Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education & Development SIG

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From the Editors

Welcome to the Spring 2015 issue of Explorations in Teacher Education, the publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Teacher Education and Development (TED) Special-Interest Group.

Teachers teaching teachers is the best way to share your little corner of this pedagogical world with those who really want to know and can gain the most from what your experiences. As readers, we can learn from someone else's trials and tribulations, and then we may be able to apply some of these ideas and techniques in our own classrooms.

Last fall, Scot Matsuo took over the role of Publications Chair, and later, Amanda Yoshida stepped forward to work with Scot and get our publications back on track. Scot and Amanda are now a team of two, but they welcome anyone who is interested in working on the editing and lay out process. Of course, without writers, we would not be able to bring you another issue of the ETE, so without further ado, let us introduce the authors who contributed.

In this issue we are happy to present to you an article showcasing what types of questions you should ask when looking for an MA TESOL degree program followed by three reflective articles about teachers' experiences in the classroom.

Allan Goodwin dives into what to look for when deciding which school to choose for your MA TESOL degree, comparing the formalist and functionalist perspectives and how those will affect your class choices and effectively your world-view on teaching.

Gilbert Dizon provides a step-by-step guide to web-based testing (WBT). Once the test is set up, teachers can save time on grading and students can find out their scores instantly. After the students learn how to use the computer and become familiar with the testing format, there is no limitation to what you can do.

Torrin Shimono describes three students who taught him about being an effective teacher, which redefined his paradigm of being a language teacher.

Christopher Edelman rounds up the Explorations section with a report about his year-long study in Content Based Instruction (CBI). He covers his students' success, increased motivation, and how they beat all odds to perform better than anyone expected.

Happy Reading,

Scot Matsuo

Amanda Yoshida

Call for Papers

Explorations in Teacher Education is a journal for teachers, by teachers, where we encourage people to share their experiences and reflections.

Papers for the Explorations in Teacher Education (ETE) Journal are accepted on an on-going basis. **Papers submitted by October 15, 2015 will be considered for the Spring 2016 issue of ETE. Papers submitted by April 15, 2016 will be considered for the Fall 2016 issue of ETE.** We encourage both members and non-members of our SIG to submit papers, so please share this information with your colleagues and friends to ensure a rich and diverse publication for our SIG.

If you wish to submit a research paper or explorative piece to the ETE, please pay attention to the following requirements:

• All submissions should use APA style and a maximum of 12 references.

• Research articles should include an abstract of 100-150 words.

• Explorative pieces do not require references but connections to the literature are encouraged.

• All authors should provide their current affiliation and a contact email. A short bio is optional.

• When sending in a submission, please indicate which category of the ETE Journal your article will fit under.

• Please note that all submissions for the research and explorations sections of the ETE will undergo a peer-review process and that, if accepted, we may provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

• Authors are encouraged to include charts, images, graphs, etc. with their articles, which will provide a visual representation to our readers.

Following is a list of the categories and types of articles we are interested in publishing:

Research Articles (2000-3000 words)

We are especially interested in submissions using the following approaches.

• Narrative Inquiry
• Reflective Inquiry
• Action Research

Explorations (1000-3000 words)

• Reflections on beliefs/practices
• Learning / Teaching Journeys

Other (1000 words or less)

• Book Reviews
• Creative/Humorous Observations

In addition, interviews of relevant educators/researchers may be accepted at the discretion of the editors. Please contact us if interested in writing an interview piece.

TED SIG also publishes the proceedings of our Teacher Journeys conference held in June as well as occasional special issues in collaboration with other JALT SIGs.

Questions and contributions may be sent to the following email address:

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Philosophies - Formalist and Functionalist Traditions in Language Teacher Training

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Two different traditions in language teaching are the formalist (also called structuralist) and the functionalist (also called emergent or interactive) perspectives. The former views language as coming primarily from the brain (it is the prevailing tradition in North America), the latter sees language as coming primarily from society, and interaction within it (it is very common in Australia and the UK). The tradition that a university leans towards has a huge effect on how TESOL is taught at that institution and so also the way in which graduates of its programs go on to teach English.

Introduction

The training of ESL teachers is different than the training of other teachers, but there are similarities. All teacher-training is designed to train someone to teach a particular subject or subjects to a particular audience. In the case of master's degrees in language teaching, the particular subject is the English language and the target audience is usually adults (normally, though not exclusively, tertiary students).

In education systems where teacher training is a year-long program following an undergraduate degree (for example, a PGCE in the UK, or a consecutive B.Ed program in English Canada) student-teachers learn to teach the subject or subjects they studied in their undergraduate degree (called a 'teachable', it is an area taught at the target level. Math is a teachable at all levels. Linguistics and Psychology are usually not teachables even if you have a degree in them because they are not usually taught at high schools). This means that most people in a particular teacher education program (say, people becoming English literature teachers) think about school and approach problems in a similar way (though there are differences in the way English literature is taught, there is a similarity because graduates are people who are, or were, interested in English literature enough to study it for several years).

ESL teachers, on the other hand, come from a wider variety of backgrounds. Common backgrounds include education, English literature, languages and linguistics, and communications. However, people with backgrounds in psychology or computer science are also not uncommon. This means that people enter language teaching programs think about academic work in a much more diverse manner and a given cohort likely has a greater range of interests than in the typical one-year bachelor of education to teach a specific subject.

In my experience, there still remains widespread lack of knowledge about major differences in these language-teaching post-graduate programs even amongst people who have already graduated from one. People who do a master's degree in one school are very unlikely to do another one elsewhere and so many graduates may believe that because they studied x, y and z at university A, that the same things were studied at university B, even if university B is located in a different English-speaking country on a different continent. After completing a degree off-campus from universities in Australia or the UK, many North Americans living abroad in Japan return to North America and discover that teachers there have learned very different ideas about language than they did.

The province of Ontario in Canada, where I am from, is probably rare, in that the path to becoming a language teacher at the university level often requires two programs of studies: a CTESL (known by various names, including at one time a B.Ed (TESL) at one school, and a master's degree in Applied Linguistics (unless the ESL teacher has a graduate degree in another area, in which case the CTESL is all that is required). The graduate degree is usually taken after completing a couple of years of experience post-CTESL. In most cases, the CTESL is pursued as a "consecutive" teaching program (entering the program after graduating from the undergraduate level) but, as is fairly common for teacher-training in Ontario, it is also possible to pursue the program "concurrently" after finishing the first year of university studies. (It will mean that the student graduates with both an undergraduate degree and the

teaching qualification at the same time. This route is not any faster than the consecutive route, it just enables students to spread out the courses in a different manner). In my case, I did my CTESL consecutively, then came to Japan, and then did a master's degree in TESOL through a university in Australia several years later.

In this article, I review differences between two traditions in language teaching and show how each tradition is implemented in a university level teacher-training program. I want to help people who are thinking of doing postgraduate work in language teaching understand differences in programs, and also help people working in universities who may be puzzled as to why some of their colleagues seem to have a very different understanding of language teaching than they do.

Different Branding of Products and Acronyms

For someone who is trying to decide on a training program, a difficulty is the number of acronyms specific to language teaching: TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), SLA (Second Language Acquisition), EAP (English for Academic Purposes) etc. When people are trying to decide on a master's degree in language teaching, they are further confused because degrees tend to be called either a master's of "Applied Linguistics" or a master of "TESOL". The master's degree itself may be a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree, it may be a Master of Education (M.Ed.), or it may even be a Master of Science (M.Sc.). At least one university in Ontario offers a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics (TEFL). Often these people turn to discussion boards or to acquaintances for advice. Common advice given is to look at different programs and to take the one that seems most interesting, or closest aligned with what the person would like to study, and not to worry about the name of the program. Whether a program is in the formalist or the functionalist tradition is largely hidden from the student teacher.

Formalism and Functionalism

An extremely useful resource for explaining the two traditions can be textbooks on discourse analysis. However, few people who do not have an academic background in linguistics or applied linguistics will know (or even have heard of) discourse analysis. Schiffron, in *Approaches to Discourse* reviews the literature on these paradigms and shows the following qualities of each from another writer, Hymes (1974), as shown in the chart below (Figure 1).

This is highly informative for people who have already completed university work in the area, but will not likely be of much use to someone who has no background in linguistics and just wants to have some way of differentiating programs, especially if they are looking into doing an off-campus program while teaching in Japan or elsewhere. Fortunately, Schiffron then goes on to review Leech's (1983) contrast of the two traditions.

1. Formalists (e.g. Chomsky) tend to regard language primarily as a mental phenomenon. Functionalists (e.g.

Halliday) tend to regard it primarily as a societal phenomenon.

2. Formalists tend to explain linguistic universals as deriving from a common genetic inheritance of the human species. Functionalists tend to explain them as deriving from the universality of the uses to which language is put in human society.

3. Formalists are inclined to explain children's acquisition of language in terms of a built-in human capacity to learn language. Functionalists are inclined to explain it in terms of the development of the child's communicative needs and abilities in society.

4. Above all, formalists study language as an autonomous system, whereas functionalists study it in relation to its social function. (Shiffron, 1994, pp. 21 – 22)

That someone can do a graduate degree in TESOL without reading, or hearing, the name Chomsky very often at all could be surprising to someone with a master's in TESOL from a North American university. However, the same could be said about the absence of Halliday and his adherents from the perspective of someone who did a TESOL master's degree in Australia. For someone thinking of doing a degree in language teaching, Leech's information could help because it is relatively free of jargon.

Figure 1

"Structural"	"Functional"
Structure of language (code) as grammar	Structure of speech (act, event) as ways of speaking
Use merely implements, perhaps limits, may correlate with, what is analyzed as code; analysis of code prior to analysis of use	Analysis of use prior to analysis of code; organization of use discloses additional features and relations; shows code and use in integral (dialectal) relation
Referential function, fully semanticized uses as norm	Gamut of stylistic or social functions
Elements and structures analytically arbitrary (in cross-cultural or historical perspective), or universal (in theoretical perspective)	Elements and structures as ethnographically appropriate ("psychiatrically" in Sapir's sense)
Functional (adaptive) equivalence of languages; all languages essentially (potentially) equal	Functional (adaptive) differentiation of languages, varieties, styles; these being existentially equivalent
Single homogenous code and community ("replication of uniformity")	Speech community as matrix of code-repertoires, or speech styles ("organization of diversity")
Fundamental concepts, such as speech community, speech act, fluent speaker, functions of speech and of languages, taken for granted or arbitrarily postulated	Fundamental concepts taken as problematic and to be investigated

(Schiffron, 1994, p. 21)

An Example of Each Type of Program- Formalist and Functionalist

I will look at Carleton University's Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (CTESL) from Ottawa, Canada as an example of a North American program in the formalist tradition, and Deakin University's Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MTESOL) from Melbourne, Australia as an example of a program in the functionalist tradition because I have personally done both of these programs.

Both Carleton's CTESL and Deakin's MTESOL programs can be completed in two semesters of full-time study, and are initial training programs in that neither requires a particular background in education or linguistics for entry (although both recommend a background in a language-related area). In both Australia and Canada, unlike in the UK, all coursework master's degrees are very common. Some things to keep in mind are that the CTESL program was done on-campus in Ottawa, while the MTESL program was done off-campus over seven years later and I had been teaching in Japan for all but the first year between the two programs.

As with any academic program, the actual courses available can change over time. I do not consider this to be particularly problematic in this comparison because the point is not advertising for either or both of these programs, but to show the kinds of things studied in each tradition. Different schools in Australia and Canada will, of course, have variation in their programs, and outside of Ontario, a one-year certificate in TESL is not commonly required for entry into master's degrees in Applied Linguistics or TESOL.

It is tempting to suggest that major differences in these programs could be simply explained by the different target audience of each. The CTESL is primarily aimed for teachers of English as a Second Language (English language in countries where English is the main language spoken) and is a TESL Ontario approved course for teaching adult ESL in the government-funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. According to its marketing materials, the MTESOL is specifically targeted to people teaching overseas. However, both programs mention that they are suitable for the other situation as well, and it should be obvious that many graduates of both programs will very likely at some point want to work in the other situation. Below is a table from which two programs may be compared easily (Figure 2).

In the CTESL program, there is a lengthy list of linguistics electives from which the student picks two. This is to be expected given that the program is housed in a linguistics department. Electives in the Deakin MTESOL are education electives, and the program is housed in the faculty of education. However, normally, these electives can only be taken in the twelve-course program, or by people who have a four course post-graduate certificate in TESOL who want to complete the master's degree. People with a four-year degree taking in the eight-course master's can only take core and specialist courses. Reading a full list of the electives offered by Carleton shows some overlap with Deakin, but each year, very few courses from the full list of electives in Carleton's CTESL program are

actually offered, so many of its graduates will not have studied the in the overlapping areas.

Figure 2

	Carleton CTESL	**Deakin MTESOL**
Department / Faculty	Linguistics Departments	Faculty of Education
Entry Requirements	An undergraduate degree, or second year standing	An undergraduate degree
Number of single term equivalent courses required	10	8 (with a four year degree) 12 (with a three year degree)
Available off-campus	No	Yes
Required or Core Courses	Required Courses: Practicum; Methodology; Introduction to Linguistics or Language Matters; Introduction to Applied Linguistics / Discourse Studies; Major Structures; Second Language Acquisition	Core Courses: Linguistics for Language Teaching; Pedagogy in the Globalised Language Classroom; Innovation in Language Curriculum; Learning An Additional Language; Discourse Analysis for Language Teaching; Language Teaching Practice in Context
Electives	Available from a large list of theoretical linguistics courses (for example, Phonetics)	Available from a list of "Specialist" courses (for example, Intercultural Communication in Language Classrooms) and Education "elective" courses (for example, Educational Leadership)
Research Thesis	Not available	Available, but not mandatory, and will count for a large percentage of the degree if undertaken.

There are at least a couple of reasons why university websites rarely, if ever, explain whether its program is in the formalist or functionalist tradition. One reason is that a university's program offering pages are a form of advertising, and as such they want the information to be as clear as possible. The confusion from acronyms described above is not really relevant to individual schools, since in most cases, each school only uses one. A school will have a degree in TESOL, or a school may have a degree in TEFL. It is only confusing to the potential student who looks at more than one school (although hopefully most people looking for a professional degree program will look at more than one school). Schools across

North America are in the formalist tradition. If the target customer/student is also in North America, then stating the tradition is hardly necessary. And the same is true for institutions in Australia in the functionalist tradition. However, nowadays, many people do graduate degrees from schools in different countries, both on-campus and off.

Comparing Linguistics Courses

Looking at terminology and descriptions of courses can be confusing for people deciding on a program. A course on "Linguistics" may be an overview of theoretical linguistics. It could also be a course on grammar. In this section, I will look at overlapping terminology and the differences in courses labeled "Linguistics" or dealing with the information described as "linguistics".

At Deakin, "Linguistics for Language Teachers" is the name of the grammar course. At Carleton, the grammar course is called "Major Structures". It is interesting that although the study of English grammar could be expected in a course on teaching English language, neither Carleton nor Deakin used the word "grammar" in the course designed to teach it. In order to know that it is a course on grammar, the course description needs to be read, and even then, it may not be clear that the course is primarily concerned with English grammar. Grammar courses for language teachers at universities usually show grammar as a description of how a language works (descriptive grammar) as opposed to a set of rules to be memorized (prescriptive rules). The grammar that students in language classes learn is a simplified version of general rules that help someone communicate in the language (pedagogical grammar). Different people with different ideas of what language actually is and where it comes from have very different ways of describing it.

I will use the Deakin "Linguistics for Language Teachers" as a starting point for a number of reasons: the course descriptions for Deakin are designed for those who are off-campus as well as on-campus, and so the descriptions give more information than the Carleton CTESL course descriptions.

This is what the course description for Linguistics for Language teaching says:

ECL753 - Linguistics for Language Teaching Content

Knowledge of the target language is central to the expertise of a language teacher, its structure and functions, and how it is used in diverse contexts. Topics to be addressed in this unit include: approaches to the description of language for teaching purposes; language structure and language function; spoken and written language; meanings in discourse; the concept of genre and its application to language teaching; text and discourse analysis for teaching purposes; formation and meanings of words, and teaching and learning vocabulary; the study of syntax, morphology and phonology; spelling systems; the teaching of linguistic features in context; inductive and deductive approaches to grammar teaching; and analysis of spoken and written learner interlanguage for diagnostic and teaching purposes. (2009 Deakin Units pp. 243 – 244)

Based on this description, it seems quite similar to Carleton's "Introduction to Linguistics" course, which is described below:

Linguistics and Applied Language Studies 29.100 Introduction to Linguistics

Elementary principles and methods of descriptive analysis of language; phonetics; phonology; morphology; syntax. Survey of other areas of linguistics: historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, semantics, applied linguistics. (Carleton University: Sixtieth Annual Undergraduate Calendar p. 373)

For someone without a background in linguistics, the courses may look similar because both mention syntax, morphology and phonology- all terms that are not likely to be known. However, in reality, the Carleton course spends quite a while covering these items, whereas the Deakin Linguistics for Language Teacher course goes over them quite briefly and the bulk of the course is sentential level grammar. There is a section on grammar in the Carleton course, but it is not longer, nor given any more weight, than any of the other areas in the course description. At the end of the course, Deakin's Linguistics for Language Teachers goes into discourse level language, and many students will go on to take a course on discourse analysis. The Carleton Introduction to Linguistics course ends with reconstructing dead languages, an area not covered at all in Deakin's program. In short, Linguistics for Language Teachers is a course on English grammar. Introduction to Linguistics is not.

The required course in grammar for the CTESL is Major Structures of English (obviously relating to 'structural grammar- the approach taken in the formalist tradition). A description of the CTESL Major Structures of English is:

Linguistics and Applied Language Studies 29.481 * Major Structures of English

This course is intended to familiarize students with the structure of the English language, highlighting important contrasts between English and other languages as well as grammatical difficulties for ESL learners. (Carleton University: Sixtieth Annual Undergraduate Calendar p. 315)

Whereas the Deakin course leads the student to studying discourse analysis as a natural follow-up, Carleton's grammar course could be viewed more as an amplification of the syntax part of the Intensive Introduction to Linguistics. Other courses in Carleton's CTESL likewise seem like amplifications of the material covered in Introduction to Linguistics. This is important because it shows that rather than stressing the "teaching" part of the CTESL (Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second Language), it focuses on areas related to the second language acquisition of English. This is perhaps to be expected given that the program is housed in the Linguistics Department, and not a Faculty of Education. It may also be possible to say that the CTESL student-teacher at Carleton will approach the study of English grammar with a more thorough understanding of grammatical concepts divorced from the English language and therefore more ready to apply these

concepts to other languages or view them from the perspective of students trying to learn English grammatical concepts than Deakin's MTESOL students because the majority of CTESL students take the survey of theoretical linguistics with the Introduction to Linguistics course concurrently with the Major Structures. In both programs, courses complement each other giving the learner a stronger overall understanding of the area than a single course alone. It is interesting that the 'area' that is covered is defined by the tradition of the program (either formalist or functionalist) with little mention of the other tradition.

Conclusion

Both formalist schools and functionalist schools eventually cover similar territory, preparing people to be English language teachers, but do so in entirely different ways. The formalist tradition generally treats sociolinguistics as a sidebar to the teaching of language, the functionalist tradition does the same with most of the areas other than sociolinguistics that are studied in surveys of linguistics. For example, language families of the world, particularly Indo-European language families are often studied as a starting point of historical linguistics in the formalist tradition by studying charts of related languages and noticing the manner in which different language families tend to be grouped together on the map (most of the Slavic languages are in Eastern Europe, most of the Romance and Germanic languages are in Western Europe). Language families in the functionalist tradition are covered within sociolinguistics courses by pointing out a gradual shift in languages across space rather than isolated points on a graph. For example, when we think of "Italian" we are thinking of the language as spoken in Rome, but the manner in which it is spoken near to the French border will have many similarities with the manner in which French is spoken at the border with Italy. Both traditions teach the concept of "language family", but in entirely different ways.

Universities in English speaking countries often hire ESL teachers from amongst their own graduates, and so these universities need to ensure that graduates are trained to work at their institution. The reality is that both functionalist and formalist traditions are valid, and universities have to cover a huge amount of material in a short amount of time. University program designers have to think about norms for their geographic area, as well as ensuring that course takers have a sufficient depth of knowledge to work elsewhere. To try to cover both traditions equally within the same degree would mean either expanding the program length until it was much longer (and therefore more expensive and consequentially a less attractive product to potential customers) and probably confusing for students who would then be learning to view language and language teaching in two different ways simultaneously. Or the depth of study would be lessened, and graduates would take away a fairly superficial overview of the two different systems. Neither situation would be desirable.

In conclusion, it is not easy for someone choosing a graduate course in language teaching to understand what the similarities and differences are between courses just by reading course descriptions and comparing programs. The manner in which the programs are described may make programs that are in reality extremely different seem very similar. The amount of unfamiliar terms in language teacher training makes it all the more confusing. Just knowing the differences between the formalist and functionalist traditions could help these people. For some people, a program in the formalist tradition may seem a natural progression from their undergraduate study for example, if they majored in a foreign language, psychology or even a science. For others, a program in the functionalist tradition may seem a natural progression if they majored in English literature, the history of one of the fine arts, or communications. In order to choose between a formalist and a functionalist program, it would likely be necessary to investigate programs in different countries. Other than people doing an off-campus program (probably likely while based in a country where English is not spoken), the majority of people from inner-circle English speaking countries will probably choose to do a program in their own country.

For universities, the mixture of traditions in language teaching through the hiring of both people with formalist and people with functionalist training has the potential to greatly benefit everyone involved in language teaching. People coming from the formalist tradition are steeped in linguistics as a field. They learn about language families and therefore language change from the perspective of vast lengths of time. This kind of focus may be looked at as having similarities with quantitative research. They can list language families, and languages within individual families. What is not considered part of the core, however, is an understanding of differences in speech between different speakers of a single language and relating it to very complex cultures and the inter-cultures of language users. Sociolinguistics, the focus of the functionalist tradition, tends to focus on small groups and analyze differences between speakers within a single language, and bares similarities to qualitative research. Each tradition is like a culture- they are looking at the same thing (language and how to teach it) in a different way. Both of these traditions working together in a single university is a kind of occupational intercultural communications- with all the benefits and power relation issues inherent in any meeting of different cultures. Language teachers themselves come from a variety of backgrounds, academically, geographically and culturally. A person's identity as a language teacher is also affected by the professional training that they had.

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Integrating Web-based Tests in the Classroom

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Introduction

Anyone who has marked a large stack of exams understands how tedious and tiring the process can be. As a result, grading each test with a high-level of accuracy and consistency can become difficult, particularly after a long day of teaching multiple classes, checking students' homework, and attending meetings. Despite a teacher's best efforts, these difficulties may lead to errors when scoring many exams. However, teachers do have an option that alleviates some of the issues that arise once it comes time to assess students' performance – web-based tests (WBT').

What?

As the name implies, WBT are assessments which are delivered via the Internet. Although there are many commercial options available, there are also sites such as *onlinequizcreator.com* and *classmarker.com* (Figure 1) that allow teachers to administer WBT for free. However, some restrictions may apply to these types of accounts. For instance, *onlinequizcreator.com* limits each assessment to fifteen items while *classmarker.com* allows a maximum of 100 tests to be administered per month with a free account. Nevertheless, paid accounts are reasonably priced and allow for some flexibility, often allowing teachers to choose from monthly, annual, or credit-based plans.

Figure 1 Classmarker.com Website

Why?

As Brown (1997) states, computers provide a higher-level of accuracy and reliability when compared to paper-based tests (PBT) which are scored by teachers. This advantage in regards to accuracy is also perceived by students, as found in Nobandegani's (2012) study of the computerized TOEFL exam. In addition, computer-based tests (CBT) as well as WBT can give immediate feedback to students regarding their performance. This eliminates the inevitable delay between the time they finish exams and the moment they receive their test scores and feedback. Moreover, with the exception of essay questions, students' answers are automatically graded, thus saving instructors valuable time.

Another advantage that WBT have which also sets them apart from CBT is that they can be offered anytime and anywhere. Therefore, students are able to take tests from the comfort of their own homes, provided they have Internet access. While this may not be suitable for assessments with medium- to high-stakes such as midterm and final exams or language placement tests, they are appropriate for formative assessments which provide students ongoing feedback to help them improve their performance in class.

While they do offer specific advantages, WBT are "not automatically more suited for the testing of general second language competence or subject-specific second language performance than are other testing mediums" (Roever, 2001, p. 86). As Roever (2001) notes, it may be difficult to assess spoken language due to the high-risk of error when recording test-taker speech. In addition, it has been shown that computer familiarity can affect students' performance on tests. Kirsch, Jamieson, Taylor, and Eignor (1998) surveyed nearly 90,000 test-takers of the computerized TOEFL exam in order to investigate the effects of computer familiarity on test scores and found it had small but significant effect on test performance. Computer anxiety is another variable that may influence students' performance (Brown 1997). Therefore, students' must be given sufficient learner training as well as opportunities to acquaint themselves with the unique delivery method of WBT to increase computer familiarity as well as decrease any anxiety associated with using computers and the Internet.

How?

It is not necessary to have a vast amount of computer-programming expertise to create and administer an online test. In fact, it is fairly easy, only requiring basic computer and Internet skills. In other words, if you are able to navigate the Internet without difficulty, then creating tests and administering them should be simple. The following explanation will detail how to create and administer tests via classmarker.com.
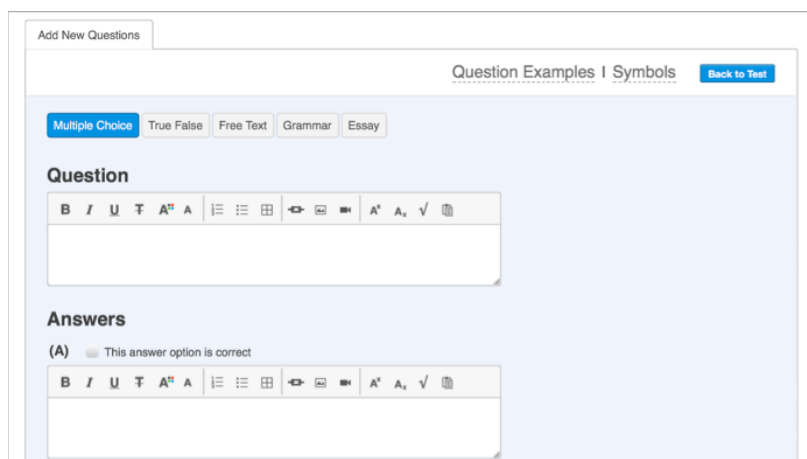
Creating an Exam

1. After creating an account, click on the orange icon entitled "New Test +" under "My Account" (Figure 2).

2. Next, create a name for the test. You may also make or select a specific category you would like the exam questions to be under. By doing this, all of the items you create for the test will be saved under the category for easy access and use in other exams. If no category is chosen, the questions will be classified under the "Generic" category.

Figure 2 Creating a New Exam
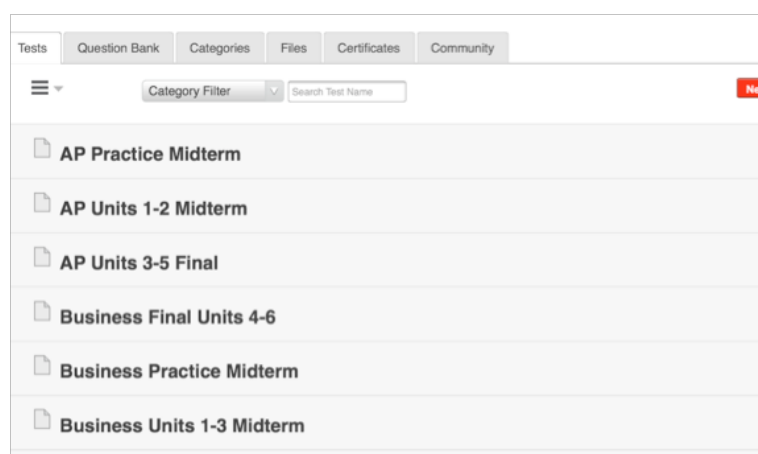
1. From here, you can add pre-made questions from a category or create new ones. Five types of questions can be made: multiple choice, true/false, free text (cloze), grammar, and essay (Figure 3). To create a question, simply type the appropriate information, i.e., the question or prompt, potential answers, and the correct response or responses in the respective boxes. When creating a test item, pictures and videos may also be included by either embedding the link from the website or uploading the picture or video directly onto the website.

2. Lastly, choose the weight or the number of points available for the test item and save the question. If it is a multiple-choice item, you may also randomize the order of the potential answers.

Figure 3 Making Questions

Administering an Exam

1. Once you have completed making an exam, there are two ways to administer or assign it: via group or via link (Figure 4). The easiest way is to create a link for the test. That way, students only have to click on the provided link

or copy and paste it into the web address bar. For increased security, you may also password protect the exam. The only caveat with assigning an exam via link is that it is only available to paid accounts.

2. The other option, which is available to free accounts, is to create usernames for the students, designate them to a specific class or group, and then assign the test to a group. Fortunately, it is simple to create bulk usernames. All you need to do is create a list of the students' first and last names. Passwords are automatically generated for them but you can also create customized passwords. If you know your students' email addresses, usernames and passwords can be emailed in order to expedite the process.

Figure 4 Assigning an Exam
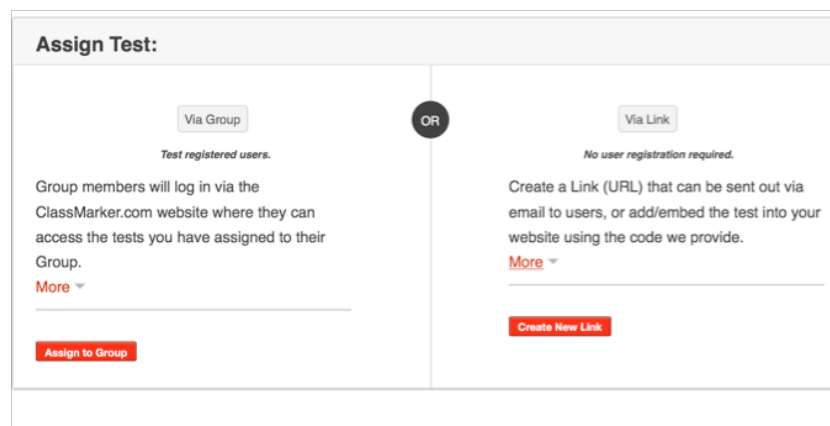
3. A variety of settings can be adjusted when assigning an exam (Figure 5). For example, you can randomize the order of the questions to decrease the likelihood of cheating during group testing, set a pass mark or time limit for the exam, as well as restrict test availability to a fixed day and time. In addition, you also have the option of changing the test interface language from English. Twelve other languages including Japanese are available. Students must feel comfortable with the delivery format of WBT in order for them to be effective. Therefore, selecting the students' native language for the test interface may be appropriate, especially when administering an exam to students with low L2 proficiency.

Figure 5 Exam Settings

Conclusion

WBT offer teachers a timesaving alternative to traditional PBT. Although time must be spent creating tests from scratch

and familiarizing students with the unique testing format, doing so will save instructors time and energy in the long run because a large portion of the exams are automatically graded. Another benefit is that students can take WBT anywhere and anytime, making them perfect for low-stakes formative assessments. They also may be used for medium- and high-stakes exams; however, students must be supervised and monitored in these types of situations where students have an incentive to cheat (Roever, 2001).

In my experience, students seem to genuinely enjoy taking exams via the Internet. What is most important is that they are provided adequate time for training and experimentation with the testing medium "For students to be effective users of a computer tool or learning application, they must first understand how to operate it and then become comfortable with its operation" (Hubbard & Romeo, 2012, p. 38). After students are given time to familiarize themselves with the delivery format, they seem to adapt fairly and as a result, they are able solely concentrate on their performance on assessments.

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My Three Most Memorable Moments in Teaching

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Five years working at an English conversation school in Japan has afforded me a cornucopia of memorable experiences. Teaching an eclectic array of students – ranging from 4 year-olds to university students, businessmen to the elderly – inevitably runs a gamut of emotions. I could feel happiness, sadness, embarrassment, exhilaration, and inspiration all in one day. Three of my most memorable experiences in teaching involve these strong emotions which include: 1) an embarrassing episode with a child in front of his mother; 2) a failed execution of a class game that broke a university girl down into tears; 3) an inspirational story of a businesswoman's resolution to succeed on the TOEIC test. Each case has given me pause for reflection and fueled my motivation to become a better language teacher.

The first memorable episode involves a nice 8 year-old boy named Tomoki and his mother. After every kids lesson at my school, teachers were instructed to show parents what their child had learned that day. The target vocabulary for the week was things found in the kitchen, like knife, fork, spoon, plate, sink, stove, and faucet. Using vocabulary flashcards with pictures and text below, I had Tomoki regurgitate the words to his mother in rapid succession. I often made duplicate copies of the flashcards to ensure more practice. Unfortunately, the order caused an embarrassing scenario. "Fork" came up twice in a row. Tomoki immediately recognized the picture and was able to vocalize it quickly. However, his pronunciation of /r/ needed some work and the resulting utterance sounded more like a four-letter expletive. This made me a little red in the face. As fate would have it, the next card ended up being, "faucet." Regrettably, Tomoki didn't learn this word very well so he resorted to try to read the text beneath the picture. He had a good grasp of basic sound-letter correspondences so he did his best to sound out the word. I could see his eyes squint and the wheels turning in his head – "Fuh… Fuh…Fuh… … F@$& IT!!!" I could not help but belt out a guffaw of laughter. I remember thinking, "How pragmatically appropriate, Tomoki! That is exactly what I would say if I didn't know the answer to something!" However, mouth agape, Tomoki's mother looked horrified. It seems despite her limited English vocabulary, she knew those words! The manager of the school did not help the embarrassing situation by yelling, "What are you teaching this child?!"

This incident was memorable because it was humorous albeit somewhat juvenile of me for thinking so. Even though the episode ended up being quite embarrassing, upon reflection of that lesson, I realized the difficulties of English pronunciation, phonetics, and spelling. Inaccurate pronunciation can get you into trouble as others might misinterpret or mishear your intended word or meaning. Moreover, the spelling and pronunciation of English words follow rules that are irregular, opaque, and ultimately very difficult to understand by second language learners. Tomoki actually read the word "faucet" correctly in terms of the basic phonetics that he learned. In addition, I was impressed by Tomoki's valiant effort to try to sound out the word, even though he was unsure. As a language teaching professional, I shouldn't have laughed at Tomoki's pronunciation. Rather, a more appropriate response would have been to help him slowly and carefully sound out the word. If he still had trouble, it would have been better to inform his mother that we would continue to practice those words in the following weeks. Taking into account Tomoki's sincere efforts, I became more determined to work harder on pronunciation.

Another memorable experience involving a group of university students and a game that failed to go as planned. In my first year of teaching, I tried to make lessons as fun as possible by playing games at the end of the class. For one lesson, I decided to have the students read a passage and afterwards, they would play a quiz game. The class was divided into two teams. Then I asked some questions about the reading. Each team had a representative each turn, and whoever rang the bell on the table first would be given an opportunity to give the correct answer. Naturally, the team with the most correct answers would win. One of my favorite members of the class was named Aoi, who was a shy but an extremely intelligent student with a cheery disposition. I was certain she would find this game entertaining and informative. To my surprise, I noticed she did not perform very well. On that day, she was slow to respond and quite frankly, she ended up answering a lot of the questions incorrectly when it was her turn. Even though time was running short, I wanted to give Aoi one last chance at success. So I gave her one more turn before the class finished. But before I could even ask the question, I noticed tears welling up in her eyes. Unable to hold back, tears

started streaming down her face and she stormed out of the classroom. All the other students left the class presumably to comfort her. Left standing with extreme embarrassment and dismay, I had little choice but to think deeply regarding what went wrong and how to revise activities for that class in the future.

From this episode, I became more sensitive to my students' feelings, especially when they are put on the spot. Students are not a bunch of stoic automatons that come to class to input large quantities of English information for one hour a week only to spit it back out. Rather, they carry with them a lot of pride, ego, feelings, and moods on a daily basis that affect how they learn. I also came to understand how sometimes games can become too competitive which puts students' pride on the line and can potentially cause a student to lose face. Even though I myself was disappointed the game didn't go as expected, I went back to the drawing board to find out ways to improve the game. If I were to play the same type of game in the future, I would score points as a result of a team effort for every question instead of putting pressure on individuals every round.

Furthermore, this experience also made me more attuned to what kind of environment I created in the classroom. I realized every group dynamic is distinct so what I or other students think is fun and exciting in one class doesn't necessarily mean all students will think so as well. Although I'm still not exactly sure why Aoi broke down crying, I could only guess it was because she did not perform well in a competitive situation in front of her peers. Therefore, I started to prepare not only for the teaching material of the lesson, but also how to tailor a classroom atmosphere that suits my students' learning style with regard to their feelings and emotions.

Another lasting memory involves a businesswoman named Yuko. I was always impressed by how diligently Yuko would take notes in my class and do her homework thoroughly to completion. One day, Yuko told me she was going to take the TOEIC test. If she got a score over 800 points, she would receive a pay raise from her job. Yuko was an intermediate level student, so I thought a score of 800 was a little beyond her reach. She would be fortunate to get 700, I thought. Nevertheless, she said she was going to accomplish her goal. Over the course of three months, she would often ask me to provide her with extra homework or spend a few minutes before and after class answering her questions. At first, I was a little disgruntled by her persistence and meticulous questioning that shaved valuable minutes off my break time, but I soon realized how seriously she took her studies. The day finally came when she received her TOEIC score. With a wry smile on her face, she opened up the letter – an 850! Yuko had surpassed all my expectations!

Teaching Yuko made me recall something my Japanese language professor said to me during my undergraduate days as a language-learning student. In a class of thirty students, he asked me, "How many will go on to become proficient Japanese speakers?" I replied, "Maybe half." My sensei smiled and said I was being too optimistic. His estimation was starkly different. "Two. At most." he said bluntly. A little surprised, I asked him why he thought so. He commented that there was only so much a teacher can do. To really achieve a high level of language mastery, students must rely on their own dedication and motivation. "Isn't that statistic a little depressing and demotivating as a language teacher?" I inquired. My professor shook his head. He then spoke with a gleam in his eye: "Those two students are the ones I enjoy teaching most." My years of teaching at the English conversation school supplied evidence for what my professor was talking about. To be honest, most of my students didn't study as hard as they could have. To my chagrin, I can't say I saw drastic improvements in their English either. Teaching Yuko made me realize she was that rare kind of student my sensei spoke of. I no longer became annoyed with her somewhat uptight, overachieving personality. Rather my own attitude changed. I began to really enjoy teaching her, just as my sensei said. Through this experience, I came to realize that the right attitude for learning is also contingent on the right attitude for teaching. I no longer took my students' efforts for granted. More than ever, I became resolute to succeed in teaching by doing my best to meet my students halfway.

In closing, all three memorable events have served as a great impetus to become a better teacher. These experiences have compelled me to think deeply about what constitutes a good language teacher, and in that process, I became more aware of the reciprocal and interdependent nature of teaching – that is, my students have also served as great teachers for me. I have come to see how much I rely on my students to become a better teacher. More than the intensive training sessions, ideas from teaching manuals, or knowledge of various teaching methods, Tomoki, Aoi, Yuko, and many others have humbled me into understanding my role as an effective teacher. I have come to learn that each student presents a unique opportunity for me to understand teaching a little better as my definition continuously grows and becomes redefined. Ultimately, my students' displays of courage, effort, and personal investment to succeed in English have in turn greatly increased my motivation as a language teacher.

Teaching Philosophy: Why I Made the Right Choice with CBI

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In the In the spring of 2013, I was starting a new job at Himeji Dokkyo University. The schedule was fairly standard for a new teacher: three communication classes, one writing class, one business workshop and five classes of English for non-English majors. Upon inquiring as to the content that should be prepared for the latter, I was told to choose something very easy, set my expectations low and not to be surprised or take it personally when students fail to attend. It was shockingly honest and direct advice from my superiors and colleagues. That being said, I am so happy I ignored it completely.

Brief Description of CBI

Content Based Instruction (CBI), also often referred to as Content Based Learning (CBL), is described as "the integration of content learning with language teaching aims" by Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989, p. vii). With CBI, the subject is the main vehicle and the language is the tool. H. D. Brown points out that CBI has "the potential of increasing intrinsic motivation and empowerment, since students are focused on subject matter that is important to their lives" (2007, p. 56). It seems quite logical for language to be described as a tool, and makes sense that language learners should implement it as such. In the traditional ESL classroom though, this is rarely the case.

In the CBI classroom, students will study a subject using the target language; for example, Japanese university students learning about American history in a classroom where the text, materials, discussions and instruction are primarily in English. The content syllabus is supported by a lexical and grammatical syllabus which incorporates language-learning targets parallel with the subject material.

With CBI, students are not simply studying language for language sake, a practice that is all too common in most classrooms and leaves learners with no practical application. As Snow, Met and Genesee note, "In the absence of real meaning, language structures and functions are likely to be learned as abstractions devoid of conceptual or communicative value." (1989, p. 202). This really calls into question the motivation of most students in Japan to learn English. Perhaps this is why they are able to 'speak about' English, but unable to speak English; the former being exactly what they were taught to do. With these points in mind, these five classes seemed to be

an excellent opportunity to create a CBI classroom where students could use English to learn content relevant to their major area of study.

Implementation

When creating a curriculum built upon CBI methodology from the bottom up, these are some important factors to be kept in mind: What is the language ability of my students? What type of content should be taught? What is the theme of the content? How can I incorporate language learning? What type of text or other material do I need and is readily available? How will I assess content as well as language skill? Is my class being taught in connection with any other classes?

Given that my new job was to start in 2 months, realistic constraints seemed ready to make quick work of my goals of creating a CBI classroom. There was the need for a content curriculum and a parallel language learning curriculum, of which I needed three pairs for three different courses. I did not know the level of my classes, but was told they were low, even for a university.

One thing that was advantageous, each class was comprised of students with the same major: two classes of medical students, two of business and one of law. With the content chosen for me, the next thing to do was find suitable textbooks. Looking through some of them, I noticed that there was already a fairly straightforward curriculum for content and language already incorporated in each. Deciding to ere on the side of caution, selecting elementary level texts for each course seemed like the safest option.

To compliment the text, videos and other visual and aural media were used. For their fifth class, medical students might have been given a modified newspaper clipping about the rise of diabetes in Japan, a set of discussion questions and put into groups to discuss the topic. After, students worked in these same groups to complete a vocabulary gap exercise, followed by a listening exercise detailing the use of an insulin pen. Next, students filled out a mock hospital report while watching a five-minute video about a patient going to the hospital and being instructed on the use of an insulin pen.

All exercises were carried out in English, with students being given a helpful phrase worksheet to study as homework

in the first class. Students were told to tape this page onto the inside cover of their book so that they would not lose it. If they were unsure how to effectively communicate during a group activity, they could simply open their book cover and choose from the list inside.

Grading was based exclusively on a weekly quiz grade of which there were 10, a mid-term exam and a final-exam, the exams each being cumulative. There were points given for correctly completing the in-class activities, which would be forfeited if a student were found to be speaking during class. Students were encouraged to bring dictionaries and use them in order to quickly close the gap of understanding regarding technical terms.

I will never forget the first time one of the other teachers saw the mid-term exam I was preparing for the students. I had just completed making the cloze listening section and was downstairs using the copy machine that could print in a booklet format. Being that this was a content class, and there were seven weeks of material to test on, it was about eight pages deep.

"You're going to give them that? I hope you're ready for a whole lot of zeros" were literally the words that came out of their mouth accompanied with steady head-shaking and rolling eyes. Two weeks later, 37 students from one of the medical classes took that test. Out of all the students, only four received failing marks, two received perfect scores, and the median grade of the class was 75.02%.

My supervisors were all very pleased with the results. Not only were grades decent, the amount of attrition among students was negligible. From the previously mentioned class, 37 students started, 35 finished, and 33 of those 35 received passing scores averaging around the same 75 percent average. Given the expectations of the university that half or more of the students would not see the course through to the end, and that out of the ones who did stay, only half of them might pass, the results of the CBI classroom speak for themselves. Within my five content classes, almost all students finished, with the majority of them receiving very decent scores on challenging material.

Reflections
After a full year at Himeji Dokkyo University, there was no comparison between my CBI classes, attended by non-English majors, and my classes where English language or education was the main focus, in terms of level of achievement. The expectation would be, students with high intrinsic motivation, English majors, would put more effort into their classes. After all, these students chose English as their major area of study. The students from other disciplines taking their required English classes, having very low intrinsic motivation for learning a language, should perform below the level of their English major counterparts. Looking at my class statistics shocked me: attrition of my English major students was almost half by the end of the year, while only about five percent of the non-English major students had left. Also, while the average final grade for English majors was just above passing, most non-English majors passed with a healthy margin.

Students who were motivated to learn English were barely getting by in a traditional English learning classroom, while they're peers were not English majors were thriving. At the end of the semester when the class surveys were returned, many students from the CBI classes had made comments equating to 'this class was difficult, but I think it is useful for my future'. From that point forward, I was sold on CBI.

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EFL Teacher Journeys

Mike Ellis

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TED, in collaboration with Tokyo JALT, is getting ready to host our annual EFL Teacher Journeys Conference. For the past four years, this event has created a platform for teachers from throughout Japan and Asia to share stories of their personal, professional journeys as educators.

The two featured speakers, Dr. Diane Hawley Nagatomo and Dr. Paul Underwood, bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to shed light on narratives of a fantastic lineup of teaching professionals who will present in several concurrent sessions throughout the day. We hope that the stories these teachers share will be taken as case studies to spark conversations and to encourage participants to reflect on their own teaching practices.

Please consider joining us in Shinagawa on June 28. You can find more information, including the pre-registration form, at the conference site. We hope to see you there!

https://sites.google.com/site/teacherjourneys/welcome

Teacher Education & Development
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The JALT Teacher Education and Development SIG is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. Active since 1993, our members teach at primary and secondary schools, universities, language schools, and in various other contexts. New members are always welcome to join our conversation and share their experiences with other teachers.

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