

Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education and Development SIG Newsletter

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Editor: Simon Lees <simich(at)gol.com>

And Now a Word from...The Coordinator

Greetings to the TED membership. You are cordially invited to attend the TED SIG Annual General Meeting at the national conference in Tokyo. The meeting is on Sunday morning (November 20) from 9 to 10am in Reception Hall 3. This is an early hour for an AGM, but I think you'll be able to get away before 10 and catch some great presentations that morning, too!

The main duty at hand is to ratify our new bilingual constitution. It has already been accepted by the Board of Directors at the EBM, so we just need to formally ratify it as a group, notify the Board, and then we have a working constitution. In addition, of course we'll hear brief reports from the SIG Officers, and discuss any new business or questions that come up.

Otherwise, I hope you will join us at the many interesting sessions that are being given under the aegis of the TED SIG. Foremost, of course, is the Featured Speaker Workshop given by our sponsored speaker Professor Keith Johnson (co-sponsor CUE SIG), who will be talking about teacher expertise. This FS workshop is on Saturday, Nov. 19, from 3:50 to 5:20pm in Room 106. Prof. Johnson will also be taking questions in an open Q&A session at 6:10-7:10 that same day, in Room 307.

Also, please plan to join us at the Joint SIG FORUM event, on Sunday from 11:30-1pm (Room 310). This is an innovative event organized primarily by our hard-working Program Chair, Peter Hourdequin, in which the presenters will share brief stories, using a "kamishibai" approach via iPads, laptops, and good old paper. Keith Johnson will be a respondent in the session and will provide feedback to the speakers. Both CUE and TED members have signed up for this joint Forum session.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM and at the conference!

Best wishes,

Deryn Verity

Coordinator, TED SIG

And Now a Word from...The Editor

Hello and welcome to the Conference edition of *Explorations in Teacher Education* (Volume 19, Issue 2), the newsletter of the Teacher Education and **Development** Special Interest Group (TED SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

This newsletter has been timed to coincide with the JALT National Conference 2011 (November 18-21) at the National Olympics Memorial Center, Yoyogi, Tokyo. As you have probably already noticed, information about the Teacher Education and Development SIG events at the conference is detailed on page 2. In addition, beginning on page 31 you will find a schedule for all the presentations which are associated with Teacher Education.

This issue of the newsletter has four articles. Two are from regular contributors Anthony Robins (former TED SIG Coordinator and current Chairman of the JALT Grants Committee) and Melissa Senga, one is multi-authored by Paul Tanner (a regular contributor), Takehiro Sato and Satoko Osawa, while the other is a debut piece by Richard Miller, who incidentally, will be presenting at the conference on Sunday morning between 9 and 10am in room 107. Richard Miller's article is entitled, "The More You Learn, the More You Earn," and it covers some of the same ground as his presentation about The Academic CV. Melissa Senga's article is the second part of "Do You Have Access to Ubiquitous Technology?" seen in the previous issue. The article by Paul Tanner, Takehiro Sato and Satoko Osawa is, "Can Your Students Read Cursive Writing?" I have to confess that when this article was submitted I didn't think it would be very interesting, however I found it to be surprisingly absorbing. Anthony Robins' article, "Visits Bringing Contrasting Cultures," is a report on his continuing project to bring visitors to his classroom to provide some interest and stimulation for his students. It has some connections to his article published in *Explorations in Teacher Education*, Volume 18, Issue 2.

Hope you enjoy the issue,

Simon Lees,

Editor,

Explorations in Teacher Education

**Can Your Students Read Cursive Writing?
Survey of University Students Concerning Cursive Writing Literacy**

Paul Tanner, Aichi Bunkyo University

Takehiro Sato, Nagoya University

Satoko Osawa, Suzuka University of Medical Science

Introduction

Learning cursive English has a number of benefits both for L1 and L2 learners. For example, research gathered by Peveryly (2006) and Graham (2009-2010) shows that handwriting fluency aids the quantity and quality of actual writing. This paper will first explain some of the benefits of cursive writing, and examine official Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) policy towards the teaching of handwriting. Then, a survey administered to university English language students concerning their cursive writing instruction and literacy will be explained and analyzed. A comparison between handwriting literacy demonstrated by surveyed Japanese students of English and early handwriting instruction in the US will be made. Finally, this paper will draw conclusions and offer recommendations for English language teachers concerning the use and teaching of cursive writing.

Benefits of cursive writing

Although much cursive English research focuses on elementary school age native speakers, this paper will demonstrate that the benefits of cursive writing fluency can be applied to university-age Japanese students of English. If handwriting is to be functional and done with ease, it must be fluent and automatic. Steve Graham of Vanderbilt University has studied this issue extensively. He defines handwriting fluency as “speed in writing,” (Graham and Miller, 1980). Learning cursive leads to better reading skills by helping learners match symbols to sounds, and recognize patterns and letter associations. At a higher level, greater writing speed lessens the burden on working memory. This allows the writer to allocate working memory towards creating good reader-friendly prose (Peveryly, 2006). Researchers such as Berninger and Fuller (1992) and Biemiller et al (1993) have found a relatively high correlation between handwriting fluency and composing speed (ranging from .47 to .83), as cited in Graham and Weintraub (1996). Writing in cursive is faster than printing. For example, Suen (1983) found that cursive writing was about 40% faster than manuscript printing. Finally, cursive writing evokes a sense of visual order, beauty, and individuality (Florey, 2009; Kelly 2007; Hamstra-Bletz, and Blote, 1990).

Conversely, handwriting that is not fluent will reap none of the benefits listed previously. If a writer must devote considerable attention to the mechanical demands of handwriting, it may cause the

writer to forget already developed intentions or disrupt planning about the next unit of text to be written (Scardamailia et al 1982). Graham and Weintraub (1996) add that a slow rate of handwriting may not be fast enough to keep up with a writer's thoughts, and can interfere with content production and planning. Further, Graham (1992) notes that difficulties in writing affect how frequently people write, and affect perceptions of their individual capabilities.

Of course keyboarding skills can also provide the automaticity that cursive writing skills can bring. Thus, typing could also aid in writing English by lessening the demands on working memory. The authors acknowledge the benefits of learning keyboarding skills. However, learning cursive writing has its own benefits. Longcamp et al (2005) cite evidence that strongly suggests that writing movements are involved in letter memorization. Certainly this is the technique Japanese people are taught to memorize *kanji*. Although anecdotal, people in Japan can be seen "writing" in their palm when they are trying to remember a complex kanji character. In their study, Longcamp et al (2005) worked with young learners (age 3-5) of English writing. One group learned letter recognition by writing, and the other learned letter recognition by typing. The results showed that handwriting training led to better letter recognition than typing. Longcamp's study concludes that writing letters facilitates their memorization and subsequent recognition. Handwriting provides on-line signals from several sources, including vision, motor commands, and kinesthetic feedback, while no such spatio-temporal pattern occurs in typewriting. Also, attention differences are apparent, since learning to write a letter may require a deeper level of processing than finding a letter on a keyboard (p. 77). The authors do not wish to denigrate keyboarding; however, this paper seeks to show the merits of learning handwriting.

Official MEXT policy

The Ministry of Education, MOE (now MEXT) policy concerning the teaching of English handwriting in Japan has a long, fluctuating history, which leads to some confusion concerning the present. A MOE directive was made in 1958 and implemented in 1961 which called for the teaching of English block style and cursive handwriting in junior high schools (Ministry of Education, 1958). From 1968 to 1989, official MOE policy directed that block style and cursive should be taught (Ministry of Education, 1969, 1989). A 1980 MOE directive stated that foreign language instruction requires reading and writing letters: "It is important for students to get accustomed to block style and cursive style alphabets." (Ministry of Education, 1980) Proposed in 1998 and taking effect in 2002, the teaching of cursive writing is no longer required (Ministry of Education, 1998). In the MEXT Course of Study published in 2008, official MEXT policy in the Guidelines for Teachers directed that the teaching of cursive writing is optional, depending on student levels (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2008).

Cursive handwriting literacy survey of Japanese university students

The authors surveyed 292 university students from five Chubu area public and private universities concerning their ability to read and write cursive handwriting. Their fields of study included agriculture, liberal studies, humanities, world Englishes, pharmacy, English literature, business, and economics. The survey was written in Japanese and was administered in an English language classroom setting. The survey consisted of three parts: a history and self-assessment, a cursive writing exercise, and a cursive reading check. The surveys were scored by the individual teachers who administered the surveys.

Results of the self-assessment

85% of respondents expressed having some difficulty in writing cursive letters, while 76% expressed having difficulty reading cursive. 31% of respondents had learned cursive in school, while 69% had not. Of the 31% who had been taught, 80% learned cursive in junior high, 16% in elementary school, while 4% learned in high school. 62% of respondents who received instruction, did so for only one week! 9% learned for a month, 5% for a semester, and 24% classified their learning as “other.” In response to the question, “Did your teacher use cursive?” 50% of respondents answered “never,” 44% said “usually not,” and 4% answered “usually.” Of the 69% who had not been taught cursive, 42% claimed they taught themselves. A final question asked, “Would you like to be able to read and write cursive handwriting?” 14% of respondents strongly want to have this skill, 49% answered “yes,” 27% claimed they “didn’t know,” 8% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. Unsurprisingly, a higher percentage of English majors expressed an interest in reading and writing cursive script, with 62% expressing a “desire to read and write cursive” and 19% expressing a “strong desire.” (See Appendix A)

Results of cursive writing section

The cursive writing exercise asked students to read ten words and write the cursive script next to the word. The word list included some medical terms. The words were: *Alzheimer*, *back*, *although*, *develop*, *question*, *injection*, *next*, *transforms*, *rainbow*, and *spray*. 14% of the respondents wrote all words and letters without mistakes, while 24% could not write any letters correctly. The mean score was 52%. The most frequently mistaken letters were z (only 22% correct), f (30%), r (34%), j (37%), and x (41% correct). (See Appendix B)

Results of cursive reading section

The cursive reading section asked participants to read 12 words written in cursive and print the letters. Medical terms were used exclusively, which allowed participants little room for guessing familiar words. The list included *cytoplasm*, *quinine*, *dehydrogenase*, *acylate*, *glucoside*, *xanthone*,

garcinia, vacuole, flocked swabs, enzyme, benzoxazolin, and juxtapose. Having students reproduce a sentence containing every letter of the alphabet (pangrams such as “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”) would have provided too many context clues which could make the data unreliable. Reading proved much easier than writing. 13 letters had correct responses of more than 80% (*a, d, g, i, j, m, n, p, t, n, o, h, x, y*). 6% of respondents recognized all letters, while 5% did not print any responses. The mean score was 70%. The lowest percentage of correct responses included the letters *c* (22% correct), *z* (28%), *r* (38%), and *f* (45%). (See Appendix B)

Survey analysis

While almost 80% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in writing and reading cursive letters, they are not indifferent. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) want to have this skill. In addition, the fact that 42% of respondents who had not been taught cursive stated that they taught themselves illustrates both a knowledge of and interest in cursive writing.

It can be inferred from the survey that cursive writing is not a difficult skill to learn. Only just over one-third of respondents learned cursive in school, and more than 90% of teachers did not use it in class. Yet the mean score of the writing section was 52% and that of the reading section was 70%. This reveals that students have gained an understanding of the skills, but have not achieved a mastery or the automaticity that makes cursive writing beneficial.

Comparison with the United States

Although our survey concerns English cursive for second language students at the university level, certain comparisons with the US can be enlightening. As in Japan, fewer people are learning and using cursive writing, and less time is devoted to its study. In the US, students generally learn handwriting in the first three grades of elementary school for about 45 minutes a week (Graham, 2009-2010). In the 1950s, the average was about two hours a week (Florey, 2009). In recent years, only third grade students typically learn cursive writing. After third grade, it is generally not taught (Graham, 2009-2010; Florey, 2009). As in Japan, keyboarding skills are gaining priority at the expense of handwriting.

Legibility difficulties in elementary school students range from 12% to 44%, according to studies by Graham (2009-2010). The most difficult letters for American students are *q, j, z, u, n,* and *k*. These six letters account for 48% of omissions, miscues, and illegible attempts. The letters *q, z, u, a* and *j* account for 54% of all miscues (Graham, 2009-2010, See Appendix B).

The widespread lack of a thorough foundation in handwriting has a number of repercussions. Fewer people are using cursive writing. For example, in the essay portion of the SAT test in 2007,

only 15% of applicants chose to use cursive script (Breen, 2009). Handwriting improvement expert Kate Gladstone (in Starr, 2007) reports that doctors' poor handwriting endangers one in ten patients' health, and also costs approximately \$200 million yearly through mistakes in the workplace.

Conclusion and recommendations

University teachers in Japan should not make the assumption that students can read and write in cursive. Particularly when working with English majors, teachers might consider teaching cursive and reviewing it to ensure students achieve the automaticity level. To do this, students should practice writing connected text. Students can develop an appreciation of cursive writing by looking at examples, both in everyday life (Coca-Cola, for example), or by examining famous handwritten documents or letters from famous people. (The Gettysburg Address and John Lennon's *Imagine* are just two interesting examples). Students can be assigned to bring in examples to spur an interest or help students make a connection to a person or event from the past. Copying a favorite song lyric or poem can provide an interesting cursive writing practice.

Students should be aware that there are different levels of neatness. Notes or rough drafts do not require the neatness and care of a final draft or thank-you note. Finally, we would suggest that teachers downplay the teaching of capital letters. They comprise only 2% of all writing (Gladstone, cited in Florey, 2009), and therefore do not justify the extra time required to learn them. Students can print the capital letters and write the lower case letters in cursive. This also helps students develop their own style of handwriting (Tarnopol and Feldman, 1987), something less possible with the various Japanese alphabets. Inspired students can even enter the World Handwriting Contest, which is open to anyone.

Cursive writing is in danger of extinction due to disuse and new technology. Without a concerted effort to teach and use cursive, people may lose an important link to history and the past. 63% of the university students taking part in this study showed an interest in learning cursive writing, while 83% of English majors were interested in learning it. It is only fitting that English teachers assist their students in learning cursive, to honor student interest and to help connect them to the historical handwritten world.

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Websites

World Handwriting Contest: handwritingrepair.info/WHAC/rules.html

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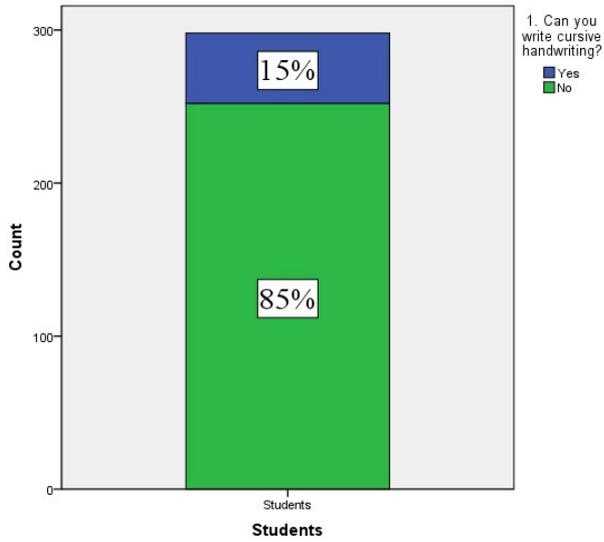
Takehiro Sato is a Designated Assistant Professor at Nagoya University, working in the on-line program for English study. He is in the final stages of his doctoral dissertation on interactive journal writing.

Satoko Osawa is an Assistant Professor at Suzuka University of Medical Science, where she teaches English to science majors. Her research interest is generative grammar.

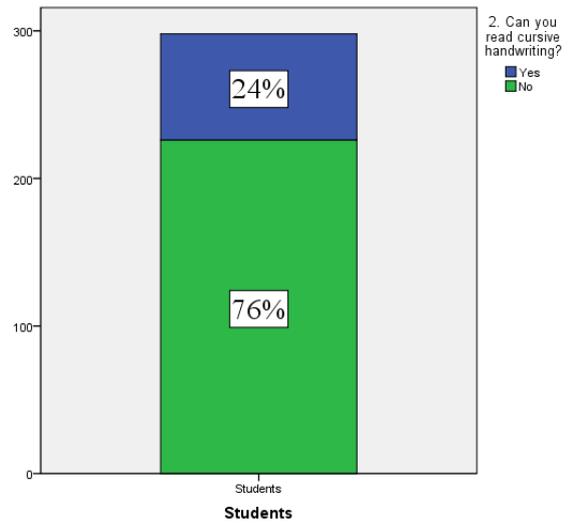
Appendix A

Student self-assessment

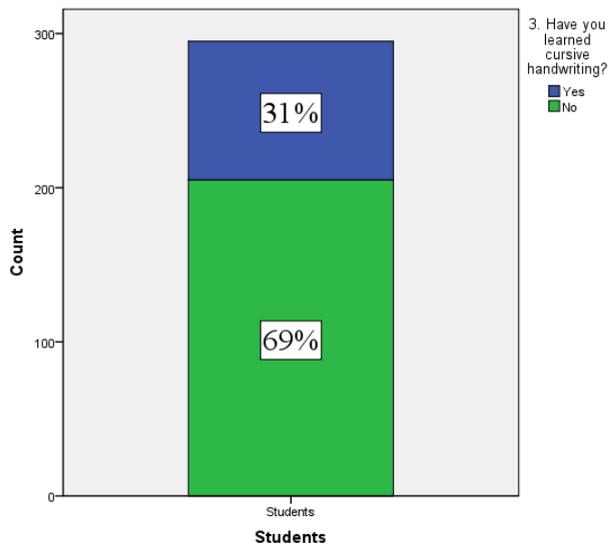
1. Can you write cursive handwriting?



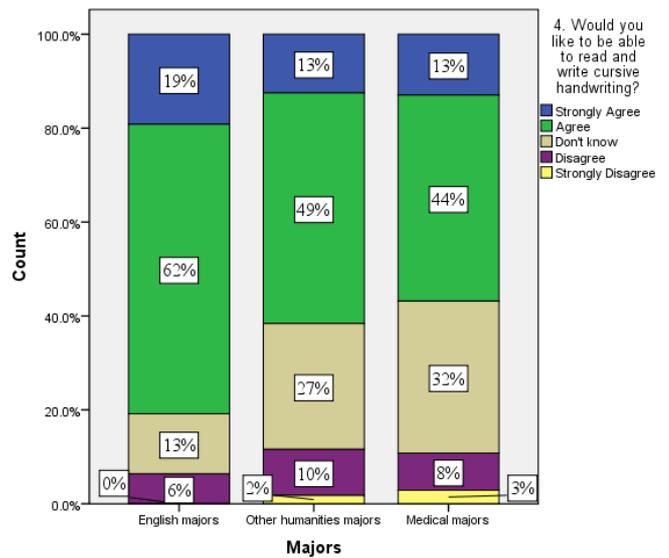
2. Can you read cursive handwriting?



3. Have you learned cursive handwriting?



4. Would you like to be able to read and write cursive handwriting?



Appendix B
Result of Handwriting Surveys

	Japanese university students		American elementary students	
	able to write	able to read	difficult to write	difficult to read
<i>a</i>	63%	86%		X
<i>b</i>	53%	52%		
<i>c</i>	61%	<u>22%</u>		
<i>d</i>	57%	85%		
<i>e</i>	61%	74%		
<i>f</i>	<u>30%</u>	<u>45%</u>		
<i>g</i>	60%	85%		
<i>h</i>	60%	88%		
<i>i</i>	59%	90%		
<i>j</i>	<u>37%</u>	80%	X	X
<i>k</i>	58%	61%	X	
<i>l</i>	63%	75%		
<i>m</i>	54%	89%		
<i>n</i>	59%	89%	X	
<i>o</i>	61%	88%		
<i>p</i>	51%	90%		
<i>q</i>	53%	60%	X	X
<i>r</i>	<u>34%</u>	<u>38%</u>		
<i>s</i>	42%	53%		
<i>t</i>	62%	82%		
<i>u</i>	61%	70%	X	X
<i>v</i>	48%	77%		
<i>w</i>	46%	53%		
<i>x</i>	<u>41%</u>	83%		
<i>y</i>	54%	82%		
<i>z</i>	<u>22%</u>	<u>28%</u>	X	X

sources: (Japanese students) author surveys (American students) Graham, 2009-2010

Visits Bringing Contrasting Cultures

Anthony Robins, Aichi University of Education, <anthonyrobins(at)yahoo.com>

Introduction

Although opportunities have increased for school students to interact with people from abroad, most notably ALT teachers through the JET scheme and more recent variations, total time and variety of nationalities still remain limited. To contribute a little to improving this situation, I have collaborated with former students who are now teachers, to provide more opportunity for interaction through visits by international students who are studying at the university where I teach. This article introduces one such visit in February 2011 and the views of some of the students who took part.

Although we had not had any face to face contact for six years, partly reflecting her workload, I have remained in contact with a student who graduated in 2004. She had undertaken both undergraduate and graduate studies with a year abroad at a sister university as well. She is now teaching at her second public high school and is taking a strong interest in MEXT's policy of high school classes being in English.

Only about 2.5% of the student body at my university consists of international students. They are studying on various bases, including Japanese government scholarships and fee-waiver arrangements with sister universities. While the majority of students are from China, the visit involved five students from contrasting backgrounds, both undergraduates and postgraduates, from Germany, Mexico, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela. I already knew three of them, as they act as tutors in the university's 'immersion room'. In addition, two of those three have joined one of my classes throughout the past semester. A further contrast was provided by myself, originally from England, whose presence was useful in offering another country but necessary in acting as the driver to reduce costs in reaching the school. Driving time, including use of expressways, was 75 minutes in the morning but markedly longer because of congestion on the return journey.

The organisation of the day and class activities

The school visited is a public high school located in a semi-rural part of Aichi Prefecture, dating from 1968. With six classes in each of the three grades, it has approximately 720 students. To maximise contact with students, we were involved in English lessons with all six second year classes, spanning morning to mid-afternoon. This is one of three high schools for a prefectural ALT, from Jamaica, and he joined one of the classes with Teacher A.

The day's timetable:

0645: Departure from home to pick up the international students

0715: Departure from the university

0830: Meeting with the school principal

0845: Introduction to the day's activities

0900-0950: First two classes (Teachers B and C)

1000-1050: Free period

1100-1150: Second two classes (Teachers B and C)

1200-1250: Fifth class (Teacher A)

1250-1310: Cleaning Time

1315-1345: Lunch

1345-1435: Sixth Class (Teacher A)

1445-1535: Free period but discussion with Teacher A and ALT

1545: Departure and stop at a local sightseeing spot

1845: Return to university

1915: Return home

As can be seen from the summary above, we covered four classes in two fifty minutes lesson periods by visiting each for half the lesson, and covered the other two for a whole lesson each. The former four classes were taught by two of the former student's colleagues (Teachers B and C) and the latter two classes by the former student herself (Teacher A). Given the more limited time in the former classes, interaction was less developed than in the latter classes.

We had been asked to prepare about six multiple-choice questions about our countries which we could put to students and we took some realia, such as pictures from our countries, to encourage communication. While all six classes involved each of us rotating between groups of around six students, the degree of 'success' varied partly because of the degree of preparation. While Teacher A, with more visiting time available, had got students to prepare a section when they told us about aspects of Japan, such as festivals or school life, students in Teacher B's classes had lists of questions ready while students and groups in Teacher C's classes were rather more patchy in their degree of preparedness. Although lists of questions might appear mechanical, students could choose from them and it meant that the limited time could be used more effectively. The fact that we had questions too reduced any interrogation overtones!

Six of us interacting with six groups of six or seven students worked numerically and accorded with my experience that it works better than a visitor/visitors plus whole class approach (Robins, 2010). We, armed with portable chairs, moved rather than the students, and it is useful to note that visitors

should try to position themselves in the middle rather than at the end of groups. Before joining the groups, some ice-breaking activity was necessary. One of the international students suggested that students guess which of the visitors were which nationality. While a little time-consuming, it was a source of a lot of humour, both for us and the students.

As can be seen from the time summary above, the day was quite intensive, added to by further interaction with students, who joined both voluntarily and rather more reluctantly, over lunch.

Visitor Feedback

I asked the five students to give me feedback based on a brief questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Three replied (from Germany, Spain, and the United States), and gave insights, including as to what could be changed in the future. The main findings were, firstly, that they all felt that the time to interact with any one group was too limited and resulted in not having enough chance to get beyond initial opening topics and onto more challenging, even deeper points. However, there was the feeling that the school students should have the chance to experience contrasting opportunities through talking to as many of the visitors as possible. In fact, students in none of the classes had the chance to talk to all of the visitors. Where there was more time (classes with Teacher A), that time was used for more time per group, rather than more groups. Secondly, the visiting students were struck by the mixed-abilities in each class, although each group seemed to mirror this, with the positive effect of stronger students supporting others. Teacher A indicated that classes were based on students specialising in sciences or students specialising in humanities, a division made from the second grade, rather than in relation to English level.

Contrasting the reactions of three students who replied to the questionnaire, the native-speaker was most generous, describing the level of the students (Q.1) as "pretty good". He also noted that some students were (Q.3), "very confident when talking to me", while "some of them were shy, but at that age it is normal to be shy." The others, with a background of studying English as a foreign language and a high level of English proficiency, were less forgiving, both of the students' proficiency and of the background to their English education. While the student from Spain considered that (Q.3), "the level of English of the students was low for their age", he also thought, "that their listening skills were better than I expected." Based on this and previous experience, he feels that (Q.2), "English classes are too much goal-(meaning examination) oriented in Japan," and that, "the methodology Japanese schools use to teach English is wrong (repetition, memorisation, English taught through Japanese...)." Similarly, the student from Germany considered that (Q.2), "when I was at that age, we were already more advanced in terms of vocabulary and also spoke a lot more," and that, "My lessons were almost completely in English, which also makes a big

difference." She felt that (Q.3) the students, "should learn more useful daily life vocabulary and just generally get to speak a lot more."

Perhaps our visit helped at least a little on the last point. As to changes for future visits (Q.4/Q.5), two of the students suggested that the visitors take the initiative in preparing class activities, something which certainly seems potentially positive for a follow-up visit.

Conclusion

The frequency for this kind of activity is constrained by school curriculums and availability of visitors such as international students who obviously have their own classes. In addition, there are transport costs involved. Public school budgets are limited as to how far they can contribute to such costs. On this occasion, we were provided with a free (and tasty) lunchbox, although payment has been necessary on other visits. We broached the possibility of another visit, possibly to be based on more input from us on the class content, as indicated above.

Finally, I would like to thank the school staff and students, as well as the five international students for their contributions to an enjoyable and stimulating day.

Pictures of the group can be seen at:

<http://www.kokusai.aichi-edu.ac.jp/1011/svisit.html>

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Appendix 1: Questions given to the international students for feedback

- 1: Was the English teaching and learning environment at the school similar or different to what you expected? Why?
- 2: Was it similar or different to your own experience of learning foreign languages at that age? How was it similar or different?
- 3: What did you think about the English level of the students?
- 4: Did you think that the activities we did which were suggested by the school were effective? Why? Why not?
- 5: What changes (of any kind) would you recommend for another high school visit in the future?

Do you have access to ubiquitous technology?

Melissa Senga, Kinjo Gakuin University, <senga(at)gol.com>

Part 2

What is the technology situation like at the institution where you teach? Do all students have laptops? Are students making their own pod or vodcasts? Do you have a class blog or wiki? Are your lessons posted on moodle? If you can answer yes to any of these questions then unfortunately you are in the minority.

While there are many proactive and innovative universities, courses and teachers in Japan, implementing wonderful ubiquitous technology and e-learning programs, this is not always the case. These days most language instructors are aware of the educational benefits that ICT (information and communication technology) can bring to students but often face difficulties from both the administration and students when they wish to use technology in a class.

There is a significant amount of research on the advantages of using various forms of digital media, for ESL/EFL teaching, both in and out of the classroom (Yamauchi 2009; Wang 2005; El-Bishouty et al. 2007). With the advent of Web 2.0, the way that technology can be used to motivate and assist students, appears to be limited only by the imagination. There are podcasts, vodcasts, wikis, blogs, chat, MALL (mobile assisted language learning), moodle, poodle (a cell phone based moodle), SMS vocabulary and other more specialized systems (see Zhang 2008). Many students are benefiting and having their language skills boosted in interesting and innovative ways thanks to the use of ICT and ubiquitous technologies. Many other students could also take advantage of these technologies but their institutions are either unaware of the possibilities or unwilling to spend money to enter the 21st century. Unfortunately, if the students and administration do not see the value, then no investment will be made in either hardware or software, and technologies that should be available to students to assist them in their learning and in reaching their full potential as citizens of the digital age, will not be available.

However, teachers in general want to do the best they possibly can for their students, under whatever circumstances they find themselves teaching. Although it is a far cry from what is happening at some of the larger and more progressive universities, I feel that it is also possible to have a positive impact on students language learning and technology use by making them aware of some of the Web 2.0 possibilities that are out there and giving them the chance to interact with these in the target language, in this case English. This is one example of what can be done.

Research Question

I wanted to know if a once a week class I was conducting at a university was having any impact on my students in regard to their interaction with technology and/ or their perceived gains in the L2, in this case English. As this was not a technologically advanced campus and many students had limited experience and interest in computers I looked specifically at using computers in the classroom and Web 2.0 activities.

Method

The students I worked with were all second year English majors at a small private women's university. In general both the language level and motivation level of the class was quite low, although there were several students who were both keen and had a slightly higher English level. It was an optional second semester class. Most students had done an introduction to computers class in the first semester where they learnt basic typing and word-processing skills, computer and internet vocabulary, how to navigate the course management package the university uses (in this case WebCT), using various websites for language learning and web searches, as well as using an on-line chat component and making a simple wiki-page.

The second semester class was seen as an extension of this with the aim of introducing students to more Web 2.0 technologies and hopefully making them competent and confident users of computers and the Internet in both Japanese and English.

It was decided that there would be a class blog and a wiki-site for the class. Although students were allocated weeks when they had to contribute to the blog, with writing and an image, they were encouraged to write on it at anytime and especially to comment on what others had written. While some students did comment on the blog several times, most only did their required contributions.

The wiki was set up as a way for students to share their work with the rest of the class. During the semester students were required to make three pages. The first was discussing their favourite movie, one was to display a PowerPoint presentation they made and the third was a simple webquest each student made. Although they were encouraged to collaborate with a partner on these tasks all chose to work independently, although sometimes friends chose the same topic. Also, although it was explained to them that they had the ability to change other students' pages if they wished, none did. I think as each page was considered to be owned by a student, rather than as a class project, it was seen as inappropriate. To ensure that students looked at the pages of other students they were required to complete and submit tasks in which they commented about other pages.

While most students had done the first semester introduction to the Internet and/ or were fairly familiar with ICT, not all were. Those who came into the course without much computer knowledge struggled at the beginning and were quite slow to complete the tasks. Also the less motivated and students with a lower English level were heard to complain about the workload on occasions, although all lessons were planned so that an average student, working reasonable conscientiously, could complete the task within the 90 minute class time. Despite the occasional grumble though, and surprisingly for an optional course, no student dropped out during the semester.

At the end of the course students were asked to fill in a questionnaire about the course (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 1 looked at their impression of the course overall and if they felt it had improved their English skills, their computer skills or their Internet skills. Section 2 was about what aspects of the course they felt had been useful and Section 3 asked what parts they had found interesting. There was also a comments section at the end where they were asked if they would recommend this course to a friend and why or why not. For each statement in the first 3 sections the students were asked to give it a rating from 1 – not at all, to 5 – yes, a lot.

Results

In general, the response was very positive. Out of 14 students, 16 rated the course as a 3 or above for enjoyment and 12 out of 16 students gave a 4 or above for usefulness. Fifteen out of the 16 also gave a 3 or above for using computers more in the future. In Section 2, looking at how the students perceived the usefulness of tasks, making a PowerPoint presentation was rated the highest. The least useful activity was seen as writing on the blog although reading what others wrote on the blog was rated quite highly. In Section 3, asking about interest, once again making the PowerPoint was the highest rating along with reading what other students had written on the wiki pages and looking at other student's PowerPoint's. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed results.)

In the comments, all students said they would recommend the course to their friends. Most said it was useful, fun to look at other student's pages and it improved their English. For example,

“Yes I would. Because I could know much information around the world and my reading skill improved. Making own page was difficult and hard but I enjoyed looking other students page.”

“Yes. Because this class is interesting and we can get computer skills as using computer. And we can know other students likes or some interesting writing or thinking.”

Discussion

Looking at the results of the questionnaire, the comments, and the fact that no student dropped out

of the class or failed it through lack of effort, I consider the class a success. For most students it was the first time for them to make their own wiki page, write on a blog, surf the web in English and make a PowerPoint presentation. Although the OS on the computers they used was in Japanese, I conducted the class entirely in English and used the English terms rather than the Japanese ones they saw on their computers, although at first I often pointed out where a command was.

Apart from the fact that most students found the activities in the course enjoyable and useful, it was also interesting to note how highly they rated looking at what other students had produced. If I ever conduct a similar class I will ensure that this component is included again. That students value reading what others have written and feel it is of more use than writing themselves, has also featured in other studies of computer use in ESL/EFL courses. (Nagatomo, 2006).

Compared to some of the uses of technology in language learning (see Zhang 2008 for details of: MALL – mobile assisted language learning, CLUE – Collaborative Learning Support System with a Ubiquitous Environment, and PERKAM – PERsonalized Knowledge Awareness Map), the class I conducted might seem very primitive. However given the lack of computer literacy of my students and the lack of technology available for use, I felt the class was a good match for the students and more importantly gave them confidence and interest in pursuing various ICT learning strategies further. While much of the literature on technology in language teaching and learning claims it promotes learner autonomy, several studies have recently been conducted that show that far from the technology automatically causing autonomy, just as in other learning situations, the teacher needs to support the learners' progress toward autonomy. In an educational setting teachers need to scaffold instruction, using technology and take learners up one level at a time (Murray 2005). In this instance my learners were very much on the first level and needed basic literacy skills as well as an introduction to the technology.

Both reading and using the new technologies, whether in one's first or other languages, is now often referred to as digital literacy. This suggests moving from more than just computer literacy, which is often narrowly seen as how to use software or specific hardware, to encompass communicating online and how to access, evaluate and use information presented in an electronic medium. For language learners, such reading and use includes learning digital literacy in another language, learning how to navigate the new technologies and also learning how to read digital texts such as web pages.

Little research has been conducted on how language learners navigate the web in their target language. However research with native speakers concludes that screen reading is more difficult than print reading and that in addition to reading the Web, learners also need to learn how to

construct knowledge from a nonlinear, hypertext navigation. Second language learners, even if quite fluent readers of print text, have difficulties reading texts specific to the web, such as home pages, have difficulty in determining which online texts have reliable information, lack skills for evaluating non-text features such as visuals and advertisements and have difficulty modifying rather than copying online texts. However, the skills of literacy to navigate the Web are essential for life, whether personal, social or educational, in an increasingly digital world. For many learners, these skills will need to be in an L2, especially English because it still dominates information on the Web (Murray 2005).

While I don't pretend that my students became proficient in all these areas, I do hope that I have taken them off the first rung of the ladder leading to digital literacy, which in the 21st century is an essential factor in life, not just language learning.

Conclusion

As we look back at 2010, "the year in which realizing the ubiquitous society in which anyone can easily access and use a network anytime from anywhere and from any appliance" (MIC), was to be achieved, I have to think that u-Japan has not reached these goals. While there are amazing things happening in many institutions, this has not filtered down to the students who could probably use it most.

While I hope I have demonstrated what can be done to assist lower level students get to grips with some of the technologies out there, given more resources there is much more that could be done. Out of four universities I currently teach at, none have a wi-fi system across the whole campus. If I want to have the class use computers I need to book them well in advance and access is often limited to one or two classes a semester and where computers are more freely available they are out of date (more than eight years in some cases) and not maintained. There is certainly nothing "ubiquitous" about the use of technology in these instances.

So while the u-Japan policy was an admirable attempt at improving Japan's standing in the technology race of the 21st century, from where I am I can't say that it was a great success. In fact I would guess that the majority of students received no benefits from it at all. If Japan hopes to maintain its position as a leader in the academic and economic world there needs to be more ICT initiatives targeted at all students and institutions, not just the elite.

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Appendix 1

Internet Research Questionnaire

Please write one number next to each sentence.

1 – not at all, 2 – a little bit, 3 – it was OK, 4 – it was good, 5 – yes, a lot.

Part 1 Overall.....

- a) I enjoyed Internet Research –
- b) Internet Research was useful –
- c) Internet Research improved my English –
- d) Internet Research improved my internet skills –
- e) I feel I have better computer skills –
- f) I feel I have better computer skills in English -
- g) I think I will use a computer more in the future –

Part 2 A USEFUL part of Internet Research was

- a) Making my own wiki pages -
- b) Reading other students' wiki pages -
- c) Writing on the blog -
- d) Reading what other students wrote on the blog -
- e) Making a PowerPoint presentation -
- f) Looking at other students PowerPoint's -
- g) Making a web search -
- h) Doing other students' web searches –

Part 3 An INTERESTING part of Internet Research was

- a) Making my own wiki pages -
- b) Reading other students' wiki pages -
- c) Writing on the blog -
- d) Reading what other students wrote on the blog -
- e) Making a PowerPoint presentation -
- f) Looking at other students PowerPoint's -
- g) Making a web search -
- h) Doing other students' web searches -

Part 4

Would you recommend this course to a friend? Why or why not?

Results of Internet Research Questionnaire

	1- not at all	2-a little bit	3-it was OK	4-it was good	5-yes, a lot
Part 1- a	0	2	5	8	1
b	0	1	3	10	2
c	0	3	7	4	2
d	1	2	2	7	4
e	0	1	3	9	3
f	0	1	7	5	3
g	1	1	4	5	5
Part 2 - a	0	1	8	6	1
b	0	1	4	8	3
c	0	1	9	4	2
d	0	2	5	7	2
e	0	0	5	7	4
f	0	0	4	7	5
g	0	1	7	6	2
h	0	2	6	7	1
Part 3 - a	0	2	6	5	3
b	0	1	5	5	5
c	0	2	6	4	4
d	0	2	7	3	4
e	0	0	5	6	5
f	0	1	5	4	6
g	0	3	7	3	3
h	0	2	5	5	4

The More You Learn, the More You Earn

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On October 17th, 2010 the Moveable Feast was held at Osaka Gakuin University, where the main theme was teacher development, and what we, as educators, could benefit from learning. After first hearing about the conference, I started to realize that the more that I learned, the more that I earned (and, as I continue, it continues). Both learning and earning can be categorized in several ways, and the benefits are rather obvious to those who pursue that type of philosophy.

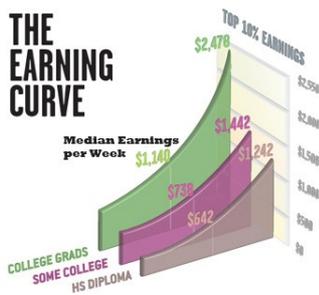
When most people think of 'earning', with respect to employment at least, the concept of monetary remuneration comes to mind. While this is true in many instances, earning can be much more broadly defined. As an example: earning as defined by The Farlex Dictionary is '1. To gain especially for the performance of service, labor, or work: *earned money by mowing lawns* .2. To acquire or deserve as a result of effort or action: *She earned a reputation as a hard worker*.3. To yield as return or profit: *a savings account that earns interest on deposited funds*' (Earn). When we, as educators embark on learning in its various forms, the rewards will most likely include the first definition, but will by no means be limited to that definition. The other defined earnings can be very valuable and important as well.

While earning can come in more than one form, learning can come in numerous forms, so for explanatory purposes, three are utilized here (though they can and do overlap): Formal learning is defined as formal learning and study with the end goal of degrees, diplomas or certificates; semi-formal learning includes taking classes, attending and giving seminars as well as at conferences; and informal learning is learning that is done on one's own through actions such as reading, discussions and media.

Formal Learning

The most obvious one and the one that tends to have the most profitable financial results, at least at the beginning (of course, once you get too far, it has the potential of diminishing monetary results later). As most people are aware, the more education one achieves, the better the salary—at least in theory (there is a very familiar quote that states that an average college grad will make one million dollars more than the average high school graduate—but that has been disproven by research, such as from Inside Higher Ed). However, there is a definite increase that can be earned with better education.

ESPN Sports published an excellent graph showing the differences:



(Lakin, 2010)

The wage increases can and do continue into graduate studies. An excellent case in point is the difference in pay in EFL in Japan from (at least average) English conversation teachers (where a bachelor's degree is the norm) versus university work (where, at least, a master's is the norm). But, there are the other 'earnings', which include deeper knowledge of the topic (particularly with, but not exclusively with respect to content based instruction CBI), better understanding of various university systems, research methodologies and academic writing to name a few.

Options available to educators who want to expand into other areas are numerous and include online as well as in traditional class programs. As far as the latter, traditional degree programs are available to Japan based educators, Temple University (<http://www.tuj.ac.jp>) in Osaka and Tokyo as well as Columbia Teachers College (<http://www.tc-japan.edu/>) (in Tokyo only) are two large American universities with that option. The in class options not only extend to them. For example, I have an American friend currently in a PhD. Program at a Japanese university (Kansai University). So, keep the Japanese university option in mind as well, if considering a traditional degree. Aside from degrees, there are the CELTA programmes that are run out of Kobe. As for non-traditional ways of studying, there are numerous options available and those options are growing all the time. The best advice I ever had was to find an area that really interests me, then research it and choose the best place that I can afford to apply to.

There are numerous benefits' to this type of education. As a personal example: One side benefit of completing an MBA was that it gave me the added advantage of having experience writing a dissertation with the standard dissertation sections to it. By the time I completed the degree, I had a deeper background in research methodologies through taking classes in the subject, and then through writing the dissertation. Because of that, I am better equipped to guide students through their 4th year thesis and to advise on some of the options that they have available to them.

Earnings

As most people who have completed a master's degree (at least) will contend, the monetary payoff can be immediate and long lasting. Personally I know that when I completed my master's of

education, it had paid for itself in increased remuneration within two years. Even the MBA (which was expensive) is paying for itself in money terms, but has already paid off in non-monetary earnings with better understanding of the materials I'm teaching and more enthusiasm through teaching classes I want to teach (business and economics). This is, however, a very personal example, and there are numerous other fields one can pursue. The best advice I've ever come across is, "do what you love and the money will follow". (Aaron, 1997)

It is safe to say that through formal studying we become more knowledgeable and we become better teachers. This is because of any number of ways, including; learning teaching theory, being forced ourselves to give presentations, (after all, being critiqued and peer reviewed raises the self awareness that we all have towards our pedagogical approaches to the classroom). In addition, our critical thinking and study skills improve through being involved in formal classroom settings.

Semi-formal Learning

Self improvement and learning is not limited to formal learning, going to conferences, attending seminars and taking classes are excellent ways to improve and increase earning power. While it may not seem as serious a route as formal learning and the earning power seems to be more leaning towards non-monetary gains, there are a number of things that can be learned, comprising skills along with knowledge. Keep in mind that I know of several people on hiring committees who were inclined *not* to hire non-JALT members who were applying for work. Also, conferences (particularly international ones) may have the effect of raising an application to the top of a hiring committee. Aside from that, there are almost always useful ideas that can be gained from attending conferences. Finally, it is a chance to interact with others and (in the case of education oriented conferences) keep up to date with the advances within the discipline.

Not to discount the monetary earning potential with semi-formal learning, there are networking opportunities, rarely found elsewhere in such abundance. This connects with the other side of earning which is non monetary. This includes keeping up with new trends, and finding that we are not the only ones in the situations we find ourselves in. Confidence tends to build in most who find out that they are not alone. As one participant stated during a final Q&A session, "once the door is closed, it is a lonely profession", and finding peers to share with is an excellent way of coping.

Informal Learning

While this broad category may overlap in some ways with semi-formal, there are a number of things that differentiate it, and make it valuable. With respect to the earning potential as far as money is concerned, it is seemingly the weakest, although, I do know of several cases where teachers were hired because of the specialized knowledge that they acquired through informal

learning. The best examples are in IT, but I have also seen it with film studies and geo-politics. As an example of the latter, I do know of one British teacher who is teaching in a lecturer position at a university without a graduate degree due to his acting experience.

This area of learning includes, watching TV news, reading books, experiences and discussions (among others). The biggest payoff might be with the better and more knowledgeable classes that the instructor can provide. Recently at Konan University's 'Peccha Kucha' night, there was an excellent presentation from one university teacher who uses Dungeons and Dragons in his classes to teach. That, I believe, shows that if the teacher is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and passionate about the topic, it can easily translate into a good and worthwhile class.



As an example of informal learning, I was introduced to the concept of Peak Oil, and I started reading up on the concepts of oil as well as world population, and the idea that sustainable growth might be an oxymoron. As a result, I've developed several lesson plans on the exponential rule 72, world population growth and peak oil. I've used these materials in classes that were first, second and third year university classes as well as a corporate class. I have also given several presentations on these concepts at several venues.

Several years ago I was given a book on outsourcing (for personal as well as business work) and read it through looking for materials for a homework assignment for an MBA course. I was unable to use it in my course, and I thought that it was not very useful for me as an English instructor in Japan. However, while preparing original materials for classes, I was very reluctant to photocopy from other texts books. So, I went to a website that was in the book (www.odesk.com) and outsourced a number of drawings to the Philippines where it cost me less than \$100 to get 12 illustrations (including the one above that I use for 'homework' with my original materials).

One way for educators to keep a record, as well as using it as a tool for self development, is the academic CV (or curriculum vitae). An academic CV is different from a resume in several ways as an academic CV is a complete record of your academic work, without descriptive adjectives, with three main areas, research, teaching and service. In other words, just the facts. Being a complete record, it can become quite long sometimes going 20 or 30 pages. Listed is a brief overview of differences between a resume and an academic CV.

ACADEMIC CV

RESUME

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long • Just the facts • Details of all academic work • Standard/Unchanged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 or 2 Page (s) Power sales tool Broad strokes of abilities Tailored to the job application |
|--|--|

While the academic CV may or may not be used as an employment tool, it can be a very valuable asset (through a suggestion would be to add a 1-page resume if adding it to a teaching job application). Because there are few hard and fast rules for academic CVs, a suggestion might be to start with the name, address, then education (starting with the highest obtained, moving down) and then student activities. This is followed by publications, presentations and then chronology of work (academic only) with all classes listed by academic year, starting with the most recent. Next, include student advising, class projects and memberships.

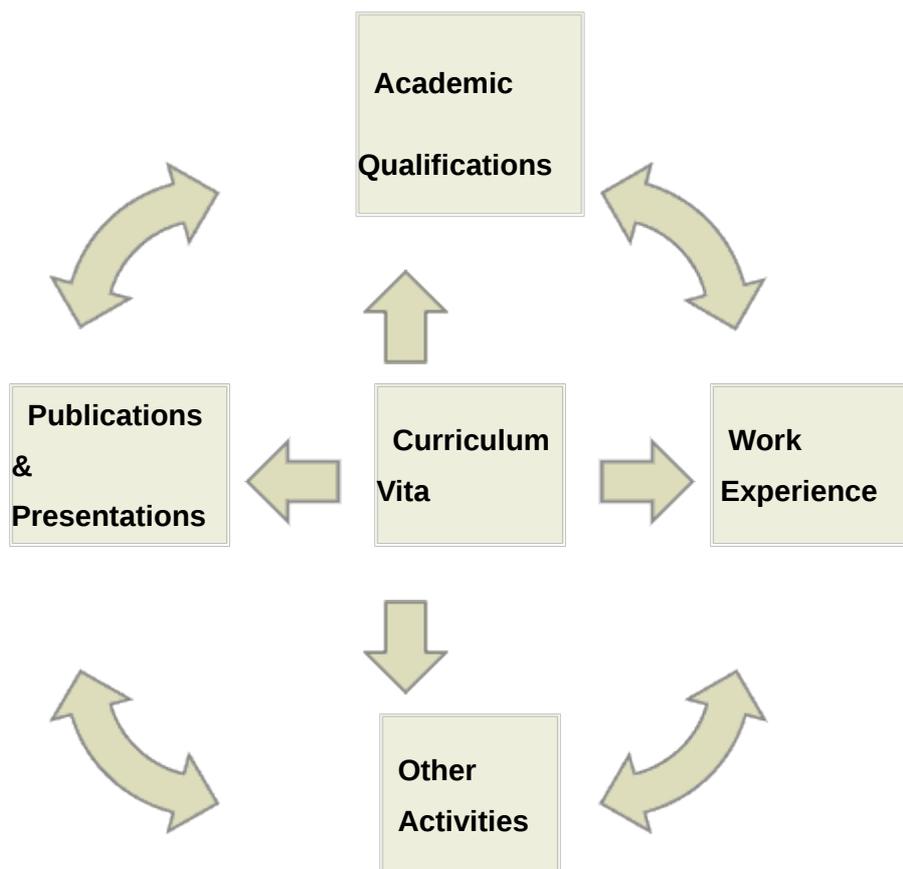
Because of the lack of set rules for the academic CV, adjustments can be made to the CV. As an example, if your publications are weak, then abbreviated abstracts can be included after the title of the publication. If, on the other hand there are a number of publications that you have, use of APA might be a more appropriate approach. Even if this document is not for employment, it can be a very powerful tool in assessing where one's strengths and weaknesses are with respect to one's career. The academic CV can become a flexible record that is more of a living document that is added to as achievements are made.

From the employer's perspective, reasons why an academic CV can be very useful include the professionalization of the EFL industry, changes in the job market, fewer jobs with more competition and a stronger acceptance of their use by hiring committees. And from the personal side, the CV can be utilized as a scorecard that helps with career decision making (see below), it is a complete record of what one has done professionally and it allows the educator to have a 'hidden agenda' where extra work might be performed if it enhances the CV. As Tom Peters stated: "Ask

yourself the following. In the last 90 days, what have I done to improve my resume?“. He goes on to challenge the reader to complete the sentence “My Principal “resume (CV) enhancement activity” for the next 90 days is. . .” And “The next year. . .” (Peters, 1999)

One suggestion is to introspectively look at our careers through a balanced scorecard with the CV as the centre of reflection. By doing so, it is easy to see the strengths and weaknesses that all of us have.

Diagram of the Balanced Scorecard



The balanced scorecard was something I adopted and reconfigured from a corporate strategy tool, which is used as a performance management device (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2007). It has been adapted to an academic CV so that educators might want to consider where their strengths and weaknesses lie. While not all areas are covered, the large amount of information from an academic CV is found in the four areas and shows how it balances. The only one major area that might be missing for people in Japan would be their Japanese language ability.

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JALT2011: Schedule for presentations concerning *Teacher Education*

Date	Time	Room No.	Presenter	Pres. No.	Title
Sat, Nov 19	11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	109	Muller, Theron - Noah Learning Center	689	Pursuing academic publishing: Experience & insight
Sat, Nov 19	11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	306	Hayasaka, Naoki - Meikai University; Qiao, Fang Qiao - Meikai University; Ling, Zhang Qiu - Meikai University	874	Meikai University Graduate School Showcase
Sat, Nov 19	12:10 PM - 1:10 PM	109	Humphries, Simon - Doshisha University	691	Macquarie students research discussion
Sat, Nov 19	12:10 PM - 2:20 PM	306	Mertens, Craig - Temple University Japan; Obermeier, Andrew - Temple University Japan; Moore, Jana - Temple University Japan; Ehara, Yoshiaki - Temple University Japan; Matsuo, Tohru - Temple University Japan; Sullivan, Christopher - Temple University Japan; Kagawa, Yukiko - Temple University Japan	875	Temple University Japan Graduate School Showcase
Sat, Nov 19	12:40 PM - 2:10 PM	107	Boon, Andrew - Toyo Gakuen University	862	The reflective teacher: Towards self-actualization
Sat, Nov 19	12:45 PM - 2:15 PM	103	Valdivia, Linamaria - Teacher's College, Columbia University; Laurier, Joel - Teacher's College, Columbia University; Mboutsiadis, Bill - Teacher's College, Columbia University; Mondejar, Michael - Teacher's College, Columbia University	465	Paradigm shifts in Japanese language policy: Forum
Sat, Nov 19	1:20 PM - 1:45 PM	303	Machida, Tomohisa - Akita International University	127	English anxiety in Japanese elementary school teachers
Sat, Nov 19	3:50 PM - 5:20 PM	106	Johnson, Keith - Lancaster University, UK	715	The good teacher: Studying expertise in teaching
Sat, Nov 19	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	300	Humphries, Simon - Doshisha University	240	Washback to driftwood: Problems implementing CLT.
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Guidelines

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

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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 TED 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(at)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.

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