular culture' in both course and test content and connected concerns with 'dumbing down'.

All the issues are interconnected and reference to the previous one raised the question of whether content about cultures should be introduced in the mother tongue or the target language, particularly at the elementary level where aims explicitly target exposure to language and culture. Given limited time at that level and at subsequent levels, there is also the issue of how to avoid reducing cultural knowledge to a few items which together constitute mere cultural stereotypes. In this connection, it was anticipated that it would be interesting to see how countries presented themselves at the Expo. Finally, the issue was raised of whether knowledge about culture should be considered as essentially a set product or rather a more negotiable process which is continuing both for participants in those cultures and for the student studying a language and culture.

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The first presentation came from Oliver Mayer (Aichi University of Education) who talked about 'Introducing Germany at Elementary Schools'. He focussed on a number of interesting points, including the disparity in the points of interest for teachers and students. While many teachers have a 'high culture' interest in such areas as classical music, students typically have little background knowledge and are more likely to be interested in areas of 'popular culture' such as soccer, not least because the location for the next World Cup is Germany. He described his efforts to explore their school curriculum in such subjects as 'shakaika' (social studies) and to make a relevant connection between what Japan and Germany do in an area such as the environment and recycling. The essential message from Oliver Mayer was that a personalized approach has to be taken to connect students with the culture, even if this means keeping cultural content limited and making it strongly personalized, by for example introducing the speaker's family.

To prepare for the following day's Expo visit, I introduced an activity I have used with students a number of times. Participants discussed and decided how they would promote Japan at a future International Expo. They had to consider these questions:

You can include three life-size objects. What would you include and why?

You can include two live performances. What would you include and why?

Your exhibition can be opened by a celebrity from the world of business, music, sport, etc. Who would you choose and why?

How would you balance tradition and modernity?

and

Would you only show the positive aspects of the country?

A range of answers were given typical of times I had used it before. However, one group suggested a neat solution to the final question through raising the idea of looking at how a negative aspect of the country had been improved with their example being the environment and pollution in Japan.

A break for lunch followed where the fare, including German sausages and Spanish guava juice, was chosen to try to give an international flavour to match the retreat's content. The afternoon sessions were led off by Tony Ryan (Queensland and Aichi University of Education) who looked at two contrasting elements he has used in teaching cultures, using the Expo as content and exploring the role of study abroad in teaching and learning cultures. Participants were surrounded by posters produced by students in the classes which he described. Using the book 'Japan as it is' (Gakken, 1997), he described how he introduced various aspects of Japanese culture as a model and then asked students in groups to

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produce material on the same cultural aspects, with each group handling one country. Tony both offered useful logistical advice on group organisation and showed how he espouses a bilingual approach to put across content in these kinds of classes, as opposed to general English communication classes. The result was a pair of posters on each country, one in Japanese and one in English. A wide range of countries was featured, with the aim of what Tony memorably described as avoiding a focus on countries such as the U.K. and U.S. which he considered were 'flogged to death'!

A lively discussion followed between participants on the central question, 'Can language and culture go hand in hand?' concerning issues raised in my introduction and the presentations which followed. Next was Brian Cullen (Nagoya Institute of Technology) who could bring his long experience of using cultural content from his home country, Ireland. While other countries may have been 'flogged to death', the problem with a country such as Ireland can again be a basic lack of background knowledge on the part of students. Brian himself described his initial realization of how little he himself knew of the country's culture when he was first asked to teach about Irish culture and the time he put in to remedy this. A number of years later, he has the latest version of his own coursebook, 'Land of Song and Stories' (Perceptia Press, 2005) which shows how accessible an introduction to culture can be through careful attention to the level of the material and through making its activities communicatively involving.

The final discussion focussed on expectations about how the Expo would put across cultural images of featured countries. A number of participants could base their views on having already visited it and a few had accompanied students there. The day's events were rounded off with a rousing session where Brian Cullen on guitar and mandolin displayed his prowess at introducing Ireland through its music and an evening party at a new nearby restaurant which itself consciously aimed to conjure up a certain image of Japan through its decor and cuisine.

Sunday saw some of the participants making a visit to the Expo. While the Expo's main theme is environmental, with the slogan 'Nature's Wisdom', our focus was on how countries presented themselves. Richard Harris writing in the local magazine 'Avenues' was critical of, "the opportunity missed by so many of the exhibiting countries (is that) of contextualisation...too many visitors are going to leave the Expo with superficial images and impressions rather than understanding." However, with more than 100 countries represented at pavilions, countries obviously faced a challenge in differentiating themselves, utilising

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often limited space (pavilions are modular with various numbers of modules available) and catching the attention of the many visitors who rushed around the Expo. We saw a range of country pavilions, mainly from the Americas, the Middle East and South Asia. They comprised those using one image (often 'the image' for Japanese) or product to represent the country - yoghurt for Bulgaria, a cocktail bar for Cuba and the tango for Argentina, those conforming more closely to the environmental theme - particularly Mexico's excellent displays, and those conjuring up the image of the country in other ways.

The U.S Pavilion used the most sophisticated audiovisual presentation, with actor and animation portraying Benjamin Franklin as guide through the country's technological rather than environmental progress. Certain of George W. Bush's tenets were not overhidden either. Finally, the first pavilion we visited, like a number of others, was open to criticism for rampant commercialism. Yemen's pavilion consisted largely of a number of enthusiastically manned jewellery stalls. Its authenticity, not least through the opportunity to barter, and liveliness, largely conjured up by the sheer number of Yemenis working in the pavilion actually made it one of the best at portraying aspects of a country and its culture.

All in all, a successful and enjoyable weekend. Do come to the AGM at JALT 2005 in Shizuoka to share your ideas for our next retreat.

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Guidelines

Articles – sharing your research with other teacher educators. Up to 3000 words.

Essays – your opinion or ideas about a topic relevant to teacher educators based in Japan. Up to 2500 words.

Stimulating Professional Development series – teacher educators are often quite professionally isolated. Write up about your teacher education activities, and the institutions that you work in. See previous issues for examples. Up to 3500 words.

Conference Proceedings – did you give a great presentation recently? Write up your presentation. Up to 2500 words.

Conference Reviews or Conference Reports – did you attend an interesting conference? Share your thoughts with the TE SIG members. Up to 2500 words.

Book Reviews – have you recently read an interesting book related to teaching, teacher education, language acquisition, or education? Up to 2000 words.

Font: Arial 11 point, single spaced, one line between paragraphs, SINGLE space between sentences.

Notes: Please include a catchy title, your name and professional affiliation, an e-mail address to go at the top of the article, and a 75-100 word bio-data for the end.

Deadlines: ongoing. Submit by e-mail to Simon Lees <simich@gol.com>. Attach as a Word document, titled with your surname, such as 'croker.doc' or 'robins.doc'.

Also, please cut and paste your article into the body of the e-mail, in case the Word document does not open.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Editor if you have any questions or ideas.

What is the Teacher Education SIG?

A network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping each other teach more effectively, the TE SIG has been active since 1993.

Our members teach at universities, high schools, and language centres both in Japan and other countries. The TE SIG focuses on five areas: action research, teacher reflection, peer-based development, teacher motivation, and teacher training and supervision.

If you would like further information about the TE SIG, please contact:
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