Explorations in Teacher Education

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Contents

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And Now a Word from…The Editor

Welcome to Volume 13, Issue 4, the solstice edition of Explorations in Teacher Education, the newsletter of the Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teachers (JALT).

Firstly, a few words about SIG business. Anthony Robins, the TE SIG coordinator has had to step down. In volunteering for the position of JALT Nominations and Elections Chair he is no longer able to serve in another elected position as a SIG officer. Miriam Black, the previous coordinator has kindly offered to step in; so as to avoid a vacuum in the leadership of the TE SIG. Anthony will be continuing to help the TE SIG move forward, albeit in a less official role.

At the TE SIG Annual General Meeting held at the JALT2005 Conference, Paul Beaufait, former editor of this esteemed organ, stepped up when a volunteer was required for the Membership Chair. Those of you who subscribe to the yahoo group will have felt his presence already. Thanks Paul.

An item on the SIG AGM agenda was the programme for 2006. The TE SIG will again be involved with the PAN-SIG Conference as one of the sponsoring SIGs and the 'pure' TE SIG event for 2006 will be a conference in Okayama. This was proposed by Neil Cowie, former SIG coordinator and current Okayama resident. The PAN-SIG Conference will be in May 2006 and the Okayama Conference will be in October. More details can be found in the Call for Papers on page 3.

Turning to this issue of the newsletter, this time we have three articles, a conference report and the third in the series of articles with former or current Japan Exchange Teachers (JETs). Two of this issue's contributors, Paul Tanner and Elizabeth Lokon, have been recently published in The Language Teacher, so congratulations and thanks for supporting ETE too. Paul's article, 'Voyages of Discovery: Improving Student Journal Writing' is the first in this issue. Having experimented with student journal writing in my own classes I found this article particularly useful. Next, is an interesting article about a Cross-cultural Simulation by Elizabeth Lokon. Having attended Tim Newfields' presentation about the Redundica simulation at the PAN-SIG conference earlier this year, I have experienced the power of these simulations myself. Here, Elizabeth provides a way for me to allow my students the same kind of experience. While Paul Tanner's article is about student journals, the third article, by

Takeshi Kamijo, is about using a similar process to improve one's teaching. The JALT2005 Conference Report by Daniele Allard can be found on page 30. Finally, the JET interview, reappears after a brief hiatus, this time I had a chat with David Barker.

I hope all the members and contributors have had a good 2005 and I wish you all the best for 2006. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Hope you enjoy the issue.

Simon Lees, Editor.

Call for Papers

Deadline: June 16th, 2006 (for October 7-8, 2006) - *Teacher Ed SIG and Okayama JALT Conference on Professional Development in EFL teaching.* Okayama University, Okayama. There are a number of stages in the professional development of language teachers. These can range through initial teacher training, being a novice teacher, and the transition to work as an experienced professional. The conference will provide opportunities for practical workshops to examine how teachers can approach some of these life stages, and more formal presentations for teachers to share their research, or simply share their stories and experiences of career development. Topics could include: gaining qualifications, working with colleagues, leadership, time-management, dealing with stress, and maintaining motivation. Contact details: <http://jalt.org/teach>

Voyages of Discovery: Improving Student Journal Writing

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"Writing is a voyage of discovery."   Henry Miller (Brussell, 1988)

Introduction

That writing journals aid a student's progress in English is not under dispute. Journals can aid students' linguistic development and metacognition, while fostering creativity and imagination. Writing journals helps students "experience writing as a way of making meaning" (Zamel, 1982), provides opportunity for authentic, meaningful communication (Duppenthaler, 2001), empowers students to speak with a "different voice," promotes student reflection and development of an awareness of their own thought processes, and provides an opportunity to "think on paper" (Mlynarczyk, 1998 p. 18). They give students a sense of control (Vanett and Jurich, 1990), and sustained language practice (see Casanave, 1993). Writing journals can increase students' confidence in their writing skills and sharpen their ability to reflect on ideas and experiences (Lucas, 1990) while aiding the development of critical thinking skills (see Franz, 2005). No litany of sources is complete without a Krashen reference, so here is his offering: "writing without being concerned with correctness [content being of more importance]…serves to suspend the monitor that may inhibit the development of fluency (Krashen, 1981).

Current Approach

The question then becomes not whether to use writing journals in a writing class, but how. This author uses writing journals in a writing class for second and third-year students who major in intercultural studies. Students write two pages each week in a "journal only" notebook. The journal writing is done outside of class. Students are free to choose their topics, and are instructed to focus on meaning and content over grammar correctness. From the beginning, students are made aware of the fact that journal writing is just one type of writing (others being the more informal freewriting or more formal compositions) (see Dupenthaller p. 154).

The teacher writes comments concerning the content or ideas presented. In addition, the teacher also notes consistent mechanical mistakes, or passages in which structures interfere with meaning. Finally, the teacher ends the entry with four or five sentences of comments,

suggestions, or questions. Specific grades are not given for the journals; they are pass / fail only. Although just one element of the course, the journals are mandatory. A simple course rule is, "No journal, No pass."

Reflection

At the midpoint of the school year, this instructor reflected on the journals. While student feedback was very positive about the journals, the instructor was not completely satisfied with the student journals. Some students wrote about the same topics in the same way every week. How can they be assisted in breaking out of that rut? Additionally, there were a few potential negative points about the journals. One was that students did not revise their writing content or style. There were errors that would have been corrected in a more polished work. Some students had begun to fossilize incorrect language patterns (see Peyton and Reed, 1990). After reviewing some literature on journal writing, and reflecting on the first semester's journals and studying student feedback, this instructor developed a new and improved approach to the writing journals. What follows is some experiential advice.

New Approach

1. *Continue teacher comments*. Students overwhelmingly liked the feedback / comments / and questions that the instructor wrote. "If I make you interested in my journal, it means my writing skill has improved." (student M.S. Note: quotations followed by initials are comments by students) "If you don't write any comments, I'm sad and disappointed." (N.T.) In his doctoral dissertation, Peter Duppenthaler found that meaning-focused feedback (ongoing and cumulative interactive dialogue with participants) in writing journals was more effective in facilitating improvement than either positive comments ("well-done," "keep writing") or red-ink error correction (Duppenthaler 2002). Simons (1993) also believes that for journal writing to succeed as a means of communication for the student, there must be substantial feedback by the instructor.

2. *Require more student reflection*. Metacognition is an important part of the learning process. When student journals are returned, students are given time to read the teacher comments and immediately respond to them in the journals. In addition, students are instructed to re-read what they previously wrote, and ask themselves if their ideas have changed. Many students commented that their earlier entries in the term were good memories, a freeze-frame of an earlier time. Re-reading also allows students to see themselves as a *reader* rather than just the writer (see Reid, 1995). One student wrote: "You said to make my English skill better,

I had to read it [the entries] twice. I always wrote very quickly. From this week, I started to write very carefully and check my own grammar or word mistakes." (D.M.) This type of journal (notebook style) rather than the more instant on-line format promotes reflection and review by having one continuous body of work.

3. *Students should title each entry*. This simple reflective step shows the main idea of their entry. Writing the title after either finishing the entry or before provides an organizational framework. Also, when the student repeats the same category ("My Weekend" for example), it becomes obvious that the writing needs more variety.

4. *Give students "error sentences" sheets.* Mistakes taken (anonymously) from journals can be corrected individually or with a partner (see Quirke, 2001, and Alexander, 2001). About ten or so key mistakes on a handout every other week is useful in pointing out some key errors without excessive emphasis or overkill.

5. *Give some error correction in the journals*. Although the literature on error correction in journals is divided, a strong case can be made for not providing correction. Quirke (2001), Peyton (1990), Elbow (2000), and Truscott (1996) all state that students can learn and their language can develop without journal error correction. Truscott believes that grammar correction is ineffective and even harmful. Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) reported that the type of correction had little influence on student fluency. Other studies support error correction. Timson, Grow, and Matsuoka (1999) reported that "error correction is necessary and desirable in order to increase second language fluency" and that "a majority of those surveyed desire to have their errors corrected" (p. 145). Saito (1994) determined that teacher feedback is more successful when it is focused on grammatical errors.

An overwhelming majority of this writer's students requested error correction. The author decided to follow the strategy of Peter Elbow's "minimum nonverbal critical response" in which he suggests using wavy / wiggly lines under sections that are unclear, problematic, or wrong. The students receive a "strong sense of readerly presence" i.e., a "felt sense of what is working and not working for us as readers." (356) Students can then be alerted to problematic structures and patterns. They can make the corrections if they choose to, and will hopefully not repeat the same type of errors.

If the reader is assigning writing journals, it may be helpful to keep in mind what this author calls Elbow's 'don't feel guilty clause': "When we assign a piece of writing and don't comment on it, we are *not, not teaching:* we are actually setting up powerful conditions for learning by getting students to do something they wouldn't do without the force of our teaching." (p. 356)

6. *Ensure that students avoid excessive stream-of-consciousness habits.* This is one of the reasons this author assigns handwritten journals rather than the instant messaging that computers make possible. Students are adept at instant messaging through their cell phones. This instructor does not want to reinforce writing without organization. Students are writing for an audience and should respect that audience. While the writing may be informal and mistakes are expected, certain conventions must be followed. This means not accepting Eminem -inspired writing (4U2C=for you to see).

7. *Students should try new structures, vocabulary, and experiment in order to find their **own language***, which Vygotsky calls "saturated with sense" or experience (cited in Elbow 353). For example, one student wrote, "This semester, I changed the style of writing journal. I changed the notebook and it has room for difficult words [in the left margin]. I write down the Japanese because I can find the word again and review it." (Y.H.)

Conclusion

There are many ways to work with writing journals. The extra writing and autonomous language practice it provides will very likely increase students' ability and confidence. Two different attitudes are expressed in the following quotes about writers:

> "A writer is one who writes about himself but has his eye always on that
> thread of the universe which runs through himself, and all things."

Ralph Waldo Emerson (Brussel, 1988)

> "They…write the things they think other folks think they think."

Elbert Hubbard (Brussel, 1988)

Let us hope your students write their journals with the attitude expressed by Emerson, and do not think about writing what Hubbard thinks they think he thinks they should think!

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A Cross-cultural Simulation for ESL/EFL Learners

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In the autumn issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*, Robins (2005) reviewed this year's Teacher Education Summer Retreat. One of the issues raised in the retreat, which unfortunately I could not attend, is "how to avoid reducing cultural knowledge to a few items which constitute mere cultural stereotypes" (p. 33). In response to this, I would like to share a simulation that I have used frequently: my simplified adaptation of BaFa BaFa. Used at the beginning of the semester, this simulation provides students with a tangible reference to analyze the process of stereotyping. The knowledge and experience gained from the simulation can then be used later on in the semester as students learn specific cultures introduced in the curriculum.

What is BaFa BaFa?

BaFa BaFa is a cross-cultural simulation designed by R. Garry Shirts in the mid 1970's to help US Navy sailors on shore leave get along better with local populations (Carroll, 1997; Steinwachs, n.d.). Now it is widely used in universities, schools, businesses, government offices, and other settings to develop participants' awareness of cross-cultural differences and how these differences influence human behavior and organizational cultures.

Participants in the simulation are divided into two groups, each group represents a culture, Alpha and Beta. Alpha is a high context, patriarchal culture that values interpersonal relationships, with strong in-group, out-group identity. In contrast, Beta culture is a task-oriented, highly competitive trading culture with its own language system. After initial practice of these culture systems, participants visit one another's cultures and experience the positive and negative effects of traveling to a foreign culture. To conduct this simulation one needs the BaFa BaFa simulation kit (available from Simulations Training Systems at www.stsintl.com), two rooms, two facilitators, 12-35 participants, and 2-4 hours of time. Depending who you ask, the amount of time needed to do the simulation varies, but the range is approximately 30-40 minutes to practice the new culture, one to two hours to do the simulation, and 30 minutes to two hours to debrief the experience (Steinwachs, n.d.; The diversity simulation, n.d.; What makes, n.d.).

Although the simulation may appear to be based on exaggerated generalizations, in fact such generalizations are useful to generate stereotyping tendencies that can then be debriefed after the simulation is completed. Needless to say, the debriefing process is the most important aspect of doing all simulations.

Why use BaFa BaFa?

BaFa BaFa is an excellent simulation that helps participants experience first hand the bewilderment and disorientation of going to another culture. During the debriefing session they can see how a social system works and why cross-cultural misunderstanding happens. They learn how stereotypes are formed and perpetuated. They become aware of their own inclinations when responding to cross-cultural misunderstandings. They also learn ways to prevent and solve cross-cultural communication problems. All of these tend to lead to valuable personal growth as well as a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication issues.

What are some limitations of using BaFa BaFa with EFL learners?

Though it is perhaps the most well-known and successful cross-cultural simulation presently available in the market, BaFa BaFa has its limitations when used with EFL learners. I first tried to use the simulation with Japanese businessmen in 1984 and encountered various issues that required a major adaptation of the simulation. Carroll (1997) reported similar issues when he tried to use it with Japanese university students. The primary challenge is the complexity of the instructions when given in English. The kit comes with cassette tapes giving the instructions of the values, norms, and customs of Alphans and Betans. To understand the recorded instructions, participants must have an advanced level of listening skill. None of my students were able to comprehend the tapes.

The complexity of the simulation relates to another issue, time. The estimated time of 2-4 hours does not take into consideration the extra processing time needed when doing the simulation in a foreign language. A much-simplified version of the simulation is needed to accommodate not only EFL learners' linguistic proficiency, but also to prevent it from dragging on too long.

Finally, there is the problem of free discussion during the debriefing session. In the Japanese context and perhaps other cultural contexts as well, it is usually difficult for EFL learners to freely discuss in English their feelings and experiences without careful scaffolding activities.

Possible adaptation of BaFa BaFa for EFL learners

To address the above issues, I initially adapted the simulation slightly, trying to keep it as close to the original as possible. The problems persisted. In the end, I had to completely revise the simulation by keeping only the framework of the basic design but changing the entire content of the two cultures. I did away with the entire BaFa BaFa kit and replaced it with regular decks of cards and paper handouts. I have been using this revised version of the simulation since 1988 with my intermediate level EFL Japanese students in business and university settings without experiencing any of the above difficulties while maintaining the richness of the experience. Below are the instructions for this revised and renamed simulation.

Shaka-Shaka and Dagang: A Cross-Cultural Simulation

Procedure

1. Randomly divide the participants into two groups. Each group will be in separate rooms.

2. Group one will read about and practice the Shaka-shaka Culture, and group two the Dagang Culture.

3. Once the groups are actively playing their roles, one pair from each culture visits the other culture and tries to participate in the other culture's activities. Each visit should be around 5 minutes.

4. The visitors then return to his/her home culture and new visitors are sent.

5. Observers (in both rooms) observe and note down what goes on when visitors from the other culture visit. In EFL settings it is probably best for the instructors to assume the observers' roles. The observers are to note down *both* the visitors' and the hosts' actions as they try to interact with each other.

Shaka-Shaka Culture

Background

Shaka-shaka is a matriarchal society that focuses on interpersonal relationships, especially the female line of the family. They value highly, family, loyalty to one's own group, social harmony, and respect for women and the elderly. It is an island society with ocean fishing as its main source of livelihood. Fishing is done by the female members of the society. The male members raise the family and assist the female members whenever requested.

Activities

Fishing is only done once a week. The rest of the time is occupied by talking in small groups about the female members of the family, e.g. their health, catch of the day, new female babies etc.

Communication System

Body Language:

Before beginning to talk to a male member in the society, you must touch his shoulders, arms, or hands, while with a female member, you must touch her head. This is a form of formal greeting that is very important in the Shaka-shaka culture.

Direct Eye Contact:

Do not make direct eye contact when talking because direct eye contact expresses extreme anger.

Group Size:

Never let someone talk with only one other person. Minimum group size is three members per group. Groups with fewer than three members create suspicion among the other members of the society. If you converse with only one other person, others may think that you are talking about them, behind their backs.

Hierarchy of Status:

Below is the status ranking from the highest to the lowest:

1. Oldest female
2. Other females
3. Oldest male
4. Other males
5. Children

Group Entrance and Exit Behavior:

To enter a group, you must stand quietly outside the group until someone of the highest status in that group invites you to join in. After being invited in, you must do the formal greeting with the people on your left and right sides. But you may not speak right away, unless asked to do so. Only after being in the group for a few minutes may you start to talk. Remember that conversations center only around the activities of the female members of the family. To leave

a group you must stand quietly outside the group until someone of the highest status gives you permission to leave.

Punishment:

Everyone in the society carries a set of cards. When someone violates the society's rules, the other members will immediately flash a card in front of the violator's face. The more severe the violation, the higher the number of the card flashed.

Hierarchy of rules:

Below is the ranking of rules from the most important (number 1) to the least important (number 6):

1. Forgetting formal greetings
2. Direct eye contact
3. Proper entrance and exit behavior when joining or leaving a group
4. Speech timing (waiting a few minutes before starting to talk when joining a group)
5. Not talking about the female members of the family
6. Group size fewer than three members

Reward:

When you appreciate someone's behavior, flash *the back* of the card to express your appreciation.

Dagang Culture

Background

Dagang is a merchant society that focuses on trading goods in the most efficient way, i.e. within the shortest time possible. It is located in a big metropolitan city. They value highly, success at work, time, punctuality, and efficiency.

Activities

The people of Dagang society are only concerned about status achievement through successful trading. This is reflected in their native tongue, the Dagang language.

Dagang Language

Dagang culture has a very simple language because the only purpose of communication in this society is to trade cards. These cards are similar to our stocks and bonds. The language consists of seventeen words that describe the type of cards to be traded. The language is English based with some changes at the end of the words.

ENGLISH: One, two, three, four, five.   DAGANG: wani, tuni, treeni, foni, faini, etc

ENGLISH: Jack, Queen, King, Ace.   DAGANG: jani, kweeni, kini, aceni.

ENGLISH: Spade, heart, diamond, club.   DAGANG: spana, hana, daina, klana

How would you say "eight diamond" in Dagang language? (Answer: "eini daina").

Trading Goals

The goal that you try to achieve when trading cards is one of the following:

1. To have all the same suit. For example, all hearts

2. To have a series of successive numbers of any suit. For example, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10, Jack, Queen, King of any suit combination (minimum four cards in a set).

3. To have several sets of four cards of the same number. For example, four Jacks, four tens.

Social Customs

Trading cards:

Begin with a greeting by putting your right hand across your chest while saying loudly and clearly the suit or number you seek. Respond by doing the same greeting as above and declare the suit or number you are willing to give.

If the card sought and the card offered match, trading takes place. If not, you either find a new trading partner, or change your request and offer until trading occurs.

If you would like to say that you do not have the card requested, but you would like to continue trying to trade (asking and offering different cards), then put your elbows along the sides of your shoulders and pump them up and down three times.

If you would like to ask your partner to repeat what s/he just said, touch the back of your head and push your head forward three times.

Direct eye contact:

It is necessary to look your trading partner straight in the eyes while trading. This is to establish a fair trading atmosphere and trust on both sides.

Leave taking:

After you complete your transactions (successfully or unsuccessfully), you must immediately leave your trading partner. It is extremely rude to waste your partner's time.

Cultural Taboos

1. Never talk about anything other than trading, it is a waste of your and your partner's time.

2. Never touch or have any kind of body contact with your trading partner.

3. Never trade while somebody else is present, your trading activities are highly confidential. This is absolutely necessary to ensure successful trading.

4. Never stay with one trading partner longer than necessary. Upon completion of trading activities, leave immediately.

Punishment

If you violate any of the above rules, your trading partner has complete rights to end the transaction immediately or to refuse to trade with you forever by simply walking away without responding to your greetings and trading requests.

Debriefing Process

Fluency lines to learn about the other culture:

Form two lines of students facing each other. All Shaka-shaka members stand in one row and all Dagang members stand facing Shaka-shaka members. Give each pair 3-5 minutes to ask each other about the culture they visited. Then while one row remains stationary, a student from the opposite row moves down one place so that they now have different partners in front of them. The new pairs then get a second chance to ask more questions about the other culture. Do this two or three times as needed. Typically, students will ask each other about customs and conventions in the other culture and not discuss the deeper aspects of their feelings or experiences at this point.

Individual writing assignment

To get to the deeper meanings of the simulation, students individually write responses to the following debriefing questions:

a. Briefly explain the culture you visited.

b. How did the visitors from the other culture appear to you?

c. What were your thoughts and feelings when you visited the other culture?

d. Which culture would you prefer to live in?　Why?

I found it useful to have students individually prepare a written response to the above questions before sharing them orally in small groups. This individual writing assignment addresses multiple purposes: (1) to give EFL students more time to reflect and articulate their feelings and experiences in English, (2) to solve lapse of memory if the sharing session has to be postponed to another day, and (3) to give students a writing opportunity.

Small group discussion

Now that students have prepared their individual responses in writing, they are more able and willing to discuss in small groups. Usually students begin by reading aloud what they have written and quickly move to a real, unscripted discussion as they get animated about the topic. It is a good idea to have each group nominate a secretary to note down everyone's comments.

Oral presentations

After sharing their responses in small groups, students are then invited to share a summary of their discussions with the rest of the class. The rest of the class takes notes on the other groups' presentations. The notes are then used to prepare a journal writing assignment that compares their own and the other groups' discoveries. This comparison allows students to process the complexity of the simulation one step further.

The sequence of activities in the above debriefing process allows students to reflect upon their own and others' learning, think critically, and use their writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Instructors' synthesis

At this final stage of the debriefing process, the two observers/facilitators/instructors synthesize the groups' reflections and add their own insights from observing the students in action while they visited the other cultures and hosted visitors from the other culture. Typically after synthesizing the groups' reports, they would make the following points:

(1) The similarity of range of emotions and responses to the experience regardless of which home culture they came from, Shaka-shaka or Dagang

(2) The presence of the tendency to negatively judge and stereotype "the other" after being in the Shaka-shaka or Dagang culture for only an hour or two

(3) The strong identification with and preference for one's own culture even though the original grouping was done at random.

(4) We also describe to them the types of "foreigners" we observed based on the range of behaviors that they displayed and asked them to privately identify which type of foreigner they were in the simulation. Then we ask them to reflect on the following question and prepare a journal entry response: "Which type of foreigners would you like to be when you go abroad?   How should you behave to become that kind of foreigner?"

Conclusion

While BAFa BaFa is without any question the best cross-cultural simulation around, its applicability in EFL settings is limited. The complexity of the simulation renders it impossible for use with intermediate EFL learners. "Shaka-shaka and Dagang cultures" is a highly simplified version of BaFa BaFa and requires no special equipment other than decks of playing cards and the handouts. The adaptation was done to accommodate intermediate EFL learners' needs. While the simulation itself is highly simplified, the richness of the experience was not compromised as indicated by the 2nd year university students' comments below (excerpted with permission from their journals with uncorrected errors for authenticity, 2002).

> S1: … I thought when I visit other culture, it may happen like this situation. When we meet other culture, we have experience like this game. Language, gesture and ways of communicate are different each country. It makes hard to communicate with other culture group. I think that most important thing is to keep communicate. Even if language is not same, we will understand little by little. I learned two things from this activity. First, I have to be careful about other culture's taboo. Perhaps, my common sense is not understand in other countries. Second, I should keep on trying to communicate with people even if language is different.

> S2: …I felt fear, unpleasant and confusion through doing this activity because I couldn't take off own culture…. I learned very much from this activity. If I didn't do this activity, I wouldn't notice such as feeling. I guess this activity is useful for study abroad. I have lived in Japan for nineteen years. It is probable that I will not take off Japanese idea and custom.

> S3: … I couldn't understand their language and gesture, so I tried to communicate as often as possible because I thought that I would be isolated if I keep silence. … I learned that communication is important between different cultures, and we should keep it in mind when we study abroad. … I noticed that we must not be negative even if we will be confused with different environment from Japan…. We are confused and negative when we are in the unfamiliar environment. And our relationship cannot progress without communication even though we have different cultural background. So we need communication to know each other's mind.

S4: … In short, I learned that we must not [judge and reject] all of other culture, we have to accept and understand each other and then we can keep good relationship. If we could absorption their good point, we could build better society.

With adequate simplification of the original simulation and scaffolding as described above, intermediate EFL learners could engage in reflective and analytical discussion and writing of their own experiences. Parenthetically, the Japanese students at my university have consistently rated this simulation activity as 3.6 or higher out of 4.0.

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Analyzing classroom teaching from weekly portfolios

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1 Background of the study

For the past eight to nine years, I have been involved in the field of EAP (English for Academic Purposes), as an instructor and curriculum developer. During that time, while studying for two MAs relating to English as a Foreign Language, I found the areas of genre analysis and second language acquisition (SLA) the most relevant to my teaching situation. Most particularly, I learned SLA from a cognitive perspective, including such theory as 'output hypothesis'. It is very useful not only for language acquisition but also for facilitating the meta-learning needed for EAP.

My work in the field of EAP includes teaching TOEFL and IELTS preparation. So, I have became familiar with the model by Dudley E. and St John (1998) called the 'social-constructionist approach'. I have realized it is extremely effective since it attempts to teach genre in academic writing. The methodology emphasizes raising genre awareness and the reinforcement of the learning through practice, evaluation, and feedback. Writing essays for the TOEFL test requires clear understanding of its genre and its language features, and this teaching seems to be efficient for teaching students how to write for the TOEFL test.

In September 2004, I began to work at bunsai Art College (bAC) as an instructor and curriculum developer. From September to December 2004, I applied this teaching methodology to my EAP composition classes. The students improved their essay scores for TOEFL writing. A school-based questionnaire for my composition classes revealed good results with the majority of students stating that they were satisfied with their learning. These results were positive, however, I did not keep any qualitative data or records to help me understand how I utilized the methodology in these classes. I thought I would like to make explicit what I did, so that I could see to what extent the 'social-constructionist approach' led to such positive results.

2 The study and research questions

From April 2005, bAC began a new web site for organizational communication tools, in which staff and instructors could write about their work and teaching week by week so everyone could share the necessary information without meeting and discussing it so frequently. The website is for internal use only and it is called 'Reds'. I wrote teaching records on this website from April onwards, and at the end of July I was able to organize these records and use them for the research. Keeping a weekly diary was quite fruitful for me to keep qualitative data and evaluate the teaching methodology for my composition classes.

Diary research is a qualitative approach and it applies teachers' writing of their classroom as the data for analysis and evaluation. It is useful for assessing teaching methodology (Nunan, 1989, 1992; Nunan and Richards, 1990; Smith, 2000). Smith (2000) explains how diary research can be used for evaluating teachers' own classroom activities in more detail.

> Keeping a diary helped me to redefine my teaching beliefs and examine whether I 'practice what I preach', so to speak. It thereby gave me pointers as to where my teaching needed improvement and questions that I needed to answer.(p.4)

Smith (2000) mentions the sequence taken for diary research from Nunan (1989, 1992),

> After outlining the learning (in this case teaching) history, the diarist records their current teaching experience over a period of time and then revises the journal for the public version of the diary. The diarist then studies the entries to look for patterns, and in the final stage the observations identified as important to the teaching experience are discussed. (p. 2)

So, by analyzing my weekly portfolio after the style of Smith (2000) and Nunan (1989, 1992) I would like to pursue the following three questions:

1) Was my classroom teaching in the style of the 'social constructionist' model by Dudley and St John (1998)? If so, how much was my teaching in accordance with the model?
2) What element of my classroom teaching was especially effective for facilitating students' learning?
3) What are the implications for future teaching and research?

3 Literature Review

In the literature of teaching writing for EAP, there have been two major conflicting approaches. The first one is the product approach in which teachers give students a model composition text in a particular educational context, so that students can analyze it and apply the model with new input for their writing. The emphasis is on the final product of the written text and students learn accurate grammar, use of words, expression and the overall model of the written text.

So the flow of teaching/learning goes like this:

Model text → Comprehension/Analysis/Manipulation → New Input → Parallel text
(Robinson, 1991)

The product approach of teaching writing has been criticized because it limits input on increasing learners' proficiency to write fluently. In contrast to the product approach, the process approach has been suggested and applied to develop learners' skills in writing, editing and revising. In the process approach, the emphasis is on thinking and the process through which teachers give appropriate feedback to students on their writing and allow them to do their correction through the process of revising (Robinson, 1991; Tribble,1997).

As a result, the flow of the teaching/learning covers:

Writing task → Draft1 → Feedback → Revision → Draft 2 → Feedback → Revision
(Robinson, 1991)

In recent developments in teaching writing for EAP, students are encouraged to show an awareness of the reader-writer relationship in the academic discourse community and learn the academic genre needed for EAP (Swales, 1990; Tribble, 1997). The methodology emphasizing genre analysis and cognitive learning development is called the 'social constructionist approach', which is suggested by Dudley and St John (1998).

Dudley and St John (1998) define the discourse community and writing constraints,

The process approach takes account of individual writers and readers. It does not take into account the broader context of the writing process. Writing is a social act in which writers have to be aware of the context in which they are writing. That context places certain constraints on what writers can write and on the ways in which they can express ideas. We favor an approach in which writers are shown how to take on board the expectations and norms of the community to which they belong and how these expectations shape the established practices of writing within a given community. (p.117)

They also mention the advantages of the approach, as it incorporates both product and process elements in teaching writing,

The social constructionist approach has reintroduced the idea of examining the end product in a way that is much more acceptable than the old model-and-imitation approach used in early teaching of writing. It has also, as we have noted, extended the focus on the reader to take on board the discourse community. (p.118)

They summarize the sequence of teaching in the following manner:

The approach we advocate follows the stages below:
● Develop *rhetorical awareness* by looking at model texts;
● Practice specific *genre features*, especially moves and writer stance;
● Carry out writing task showing awareness of the *needs of individual readers and the discourse community* and *the purpose of the writing*; and
● Evaluate the writing (through *peer review* or *reformulation*) (p.118)

The approach by Dudley and St. John (1998) includes evaluation through peer review or reformulation. It provides students with the writing texts based on required academic genre features. The key element is to compare the desirable L2 writing with students' own writing. This allows students to understand the differences between their L2 writing and the desirable genre of academic writing.

4 Research methodology

At bAC I recorded my lessons through the weekly portfolio which I submitted to the web site called 'Reds'. As I became familiar with the method of diary/journal research, I determined

that I would use the weekly portfolio as the data for my classroom research. The procedure was as follows:

Step 1: Methodology used in the classroom
In my writing for EAP classes, I have applied the social-constructionist approach as a model of methodology. TOEFL essays include important academic genre and writing styles, which students need to be taught.

Step 2: Data collection from classroom teaching through my weekly diary
As mentioned above, I have used my weekly portfolio submitted to the web site information board. At bAC, there are approximately 100-110 students and they are studying both art and English to prepare themselves to enter Foundation programs or BA level education at Art Colleges in the UK, the US, and Australia.

There are five classes depending on the proficiency levels of English. These five classes are: Leonardo (Beginners), Michelangelo (Lower intermediate), Cezanne (Intermediate), Rodin (Higher Intermediate), and Picasso (Advanced) respectively. There are 15-22 students in each class. Composition classes are given twice a week, and each class is for 80 minutes. In the classroom, the first 50 minutes are spent on lecture and discussion, and 30 minutes are used for actual writing practice (250-350 words per essay).

Written feedback is given to students regarding their writing. Feedback is based on the scoring criteria of the essays in the TOEFL test. I wrote about the lessons from April 22 to June 9 in the weekly portfolio and those written observations are used for analysis in this research.

Step 3: Analysis of the data through diary
By analyzing the data from my weekly portfolio, the general pattern of the methodology used in my composition class is assessed. Especially, I would like to find how closely the composition teaching matches the model by Dudley and St John (1998).

Step 4: Evaluation of the results and implications for future lessons
I will summarize the data in the results section and provide an evaluation in the discussion and conclusions section.

5 Results of the study

During the spring term, the composition classes were given from mid-April to mid July. There were also individual counseling sessions in the first and second weeks of July. So technically, the composition classes were provided until the third week of June. The data used for the research is from April 28 to June 9; six-weeks of reporting on the classroom methodology and its results in the weekly portfolio.

The weekly portfolio had initially been written in Japanese in the website 'Reds', which was translated into English and edited later for the purpose of external publication. Refer to appendix A for examples of my weekly portfolio and appendix B for examples of the feedback I gave students on their writing.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, I have dealt with the 'social-constructionist approach' in the composition classes at bAC. I applied the qualitative diary method using my weekly portfolio to assess the teaching methodology. In this section, I will analyze my weekly portfolio and the pattern of my teaching methodology. The analysis shows that the methodology has similarities with the social constructionist teaching model by Dudley and St John (1998) in the following two aspects.

Firstly, these lessons gave learners the awareness of rhetorical pattern, genre features, reader needs, discourse community, and the purpose of writing in TOEFL essays. For example, in the data of weekly portfolio from April 22 to April 28, there was a lecture on rhetorical structure, and from May 6 to May 12 reader needs were explained. Moves and writer stances such as thesis statement, topic sentences, and supporting details were taught. From May 13 to May 19, the lessons included readers' views by assessing how the essay raters made the decision on essay scoring through think-aloud protocol study.

Secondly, there were also writing tasks, evaluation, and feedback on students' L2 writing as they learned genre features of TOEFL essays. Specifically speaking, from May 20 to May 26, the teaching was about the scoring criteria with sample essays. Lessons also included writing practice in April and May. In addition, argumentation essays were explained. From May 27 to June 2, students began writing exercises with evaluation, and feedback. Finally, from June 3

to June 9 students learned argumentation essays as they did writing practice and received feedback and assessment.

In the Dudley and St. John (1998) model, it includes teaching academic genre through writing tasks as learners gain an awareness of genre features, needs of readers and the discourse community, its purpose, and language use. As learners are given practice, they also receive feedback. From April 22 to June 9, my teaching generally followed this approach. In my case, I put emphasis on teacher feedback, which helped learners notice the gap between their L2 output and the required genre. It is influenced by the theory called 'output hypothesis' discussed by Swain (1995) and other SLA researchers.

As discussed above, the weekly portfolio shows that my teaching approach was close to the model by Dudley and St John (1998). In particular, the feedback on the difference between required genre and students' L2 writing was effective. In addition, my teaching approach reflects my own belief in teaching which has been accumulated through my previous MA courses and professional experiences. Future research should be taken to include triangulation by survey and interviews with learners.

Appendix A: Examples of weekly portfolio
Weekly portfolio from May 20 to May 26

So far in the composition lessons, essay rhetorical styles (argumentation, exposition, and problem-solution) and score rating criteria were explained. I mentioned that genre features of the academic essay were reflected in the TOEFL essays since TOEFL is based on academic English.

In addition, I provided five essay writing exercises (250-350 words per essay) and their feedback to the students in the classes during April and May. The feedback is based on the scoring criteria framework so that students would understand their returned essays from the readers' perspectives. The approach of the writing exercise and its feedback is essential in terms of SLA framework.

The TOEFL has many essays with argumentation. In an argumentation essay, the writer usually sets his or her position on the issue and justifies it. When the writer refers to the opposite view, he or she refutes it in the essay consistently. Students had to learn the unfamiliar writing style of the argumentation essay in English which is different from the essay style used in Japanese.

<u>Weekly portfolio from May 27 to June 2</u>

During this week, I did some review of the previous lessons on the TOEFL essays. Also, I gave some sample essays and discussed how these essays were rated in terms of the score rating criteria. From the beginning of May, students were given more time for essay writing practice and assessing their essays through teacher's feedback. I noticed that students made progress as they were able to use teacher's feedback.

Appendix B: Sample question and two types of written feedback

Sample question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement. A live performance is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

This is typical of argumentation essays in TOEFL essay writing. For this question students need to state their opinions, give reasons and examples to support their opinions. The essay organization must have an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. A thesis statement should be in the introduction. Topic sentences and supporting sentences should be given in body paragraphs. In the conclusion part, a good summary of the whole essay should be given. A writer should be consistent with his or her opinion throughout the essay, and signalling vocabulary to help readers should be used. Sufficient examples will be needed to support writers' claims in the essay. Grammar and writing style should also be appropriate for formal essay writing.

Firstly, there is one type of feedback for students who need major revision in basic organization and other genre features.

Feedback sample A

Basic paragraph structure is OK with an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. In the introduction there is a thesis statement stating your opinion, which is also good. However, there are several necessary issues considered for more appropriate essay writing. First, the topic sentences of the body paragraphs need reasons to support your opinion. Write an advantage for your argument in each topic sentence to support your claim. Also, in the supporting sentences of the body paragraphs, write detailed examples to allow readers to understand the advantages you mention at the topic sentence. So give examples to support

the advantages of watching a live performance in each body paragraph. It is a good idea to describe your personal experience or some names of a live performance you have actually watched. Also, use transition words such as 'for example' and 'in fact' to show the signals of providing examples. In the conclusion part, try to summarize the key issues in the whole essay and repeat your opinion.

Secondly, there is another feedback for a student who satisfies basic organization and other genre features, but has some weaknesses in supporting details in the essay.

Feedback sample B

Basic structure of paragraphs is very good with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. There is a clear opinion in the introduction with thesis statement, and advantages of watching a live performance are written well in the topic sentences of two body paragraphs respectively. Good use of transition words such as 'for example' and 'in fact', and there are some examples in the supporting sentences to explain the advantages you mentioned. Nevertheless, there are some issues especially in terms of giving specific examples. In the second paragraph, you refer to the advantage of experiencing a very exciting atmosphere at a live performance. You give some description of a live concert here. You could have added the name of the concert and musicians and also you could have explained the actual atmosphere: many people were standing and singing together at the concert stadium, and you were there as audience and felt as if you actually joined the performance there. It should be the feeling you will never be able to experience by watching a live event on television, and the advantage of watching a live event directly will be more explicit. In this way, writing sufficient examples is important to support the advantages writers mention in the essay and it enables readers to understand your supporting reasons in the argumentation essay.

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The JALT 2005 Conference: Sharing our Stories
Shizuoka, Japan

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The Conference at a Glance:

The 31st yearly JALT International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exposition was held at the Granship Conference Centre in Shizuoka Japan, from October 7-10, attracting over 1,600 participants.

The three plenary speakers gave insightful keynote addresses. Jennifer Bassett, of Oxford University Press, enthusiastically made a case for extensive reading and storytelling, Kumiko Torikai, of Rikkyo University, realistically discussed the Japanese national language policy and its current crossroads, and David Nunan, of the University of Hong Kong, addressed questions of styles and strategies in the language classroom.

Many featured speakers were also active during the conference, their participation culminating in a series of special workshops on the afternoon of the fourth day. The topics covered issues related to fluency, TOEFL, the teaching of reading, the language awareness it promotes, teacher-learner dialogue and language learning histories.

In addition to pre-conference workshops, regular presentations, poster sessions, materials exhibitions and social events, the four days featured, among others, JALT annual meetings, various forum and plenary sessions, a story space corner, a job information center, and an international food fair.

Within the larger conference, the JALT Junior mini-conference focused on issues related to working with young language learners, and a series of workshops were geared for nonnative English-speaking teachers.

The JALT SIGs and other JALT related associations all had information booths. Furthermore, feedback to JALT as an organization was made possible both during the JALT open-mike session, which encouraged comments, suggestions and opinions, as well as at the

participants' plenary that gave an opportunity for reflection on the four-day event, permeated of course by many an interesting story.

An impressive number of presentations covering a wide variety of topics could be chosen from, with close to thirty concurrent sessions running at any given time.

The Granship offered a spacious venue, albeit a little distant from hotels or restaurants which are mostly found a train-station away. Finding one's way in the Granship was quite easy. There were clear signs, a quick consultation guide was available in addition to a well-designed handbook, and a friendly team of staff and volunteers were always ready to help. Contrary to expectation, Saturday morning registration on the first official day did not prove to be a long wait. The only traffic jams, so to speak, were at the elevators in-between sessions (a relatively short waiting time), and busy line-ups at lunch time at the international food fair, given the lack of readily accessible restaurants.

Day 1 (Pre-Conference Workshop Day):
Day 1 essentially consisted of an afternoon of pre-conference workshops followed by the president's reception, to the beat of jazz music. Three workshops could be chosen from, one introducing participants to the essentials of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) in relation to language teaching, and the other two enabling participants to either learn or brush-up on computer related skills useful in language teaching. The latter were organized by the CALL (Computer-assisted language learning) SIG (Significant Interest Group).

I heard positive comments concerning the CALL workshops, which with their hands-on approach proved not only to be useful and practical, but inspiring of new ideas. I attended the NLP workshop; being a first-comer to JALT, it was a good way to break the ice as participants were asked to interact with each other on a regular basis. Though NLP seems to stem from a great deal of common sense, the workshop was useful in that it brought awareness. Communication, for example, is ever present in our lives – not only as teachers – and it can be easy to take some of its essential workings for granted. The workshop caused me to reflect on what we say, how we say it, and how this can be of impact, namely with students. The various exercises and demonstrations also brought home the fact that small adjustments can make significant differences. It was interesting to see NLP techniques at work in the actual

way Tim Murphey and Brad Deacon led the workshop. Shortly after the conference, an online NLP discussion group was set up to which all workshop participants were invited to subscribe.

Following workshops, participants were able to officially register for JALT and pick up conference kits (thus avoiding potential line-ups the next morning), while preparations in the materials exhibition area were well under way.

The president's reception followed shortly: tasty food, a free glass of wine and socializing. It was a pleasant evening. "Newbies" (1st time JALT participants) such as myself had been provided with bright yellow ribbons and a list of useful recommendations, which was thoughtful on the part of JALT organizers. This being said, I found that blending in was relatively easy. The people I met, including a few "old-timers," were welcoming and friendly.

Day 2:

Day 2 opened with Jennifer Bassett's keynote address on storytelling and extensive reading, after formal welcomes and introductory speeches were pronounced. Ms. Bassett is a gifted speaker, one passionate about storytelling; it was a wonderful choice of presentation to start off the conference. A writer of graded readers for Oxford University Press, Ms. Bassett certainly had a story or two to tell while she emphasized the fact that storytelling is part and parcel of our everyday life. She explained the patterns existing in basic storylines, peppering them with examples, drove home the point of how extensive reading could not only enhance language knowledge, but empower learners and open their perspectives onto other worlds; in this sense, it is important to give them a good story to read. She proceeded to explain what makes a good story, what is an adaptation of such a story, and essentially, communicated her high enthusiasm for storytelling and reading to what seemed like a captivated audience.

Regular presentations began shortly after eleven that morning, continuing throughout the day. The greater part of the afternoon was also open for poster sessions, which made it easy and convenient to drop in and out. The evening culminated in the JALT Party.

I had been told the night before that the best part of JALT was the networking, which could be more profitable than spending a day attending presentations. Though this might be true, I must say that I was favorably impressed by the quality of the presentations I attended on this first official conference day. Among them, I was present at the CALL SIG Forum. The three

featured presentations gave a good overview of research in the field, while being informative, comprehensive, and of academic level. I also attended a presentation by Michael McCarthy, the co-author of the series Vocabulary in Use, which I have successfully used with students in Canada. McCarthy, also a gifted speaker, highlighted various facts about advanced level vocabulary that provided food for thought – just what one looks for when attending a conference. I especially enjoyed his explanations concerning "crucial chunks" of language, set collocations whose knowledge can make substantial difference in attaining various levels of fluency. He explained, for example, that "in the first place" was more frequently used in English than, say, the word "salt." As McCarthy pointed out, "salt" is likely taught as an essential beginner lever vocabulary word, but the same cannot be said of "in the first place," though the latter is proven to be a "crucial language chunk."

As was true for the following days, one could participate in many other concurrent events: the Think Tank Live (panel of plenary and featured speakers), the Story Corner (talented storytellers of all kinds), the Domestic Forum (focusing on English in elementary schools etc.), etc. One could also pay visits to the materials exhibition stands. I was actually impressed with the wealth of material gathered in the exhibition area, in addition to the ease with which one could procure examination copies of potentially interesting textbooks. I found that most of the publishing representatives I questioned gave good advice without trying to push for sales. One problem was actually lack of time – what, between presentations, eating, networking, etc., there was simply too much to do!

Day 3:

My day began with a taste of video use in the classroom with Susan Stempelski's upbeat, humourous, and practical presentation. Though she was showcasing her published textbooks on the subject, she also gave valuable general advice, which I appreciated. She is clearly a seasoned teacher, and yet another engaging speaker.

David Nunan and Kumiko Tokikai, the other two invited keynote speakers, addressed the audience on this day. Nunan delved into learning styles and strategies, as garnered from the observation of a large number of students. Essentially, he was aiming at differentiating effective language learners from less effective ones. After a brief description of the styles that research identified, he asked the audience to raise hands in accordance with the style with which each person could personally relate. It was thus possible to get a first-hand idea of

the prevalence of certain styles over others. Nunan also discussed the attitudes and beliefs of effective and ineffective learners, in addition to their in and out-of-class behavior, ending with some pedagogical implications in view of the above.

Kumiko Tokikai, whose near-native like English was impressive, discussed the national language policy in Japan and how it has reached a crossroads between globalism, on the one hand, and national identity on the other. She explained how the national language policy, as was elaborated in 2002, claims to "cultivate Japanese who can use English." Though the strategy to reach such a lavish goal seems full of promise, it is also somewhat at odds with a movement towards renewed national identity. The government is indeed taking steps towards introducing English in elementary school and increasing the number of native English teachers in the public system. Yet it is also aware of unsatisfactory achievement levels in elementary schools in various other subjects, which weakens the stand for introducing the additional subject of English. It is further concerned with the high level of borrowed words, especially English words used as such in the Japanese language, which it seeks to slow down. On the one hand there is movement for promoting the ability to communicate in English, and on the other, one that seeks to reinforce Japanese identity and culture. She proceeded to elaborate on the concept of "intercultural competence," as coined by Zarate, and that of Hirsch's "cultural literacy," later refined by Kramsch, as "intercultural literacy." Tokikai, in view of the future of language policy in Japan, concluded with "intercultural communicative literacy;" a judicious way, it seems, of succinctly drawing out some of the key factors at play.

The Sunday program also featured the Teacher Education Forum, which discussed: "Can Language and Culture go Hand in Hand?" Anthony Robins led the discussion, opening the forum on a variety of key issues pertaining to the topic: the changing attitudes to culture, the issues of language and culture at the elementary school level, the position of English as a lingua franca and how it is used for communication between non-natives. Daniele Allard, taking a different angle, then gave examples of the impact of L1 interferences in L2 acquisition, namely in the context of Japanese students acquiring English, followed by some suggestions as to how to deal with such interferences. Finally, Brian Cullen discussed and demonstrated how he introduces students to Irish culture. Cullen has recently published a book on the topic, which, to borrow his own terms, is indeed, "a labour of love."

It was of course possible to choose from a large number of other presentations on a wide variety of topics, visit the poster session hall, ask experts their opinion while discussing with

them informally (keynote and featured speakers volunteered for this session) or drop in once again on the materials exhibition, among others. The evening closed on a storytelling session by various JALT talents.

Day 4:

The morning program was as full as it had been during the two previous days. For my part, I attended another session with Jennifer Bassett in which she continued to discuss stories and their use in the classroom. I also listened in on Jones and Harris' review of Japanese language learning books, during which they gave many a valuable tip for those of us still in the process of acquiring Japanese.

The afternoon was dedicated to workshops led by featured speakers. Being interested in fluency, I attended both Michael McCarthy's and Susan Stempelski's workshops. The first was valuable in bringing participants up to par on the latest research on the topic while stimulating enriching discussion, and the second took a more practical approach, with tips for use in the classroom.

Concluding remarks :

I was pleased with the JALT 2005 Conference. From an organizational and logistics point of view, it ran smoothly. Here's a heartfelt "Thank you" to all those involved in making it possible, as well as to all those who made it such a vibrant event. In addition to a wide choice of quality presentations, JALT featured many special and social events, as well as a rich materials exhibition. I was challenged, stimulated and inspired. I am now looking forward to JALT 2006 (Kitakyushu next November).

Interview with a Japan Exchange Teacher (JET) 3

This is the third in a series of interviews with participants or former participants in the Japan Exchange Teacher (JET) scheme. This time we have an interview with Dave Barker, two-year JET in Sapporo and somewhat a veteran, having come to Japan in 1994.

Dave is British, from Wales. He lived in Sapporo for eight years. He is currently working at the Nagoya Women's University as head of the Department of English.

Now to the questions:

ETE: Having asked the previous two interviewees 'What is JET' I think we have a pretty good idea what JET is, so I'm going to ask you 'what does JET mean for you'?

DB: JET is a clever idea by the Japanese government. I believe that one of the main purposes of the JET programme is to attract high-flying, university graduates who will have a good time in Japan, fall in love with Japan, learn a bit of Japanese and then go back to their own countries and go into government service or other high-ranking jobs. Basically, plant the seeds and then twenty years down the line you'll have all these people who love Japan in high places.

ETE: Creating ambassadors for Japan?

DB: Yes, exactly. It's a very clever idea, which I think might have been a response to some of the negative feelings towards Japan in America in the late 70s and early 80s. Anyway, I think partly that and partly just having the students see and speak to a foreigner. For me, it was fabulous. I can't think of a better way to come to Japan, get set up and learn Japanese.

ETE: So you were quite interested in learning Japanese?

DB: Very much so, yes. I started studying in Singapore and that was a main goal when I came here.

ETE: So, you were in Singapore?

DB: Yes, I was there for two years, teaching English in a language school there.

ETE: So you weren't a fresh graduate, so to speak?

DB: No, I worked for two years in the police and then I went to International House in London and did my certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (RSA) and then I went to Singapore for two years.

ETE: You joined the JET programme primarily to learn Japanese…

DB: I wanted to teach in Japan and as I was already a teacher it seemed the easiest, least expensive and most sensible way to start in Japan. I was going to do it for a year to see how I liked it and then try to get a better teaching job. At the time I didn't know about the eikawa schools so they weren't an option.

ETE: What qualities do you think they were looking for when you were interviewed?

DB: That's quite interesting actually because when I decided to leave the police I applied to the JET programme and didn't even get an interview. Then after living in Singapore I applied again, got an interview and passed. What was different was, a) I had a teaching qualification, b) I had two years teaching experience in Asia and c) I had started learning Japanese, so I think those must have been the things they were looking for.

ETE: How much Japanese study had you done in Singapore?

DB: Not a great deal but I don't think the interviewers wanted people who had a high level of Japanese. They wanted somebody who was keen, somebody who was interested.

ETE: The previous two interviewees were fresh graduates when they joined the JET programme so I asked them how well prepared they felt when they first entered the classroom. Obviously, it was different for you being a teacher already.

DB: I was never nervous about that because it was what I did. It was the other way round really, I was a bit arrogant really…

ETE: (laughs)

DB: …I thought, 'I know more than these teachers about teaching'. In some ways I did and some ways I didn't. A friend and I used to have a joke for the Japanese teachers we worked with. We used to say, 'The good news is that we're team teaching, the bad news is that you're on the bench'! Our experience varied greatly according to the JTE we were working with. Some of them were very good teachers but they didn't give us any preparation. We used to turn up and the JTE would give us a lesson plan that said, 'Teacher greets students', 'Students greet teacher', 'Teacher introduces himself and his country', 'Students ask questions' and 'Final greeting'.

ETE: How accurately did the term 'Assistant English Teacher' reflect your actual role in the classroom?

DB: Well, it wasn't very accurate at all because I was doing most of the actual teaching. Most of the Japanese teachers were happy to have someone who actually knew something about teaching so they used to say, 'You teach and I'll watch'. I guess it was interesting for them to see how someone else did it. Some of the JTEs were very interested in team teaching but others were completely disinterested. On one occasion I was in a school for a week and on the Friday, after the bell had gone for the class, the JTE came up to me and said, 'Come on then'. I asked if there was a lesson plan and he said, 'no, not really, I'm sure they'll ask you some questions'. We went to the classroom where he introduced me and then proceeded to pick up a chair, put it in the corridor and go to sleep on it!

ETE: Was there any input on teaching methodology from the JET programme?

DB: No, actually I saw it as part of my job to help the JTEs by showing them some different teaching methodologies.

ETE: What you're saying is quite different to the experiences of the previous two interviewees.

DB: I was unusual in my group because I was the only one with any teaching experience.

ETE: When was this?

DB: 1994. I came here in July 1994.

ETE: How many JETs were there in Sapporo then?

DB: Either six or eight. I think it was eight but we were an expansion. I think there had been only four or five previously. I think now there are forty-something.

ETE: Did you have any pre-conceived ideas about teaching in Japan that were either proven completely right or completely wrong once you started?

DB: Not really because I had quite a good idea what to expect because I had taught Japanese students in Singapore already. I was quite surprised with the way the teachers were, for example smoking while talking to the children. That was a huge shock. Also, that they were not as rigid and formal as I expected them to be. The relationship between students and teacher was like, friends. Once I saw a female teacher that I had been working with playing volleyball with the kids and I was struck by the fact that I couldn't tell the teacher from the students.

ETE: How long were you a JET?

DB: Two years.

ETE: So you finished being a JET in 1996, nearly ten years ago. What have you been doing in the last ten years?

DB: After I finished on the JET programme I planned to go back to Britain and go to law school but I realized that I really liked teaching and I loved living in Sapporo. So, I went back to Britain and did the RSA Diploma and that took me a year because there was two months of teacher training and then the written examinations weren't for another eight months. Then I worked in Sapporo until 2003. I worked in an eikawa school for a year and then I got my first part time university job. Then I did the university circuit for three years and then got a full time job in 2000. I worked there for three years but it was going nowhere. The university said that the pay would never go up and I would never have more than a one-year contract. I think also that I got professionally stale. I began to wonder 'am I really any good at this?' Or was I just one of these 'backpackers-who-stayed'? So, in the summer of 2002 I went back to Britain to work in a summer school in Oxford for a month, just to see if I could still hack it in the multilingual classroom, teaching high-level students and dealing with Europeans and people from the

Middle East. I really enjoyed myself there so when I came back I applied for a job in a language school in New Zealand.

ETE: Why New Zealand?

DB: Well, I had a friend form New Zealand, I liked outdoor sports, I'd always wondered about New Zealand and at the time the language schools in New Zealand were booming. Anyway, they were quite happy to take me though one interesting thing is that they were initially wary of me because they said I had been in Japan too long.

ETE: Too long?

DB: Yes, my boss said it wasn't only Japan but being anywhere for so long often leads to teachers who are incapable of teaching multilingual classes. Also teachers who work in Japan don't have a good reputation for professional development. Anyway, I worked in New Zealand for a year and really enjoyed myself. I also realized that the things I had been doing in Japan were perfectly fine and in some cases were groundbreaking in New Zealand. That gave me a lot of confidence so I decided to come back. So, here I am.

ETE: You've mentioned the RSA Diploma already but have you done any other professional development?

DB: Yes, I did the Masters in Applied Linguistics from 1998-2000. I did that through Macquarie University. Now, I'm working at Nagoya Women's University and I've just started a PhD with Leeds Metropolitan University in Britain. My supervisor is Brian Tomlinson who is a very well known teacher educator, so I'm quite excited about that. My topic is looking at Japanese students speaking to each other in English outside the classroom, that is, adopting English as their language of communication within a specified environment, which in my case is the university environment.

ETE: Sounds interesting…

DB: I've been interested in this for several years now and I've set up programmes to encourage this in Sapporo and at Nagoya Women's University, so I've got a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest that it's a 'good thing'. Now I want to back that up with some study and research.

ETE: That's all of my prepared questions. Is there anything you'd like to add?

DB: Yes. I don't have any regrets about my time on the JET programme at all. I really enjoyed it and I'd recommend it to anybody who is interested in coming to Japan.

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

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

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