

# Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education and Development SIG

December 2012, Volume 20, Issue 3

## Table of Contents

2..... From the editor

## Articles

3..... Creating Basic Motivational Conditions in the JHS Classroom: Self Esteem,  
Sense of Place and Purpose

*Guy Smith*

11..... Influence of the Printing Press on English Orthography: Why 'right' and 'write'  
are pronounced the same, but 'live' and 'live' are not

*Judith Runnels*

18..... The Revival of BELTA: Professional Development in Bangladesh

*Rubina Khan & Steve Cornwell*

## Explorations

26..... Full Circle: A Reflection by the Former TED Coordinator

*Deryn Verity*

30..... A Story from a Teacher (in the Middle of a Journey)

*Mizuka Tsukamoto*

32..... TED Directions: Some Thoughts from the TED Coordinator

*Peter Hourdequin*

34..... From the TED Program Chair

*Mike Ellis*

**<http://jalt.org/ted/ted/Home/Home.html>**

All articles copyright © 2012 to their respective authors  
and JALT TED, *Explorations in Teacher Education*.

*Explorations in Teacher Education, 20(3), page 1*

## From the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*, the publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Teacher Education and Development (TED) SIG.

This issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education* provides an examination of one good teacher at a Japanese junior high school. Guy Smith provides an analysis of one teacher's behavior that allows her to create a positive learning atmosphere under difficult educational conditions. Guy identifies aspects of this teacher's approach to education and learner empowerment that other teachers could emulate in order to improve the motivation of students in a variety of situations.

Judith Runnels then traces the origins of English orthography, beginning with early modern English, and provides a history of English spelling that might help us become better teachers when confronted with "creative" spelling from our students.

Also in this volume is an article from Rubina Khan and Steve Cornwell that outlines steps taken to revitalize teacher education in Bangladesh. In this article, which is reprinted from *The Teacher*

*Trainer Journal*, Rubina and Steve explore the history of English language teacher training in Bangladesh and discuss the efforts taken to improve teacher training with the help of our other organizations, including JALT. They point out how the perspectives of teachers from other countries can contribute to the training of local teachers, but also indicate the need for those coming from other countries to be made aware of the local conditions, especially the education system that teachers are operating under, in order to make the advice they offer useful to the local teachers.

Also in this volume is an article from the outgoing coordinator of TED, Deryn Verity, tracing her journey from beginning teacher to teacher trainer and from America to Japan and full circle back to the U.S. Mizuka Tsukamoto provides an account of a teacher in the middle of her journey.

Finally, we include a word from the new SIG Coordinator, Peter Hourdequin, and some information about 2013 programs from Program Chair Mike Ellis.

Tamara Swenson, Editor,  
*Explorations in Teacher Education*

## TED SIG Information

The 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. For further information, contact

[ted@jalt.org](mailto:ted@jalt.org)

# Creating Basic Motivational Conditions in the JHS Classroom: Self Esteem, Sense of Place and Purpose

## Guy Smith

*Komazawa University/Meguro Seibi JHS*

Contact: [guyantony607@gmail.com](mailto:guyantony607@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Why do some teachers seem to be able to construct and maintain unified and calm learning groups while other, equally dedicated ones struggle to do so? In the context of the EFL Japanese junior high school, this article looks at a case study of one successful teacher and her facility in rapidly creating unified learner groups by implementing encouraging and positive strategies. These strategies focus on the development of student self-esteem, sense of place, and purpose. Individuals in the group display strong situational self-regulation skills in willingly accepting class group needs, thus creating a classroom environment which offers all participants a fair, productive and supportive foundation for learning progress.

Studies in the area of L2 motivation have been moving towards a more socially situated approach in which elements of learner motivation are seen as constructed from a dynamic and continually evolving relationship between the individual, the group and the environment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). These movements reflect the complexity of investigating components of L2 learner motivation and the many socio-cultural and individual factors which affect students' reasons to commit themselves to various and fluctuating levels of effort in and attention to their L2 studies. Correspondingly, this has led to a growth in a more situated

approach of viewing learner motivation through contextual micro-perspectives (Dörnyei, 2003), perspectives such as the effect of teacher personality, and task motivation. Another of these micro-perspectives is to examine group specific motivational components as they evolve in time, such as classroom cohesiveness and willingness to conform to the needs of the group, as found in specific classroom environments.

My personal interest in this area developed during five years of EFL co-teaching with Japanese teachers in several public junior high schools (JHS) in the Kanto region. This gave me the opportunity to work and teach with over 50

teachers, and I became more and more mystified as to why, while nearly all teachers seemed to demonstrate kind and caring personalities and took a real and sincere interest in the welfare of their students, a few teachers were highly effective in rapidly building cohesive, positive, and calm learning environments while at the same time most others struggled to a higher or lesser degree with disruptive and sometimes demotivated classrooms.

What seemed to differentiate teachers who excelled at quickly achieving group cohesion and teachers who struggled to do so could be found in the implementation of clear and simple management strategies employed at a very early stage – strategies very clearly focusing on gaining the group’s consent to adhere to group aims. The initial classroom aims for these JHS teachers could be simply stated as enabling a classroom atmosphere in which the participants (the learners) accept the importance of respecting the rights of all the other participants to be able to have access to learning, without other individuals disrupting this right, and see themselves as valued and effective members of the group.

In the next section I will look closely at one highly successful veteran teacher’s path of experience and her subsequent development/employment of effective classroom strategies in this crucial early phase of group forming. Her strategies are first analyzed, and then discussed as possible insights to approaches teachers can use to constructively manage their classrooms in the Japanese context. We will also look at the links between her approach and current motivational theory.

## **Are the Kids Alright?**

*“It’s difficult to decide whether growing pains are something teenagers have . . . or are.”*

*Anonymous.*

A group of 40 “hormone exploding,” “touchy,” “testy,” “moody,” “egocentric,” “cheeky,” (insert any appropriate descriptive word that comes to mind) young teenagers are not a group to be taken lightly. However, the rewards of working with and influencing young people attract many energetic, dedicated, and soon to be grey haired individuals. Motivating this age-group to work as a team and adhere to group norms that will allow the teacher to maximize the learning time can be a very tricky and patience-testing operation.

Teacher A, a respected veteran with over 30 years of teaching experience in JHS public schools, has come to employ and rely on a few effective classroom management strategies in the crucial early group forming period of the classroom relationship to build initial positive unity to create momentum for a healthy and structured classroom relationship. She encourages and enhances student self esteem, establishes a healthy student to student and teacher to student body relationship, and creates a strong sense of purpose amongst students.

While personality is a variable unique to each and every one of us working in the teaching field, the key strategies Teacher A employs in the classroom are based on practical guidelines any teacher could adopt in their classroom working towards building an engaged and unified classroom willing to co-operate with individual/class goals and group needs. As Teacher A’s assistant, I was able to observe her classroom over a period of five years with more than 10

groups of different learners, demonstrating the general effectiveness of the strategies she has developed in this teaching context with these young learners.

### **A Framework for Discussion.**

Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) is a motivational and personality macro-theory which firstly assumes people have an inherent desire for active growth, and the extent to which their behavior towards growth is self-determined affects the intensity and persistence of their motivation. Self-determined behavior can be promoted and encouraged by the extent to which people experience basic psychological needs as being fulfilled. Thus, the fulfillment of these needs provides and sustains the drive for people to initiate or desist from action, and motivates us to greater or lesser extents. Self Determination Theory has been researched and examined in an extremely wide range of fields including health (Ryan, Deci, & Williams, 2008; Williams, King, Nelson, & Glasgow, 2005), organizations and leadership (Hetland, Hetland, Andreassen, Pallesen, Notelaers, 2011), and the environment (Weinstein, Przybycki, & Ryan, 2009). Deci and Ryan (2000) have detailed three key psychological needs in the theory as being Competence, Relatedness, and Autonomy. These three needs are seen as being universal across cultures and peoples.

1. Competence refers to the perception that we are being effective.
2. Relatedness refers to the need to be connected, the need to interact.
3. Autonomy refers to our desire to be in charge of and responsible for our own actions.

Importantly, Self Determination Theory (SDT) includes internalization as part of its framework, a process in which individuals integrate behaviors they recognize as socially valuable and important, such as, in our discussion here, positive and mindful social school behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Relatedness, as in a relationship with a significant other (e.g. a teacher, a parent, or a peer), and competence have been found to help in promoting desired internalization with success and failure having a strong effect on situational self-determined motivation, as seen in behavior in a certain social context (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002).

SDT has been investigated in the Japanese EFL context (Honda & Sakyu, 2005) with research showing the learners in the Japanese context follow the general predictions and conditions stated by SDT. As mentioned, one of the basic assumptions of SDT is that the three needs explained above are innate and universal across cultures. By using the framework of Self Determination (especially regarding the twin concepts of competence and relatedness as posited in SDT), we are able to gain insights into and investigate connections we find that allow us to link Teacher A's natural classroom strategy and her subsequent success in classroom management.

### **The Playing Field.**

Soon to be graduating 6th year students from one "unnamed" elementary school have a formidable reputation for disruptive behavior and are notorious for their disrespect regarding school authority. Several parents have serious concerns regarding the possibility of classroom breakdown affecting the quality of education their children might receive at the local public JHS, and have

*Smith, Creating Basic Motivational Conditions*

chosen to send their children to distant and costly private schools. Teachers at the local public JHS are often to be found in small groups, drinking coffee and worriedly discussing the coming year's students.

We might leave our worried teachers for three or four weeks, and return expecting to find the students "walking all over the teacher" while teachers shout and threaten to make themselves heard in an effort to control the classroom. Instead, we return to discover Teacher A working with a strongly unified group of learners, in a classroom where students are interacting with each other, and where all participants are showing respect for the rights of other group members. Next, we will investigate her classroom strategies and applications of those strategies in more detail.

## **Strategies.**

### **Success.**

As we saw in the theory of Self Determination Theory (SDT) one of the key innate needs of people for self-motivation is competence. In other words we need to see ourselves as being effective. Teacher A includes some sort of assessment in every lesson. The assessment activities are in fact a very simple rephrasing of the lesson points students have covered in the class. For example, today's class was learning the first seven letters of the alphabet. Accordingly students in their assessment are required to write these letters three times in a 5-minute period on a worksheet. Grading is decided solely by completion of the activity, not by monitoring quality or speed of completion. The teacher circulates, helping any students who are having difficulty or perhaps encouraging those who are not participating. Not surprisingly all students receive an "A" grade. (The teacher

has also included an optional activity for students who easily complete the graded task) This kind of assessment focusing on success continues for the first two or three weeks.

By initially placing firm emphasis on all students perceiving themselves as having the qualities to succeed, Teacher A creates a strong sense of self esteem/self efficacy within the classroom. Having students first develop a confident, positive, competent perception of themselves as effective learners in the context of the classroom will pay large dividends later on in their willingness to cooperate with the needs of the group, as students feel comfortable with themselves as competent members in the group context. Ron Clarke (2004), in his book *The Excellent Eleven* on the importance he gives to success, comments "As a final word I would like to say that nothing raises the level of confidence in a child more than success" (p.1 65).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) list three important elements to improve the chances our students will achieve success in the tasks we present them, these 3 being

- \* offering them sufficient preparation and assistance
- \* making sure they know exactly what success in the task involves
- \* removing any serious obstacles to success

These three guidelines, in fact, mirror very closely how Teacher A goes about setting up and implementing the initial classroom tasks in her efforts to build the base for a unified and positive classroom. We should note that competence here refers to a task-referential competence in which the individual receives immediate feedback regarding their effectiveness and efficacy in accomplishing the requirements of the task

Smith, *Creating Basic Motivational Conditions* at hand, and the satisfaction gained by being effective in this context (Elliot, McGregor & Thrash, 2002).

### ***Relatedness: A Sense of Purpose***

Teacher A nearly always starts out the class with a quick rationale of how or why today's point, activity, or knowledge may be useful to the students. Even very simple activities such as learning the numbers from 1 to 10 are given a context, for example, listening to and noting down a foreign friend's telephone number or address. Paul Nation (2009), in *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, notes as his first principle in how teaching and learning should be approached that "the main focus should be on language that the learners can use quickly for their purposes rather than on too much grammar explanation" (p. 19).

While giving students concrete ideas for communicative applications of the current language being studied gives an extremely supportive boost to student motivation, in fact, in my five years of working in team teaching with over 50 teachers I found few who took the time to continually do so. Many teachers I observed often seemed to rely upon beliefs that students' are supposed to listen and follow the teacher's instructions, and simply instructed and conducted activities expecting students to conform because it was what they expected. With many students lacking any clear goal in their EFL study, demotivation can be a real danger faced by teachers and one typical cause can be the learners' inability to relate to or find a communicative purpose in the activity and/or learning that is being proposed by the instructor (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009).

Giving a rationale to students for tasks, learning opportunities, and other classroom activities to increase their willingness to engage with material and knowledge they might otherwise consider less than useful has been found to have a positive effect on this learning (Jang, 2008). Furthermore, Littlejohn (2008), in referring to the literature on mismatches between what learners think classroom activities are for and what teachers' intentions may have been, comments, "At the very least then, we can say it is the responsibility of the teacher to explain why it is useful to do a particular activity and how that activity relates to the wider goal of learning the language"(p. 4).

### ***Relatedness: Caring, Respect and Tolerance.***

Teacher A has an extremely disruptive student in one of her classes. In the first few lessons this student continually disrupted class, and repeated simple questions in a sarcastic manner. In one class, I witnessed the student raise his hand for the third time in five minutes claiming he "did not understand the activity." Teacher A does not pull out her Ninja star and hurl it to land quivering in the boy's forehead, but remains calm and praises the student, saying the student has raised a question that other students may want to ask but are too shy to do so. When the student disrupts the class again the Teacher asks him by name to be quiet, and thanks him sincerely when he makes the effort to do so.

This student fairly quickly comes to accept the group norm and in fact goes on to be an extremely positive contributor to class, volunteering to answer questions and to be a participant in demonstrating role plays in front of the class. This student, and the class in

general, have come to see the teacher as someone committed to helping them without being judgmental as to who is a “good” student and who is not. Thus the class has again become even more closely connected and thus more motivated to act as a team. A potentially disruptive student has not been sidelined, where he/she may continue to act as a constant disruptive influence, but has been accepted and shown they are an important and valued contributing member of the group. As teachers we should be aware that “relatedness is deeply associated with a student feeling that the teacher genuinely likes, respects and values him or her” (Niemeic, 2009, p. 139) and that our actions in this light will play a large role in building or disrupting class cohesion. Sam Pickering (2004), in his *Letters to a Teacher*, states, “I suspect the most important quality of a teacher is the capacity to like people” (p. 57). In my experience with young learners, and through observation of Teacher A, it is very important to note that just being caring does not seem to be sufficient condition for teachers to facilitate and build very strongly cohesive groups, we must also translate this into practical classroom strategies and behaviors that students can relate to and clearly recognize.

## **Discussion**

There are few things less disheartening for a teacher than to realize they are facing three years of teaching a difficult, disruptive and demotivated group. In Dörnyei’s (2003) framework of motivation teaching practice, creating cohesion and acceptance of group norms in the classroom is described as part of creating the basic motivational conditions, and represents a vital building block in accessing positive student motivation. If teachers know how to first acquire

the willing consent of the members of their mini-society, the students in their classroom, to accept group norms, they can not only allow individuals to access positive learning opportunities, increased motivation and achievement, but will also find this group motivation further amplifying the effects of peer support as members “form a social unit by joining in a group” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 28).

In my five years of team teaching, I was also in the position to observe many teachers new to the classroom having great difficulty in building and maintaining positively motivated individuals and groups, because they had little or no idea on how to go about creating unity in their classroom beyond shouting at disruptive students, or enforcing punishments that only served to create dislike for the teacher and thus further alienate members of the group. These groups often splintered into disruptive factions in which a few individuals were able to dominate the classroom to the detriment of other participants. Teachers move through different stages of development in their careers (Stroot, et al., 1998) and while it is difficult to ascertain to what extent Teacher A’s maturity and experience in teaching and handling groups contributes to the successful implementation of her strategies, we can certainly view her strategies as valuable, concrete and practical guidelines for young teachers struggling with forming constructive groups.

As investigated, we see Teacher A’s instinctive teaching path of experience showing strong relations to Self Determination Theory’s two ideas of Relatedness and Competence. This seems to suggest that at least in the Japanese junior high school classroom context, teachers would be advised to implement similar strategies and tasks to those used by Teacher A in the



*Smith, Creating Basic Motivational Conditions*

very early stages of group forming, in order to facilitate the development of self-determined student self-regulatory group needs awareness. Four points of focus seem to arise related to the students' self-determination. These are:

- \* Perceived competence (Can I be an effective learner, here in this classroom with this group?)
- \* Increased sense of purpose in context (Why am I learning/doing this?)
- \* Building a strong and visible relationship with the teacher (Is the teacher's concern and respect for me and the class real, and being expressed in a tangible manner?)
- \* Emphasizing each individual's place in the mini-society. (Do I have a role to play in the group?)

It is a fact of teaching as a career that an initial altruistic desire to have an impact on young peoples' lives and futures is sometimes markedly diminished by the fact that our classrooms and students do not live up to the ideal picture we may have had of them when starting our careers. However, while real classroom teaching will always be an emotional and stressful activity, teachers like Teacher A show us that we can, through proactive and practical strategies, create positive and successful classrooms which instead of frustrating and exhausting us, support and build our enthusiasm for teaching and keep alive the vision we had of having a positive impact on the lives of the young people.

### Note

For further information on self-determination theory, visit the University of Rochester Self Determination Research web site: <http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/>

### References

- Clarke, R. (2004). *The excellent eleven*. Hyperion Press, New York.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan. (2002). *An overview of self determination theory: An organismic-dialectical perspective in handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 3-33). Rochester, RI: The University of Rochester Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. In Z. Dörnyei (Ed.), *Attitudes, orientations and motivations in language learning* (pp. 3-32). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, Longman.
- Elliot, A. J., McGregor, H. A. & Thrash, T. M. (2002). *The need for competence in handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 361-388). Rochester, RI: The University of Rochester Press.
- Hetland, H., Hetland, J., Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Notelaers, G. (2011). Leadership and fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs at work. *Career Development International*, 16, 507-523.
- Honda, K. & Sakyu, M. (2005). The concurrent and construct validity of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation in Japanese EFL learners: A self determination perspective. *Osaka Kyouiku Daigaku Kyouka Iku Manabu Ronshuu*, 41-54.
- Jang, H. (2008). Supporting students' motivation, engagement, and learning during an

- uninteresting activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 798-811. doi: 10.1037/a0012841
- Kikuchi, K. & Sakai, H. (2009). Japanese learners' demotivation to study English: A survey study. *JALT Journal*, 31(2), 183-204.
- Littlejohn, A. (2008). The tip of the iceberg: Factors affecting learner motivation. Retrieved December 11, 2011 from <http://www.andrewlittlejohn.net/web site/docs/iceberg.pdf>
- Niemiec, C. P. & Ryan, M. R. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2) 133-144.
- Nation, I. S. P. & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. New York: Routledge.
- Pickering, S. (2004). *Letters to a teacher*. New York: Grove Press.
- Ryan, R. M., Patrick, H., Deci, E. L., & Williams, G. C. (2008). Facilitating health behaviour change and its maintenance: Interventions based on self-determination theory. *The European Health Psychologist*, 10, 2-5.
- Stroot, S., Keil, V., Stedman, P., Lohr, L., Faust, R., Schincariol-Randall, L., Sullivan, A., Czerniak, G., Kuchcinski, J., Orel, N., & Richtor, M. (1998). Developmental stages of teachers in peer assistance and review guidebook. Retrieved from [http://www.tqsource.org/issueforums/plantoAction/resources/3\\_PDPartnershipsandStandards/TeacherDevelopmentalStages.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/issueforums/plantoAction/resources/3_PDPartnershipsandStandards/TeacherDevelopmentalStages.pdf)
- Vallerand, R. J. & Ratelle, C. F. (2002). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: A hierarchical model in handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 37-65). Rochester, RI: The University of Rochester Press.
- Williams, G. C., McGregor, H. A., King, D., Nelson, C. C., & Glasgow, R. E. (2005). Variation in perceived competence, glycemic control, and patient satisfaction: Relationship to autonomy support from physicians. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 57, 39-45.
- Weinstein, N., Przybylski, A. K., Ryan, R. M. (2009). Can nature make us more caring? Effects of immersion in nature on intrinsic aspirations and generosity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35, 1315-1329.

# **Influence of the Printing Press on English Orthography: Why ‘right’ and ‘write’ are pronounced the same but ‘live’ and ‘live’ are not**

**Judith Runnels**

Hiroshima Bunkyo Women’s University

Contact: [jrunnels@h-bunkyo.ac.jp](mailto:jrunnels@h-bunkyo.ac.jp)

## **Abstract**

English spelling is notoriously difficult. Non-native and native English speakers alike struggle with the fact that almost every sound can potentially be spelled in several different ways, and various spellings can be pronounced in the same way (Bregelman, 1970). Compared to other languages, English is often said to have relatively complicated spelling rules (Bregelman, 1980). There are several theories to account for the inconsistency between spelling and pronunciation: gradual changes in pronunciation (the Great Vowel Shift; Stockwell, 2002), loan words from other languages (Finkenstaedt & Wolff, 1973), the work of prescriptivists and language planners (Fisher, 1996; Mugglestone, 1997), Dr. Samuel Johnson’s English dictionary (Johnson, 1755), and the lack of access to the written word prior to the fifteenth century (Sterling, 1962). This article explores the history behind complicated English spelling, how the introduction of mechanized printing acted to, in essence, freeze the English orthography of the time and how this led to even modern day difficulties in learning to read, write and speak English. The development of spelling reforms that continue nowadays and parallels between these historical occurrences with contemporary internet phenomena are briefly discussed.

## **A Brief History of English Orthography**

English orthography refers to the alphabetical system that uses a set of rules to govern physical representations of speech sounds of the English language. English orthography has had quite a turbulent past. The orthographical system of

Old English was almost eliminated during the Norman Conquest of 1066 (McCrum & MacNeil, 1986) although English was not commonly used in writing until the Middle English period (Bowen, 1909). Geoffrey Chaucer is credited with being one of the first to write in English, although, typical for the time, his spellings were

irregular and inconsistent (Russell, 1991). The fifteenth century saw numerous writers using English despite random spelling – the prerogative of the author led to the same words often being spelt differently within the same passage or sometimes even the same sentence. Written works were reproduced by scribes (Sweet, 2005), and early publishers hired foreign typographers who knew little or nothing of the English language (Nesbitt, 1957). Altogether, this resulted in an extremely anarchical spelling system, or perhaps more accurately, lack of one thereof. While the 1440 invention of the printing press allowed for significant developments in lexicology, grammar and the spread of the English language within England (Eisenstein, 2005), it did not necessarily result in a standardized spelling system. Indeed it was not until the nineteenth century, over three hundred years later, that English words achieved consistent, agreed upon, and widely used set spellings. While this seems somewhat counterintuitive (one might assume that widespread printing would lead to immediate standardization due to newly widespread accessibility and distribution of materials), it is actually the case that the printing press promoted the existing disconnect between phonology and orthography by freezing and perpetuating the use of the entire, already inaccurate orthographical system of the time (Rondthaler & Lias, 1985). This disconnect was largely a result of the Great Vowel Shift (a series of linguistic sound changes that occurred on a widespread level throughout the 15th-18th centuries. See Stockwell, 2002). So while the Great Vowel Shift greatly affected speech sounds, it had zero impact on the spelling system. Rather, it signified evolving pronunciation and stagnant, continual use of archaic orthography. This has led to a somewhat logographic system in use even today and has

rendered the process of learning to read and write English difficult for both native and non-native speakers.

### **Strange Spelling: Word Origin**

Complicated modern day spellings that were not eliminated by the invention of the printing press do however have legitimate explanations to account for their existence. These range from word origin, homophones, marking, silent letters and underlying representation (Venezky, 1976). Due to the fact that English borrowed heavily from other languages, it was often the case that the spelling fit with the ancestral language, rather than being altered to fit English orthographical or phonological conventions (Rollins, 2004). For instance, in the case of words of Greek origin, ‘y’ acts often as a vowel, falling in the middle of the word, rather than at the end or the beginning, with the pronunciation /ɪ/, or a short ‘i’, such as in ‘myth’. On the other hand, for words of Germanic origins, this sound can certainly fall in the middle of the word, but would never be spelled with a ‘y’. This same confusion exists with words that end with ‘es’, as in ‘Socrates’, when ‘ph’ is pronounced /f/ as in phantom or when ‘ch’ represents a /k/ sound as in ‘chimera’ (Bregelman, 1970). Again, the Germanic pronunciation of ‘es’ and ‘ch’ differ from the Greek. A further example is the sound phonemically represented as /ʌ/. This sound is usually written using a ‘u’ and defined as a short ‘u’ (as in ‘sun’), but can also be spelled with an ‘o’ in some words such as in ‘come’ and ‘son’. This is due to an old Norman spelling tendency that did not allow using a ‘u’ before the letters ‘v’, ‘m’, and ‘n’ because of the graphical similarity that those combinations of letters have (Rollings, 2004). Conversely, according to spelling conventions of the time, the pronunciation of

### *Runnels, Influence of the Printing Press*

the words ‘dove’ (as in the bird), ‘grove’ (as in an area within a forest) and ‘prove’ are due to ambiguity in the graphemes of Middle English rather than sound change or pronunciation preferences (Venezky, 1976).

### **Strange Spelling: Silent Letters**

Silent letters provide another example to account for complicated spellings. The silent ‘k’ at the start of many English words (knife, knight, knit etc.) was maintained in spelling, despite being dropped in pronunciation after Old English (Carney, 1994). According to Carney (1994), silent letters also arose as a result of losing sound distinctions from foreign loanwords, the simplifying of consonant clusters and occasionally from insertions to reflect the language origin. In terms of the latter, two examples are ‘psychology’ or ‘mnemonic’ where the ‘p’ and ‘m’ respectively are not pronounced but are still included in spelling to reflect their origin. Regarding consonant clusters, this refers to words such as ‘asthma’, or ‘Christmas’, whereby the ‘t’ is not pronounced. Carney (1994) notes that one of the issues here is that some of these letters are silent for some speakers and not others depending on accent or dialect, so it is was never possible to eliminate them from the orthographic system.

### **Strange Spelling: Pronunciation Markers**

Another function of English letters is that they occasionally provide additional information about pronunciation, despite unintuitive spellings (Rollings, 2004). They essentially act as markers, that once learnt, inform the speaker of the different pronunciation of a letter within the word. For example, the ‘e’ in cottage, such that the ‘e’ changes the pronunciation of ‘g’ to the same

sound as in judge (/dʒ/), instead of a hard ‘g’. Since English spelling does not reflect different phonetic sounds (such as aspirations), Rollings (2004) argues that English orthography is a very abstract underlying representation of the words. Take the past tense ‘-ed’ as an example – there are three possible pronunciations and although they can be guessed at by some phonological rules, there is only one spelling employed. In words like ‘sign’ Rollings (2004) notes the existence of a silent letter with no apparent role for guiding pronunciation, whereas in related words the silent letter is no longer silent, as in ‘signature.’ Rollings provides many such examples to argue that English orthography often provides only an intermediate representation between the underlying form and the pronunciation. There is no agreed upon reason for this.

### **Strange Spellings: Dr. Johnson**

The ongoing use of counterintuitive spellings is not attributed entirely to the invention of the printing press, although it is commonly argued that its invention maintained these spellings in common usage so that they were never eliminated (Scragg, 2011). It was likely that words such as those mentioned above also had the greatest range of pre-standardization variability. To address this variation, in 1755, Dr. Samuel Johnson developed a dictionary of the English language whose goal was, once and for all, to standardize the spelling of English words (Johnson, 1755). However, he is often criticized for making two serious errors: one is for spelling foreign loanwords in the spelling of their original language, rather than adopting an alternative English spelling based on the phonemes of the word and two is by perpetuating the same problems the printing press did by keeping confusing orthography in use (Hitchings, 2005). In other words, because

of him, many argue that he made what was bad in 1755, even worse today since spelling is the only branch of English that has not been subject to any kind of updating, essentially, since the printing press (Rondthaler & Lias, 1986). Archaic spellings can naturally, not be entirely blamed on Dr. Johnson, and are likely the result of a combination of factors. For one, the English language is the only major world language that lacks a worldwide regulatory organization which has the authority to effect changes in orthography. A second possibility for the lack of modern updates of English spelling is that the English lexicon is such a melee of languages, that in keeping archaic, strange or nonsensical spellings, one is able to immediately identify what original language the loanword is from and this is now seen as an advantage (Wijk, 1959). While this hinders the early learning process, there is at least a historical reason and purpose for maintenance of strange spellings since the spelling gives a clue as to the meaning of a word while allowing the reader to recognize relationships within and between languages.

### **Modernizing English Orthography**

There have been several major efforts to overhaul English orthography, and two periods in particular that have garnered serious historical attention. The first initial push for standardization fell around the 1550's until the 1650's, immediately following the widespread use of the printing press. This effort coincided with widespread public recognition that the orthographical system was lacking in consistency. Nonetheless, despite an abundance of proposals, there was never a single one that attracted serious enough attention -they were seen as either too radical, too nonsensical, or too amateur and not based on a good understanding of the phonology

of English (Wijk, 1959). Some conservative proposals were more successful in being more widely accepted, but were never implemented (Lingren, 1969). The second major period of spelling reform occurred in the middle of the 1800's, following the upsurge in popularity of dictionaries since Dr Johnson's and Webster's were released in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Essentially, an overhaul of English orthography, it was argued would decrease the number of ambiguous words, in turn reducing the time it takes to learn to read and write English (Wijk, 1959). Pro-reformers argued that this would ensure that spelling matches pronunciation, and that as pronunciations change, so should spelling. They commonly recommended or suggested introducing simpler spellings and reducing the number of letters in a word. However, these proposals, like their more radical counterparts from several centuries prior, were also never implemented. Since the original Johnson and Webster dictionaries, there has been a lack of agreement of a realistically pursuable approach (i.e. whether to use Latin, Greek, French, or Germanic conventions). Furthermore, new graphemes would be required to account for the large number of vowel sounds in English compared to the lack of vowel letters and there was no agreed upon method for this development. How to account for the fact that inflections (such as the 's' used to pluralize) are pronounced differently depending on the word was another difficulty. Further complications involved the range of accents, varieties of language and English dialects that exist in the world (Lewis, 2009). Despite the initial desire to reform, the public resistance to each proposal was significant enough to deter implementation (Wingfield, 1931). Essentially, the proposals always seem to attempt to make too many changes to the

spelling at once, and did not sufficiently specify a transition period whereby time is allowed for percolation of the new orthography (Wijk, 1959). The proposals have never been able to resolve any issue to a point where the cost to implement the new system would be justified (Wells, 2003). There were and continue to be too many obstacles to overcome (Wingfield, 1931).

### **Modern Day Reform**

The debate to reform is ongoing. Anti-reform arguments often highlight that the printing press did not eliminate all variant spellings: writer's used their prerogative then, and should continue to do so now (Scragg, 2011). A similar argument is made today giving variations of spelling between British and General American as examples. A phonetic writing system would be impossible to develop given the phonemic differences in distribution between British and American English. Furthermore, since many native speakers alter their pronunciation depending on circumstances and have very little awareness of the correct pronunciation of many words, it is nonsensical to alter written language to mirror pronunciation (Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 2006). Modern day spelling reform, in the age of telecommunication, would be quite simply, be as equally unsuccessful as the reform attempts of the past. A second standardization of English orthography would require constant maintenance and updating and considering the rate of development of new words combined with the alternative spellings of internet users, would be a monstrous task. Indeed, the rate of new words to be added to the Oxford dictionary has increased at a higher rate than ever before (Brown, 2007). Like the printing press, electronic communication grants widespread access to information, but unlike the printing

press, the internet is producing far greater ranges in spelling and a freedom of choice in expression that is reducing spelling consistency across users. It is possible that this kind of expression will have little to no effect on pronunciation, since it exists in electronic form, although it also has the potential to development into completely new varieties of language.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of the printing press has remained unmatched in its global influence, for centuries, until perhaps the last 30 years, with the introduction of the internet. Interestingly enough, both are related to communication and the spread of knowledge, and both have allowed for significant evolution of the English language. The printing press was introduced at a time where books were scarce, expensive, and took years to produce, rendering written knowledge accessible. In doing so, this spawned a surge of subsequent developments in such fields as science, philosophy and literature. The printing press also gave rise to entirely new and highly competitive industries such as publishers, publishing houses, typography, libraries and printers, to name a few. Contemporary parallels exist for the internet, in that written communication became instantaneous and cheap, access to information reached previously unimaginable levels due to electronic storage and connection speeds, and also resulted in new industries in terms of internet shopping and e-commerce to name a few. With regards to the English language specifically, the printing press had a less than expected impact on homogenizing English orthography. Although the spelling system did eventually standardize, it never did get to a stage where it was reflective of pronunciation. In fact, pronunciation remains diverse and this

has arguably led to the maintenance of a range of accents, dialects and varieties, as well as difficulties across all speakers in learning to read and write English, a problem still in existence today. Spelling reforms have completely failed in their attempts to address these issues, and conversely, the modern day equivalent of the printing press, the internet, has English users paralleling a pre-printing press situation whereby spelling is entirely the prerogative of the user, and electronic communication has led to an almost exponential growth rate in the number of new words and expressions. What is required now, is documentation and research of such processes in the same way that the evolution of orthography and phonology has been recorded for the past 600 years.

## References

- Anderson-Hsieh, J., Johnson, R., Koehler, K. (2006). The relationship between native speaker judgments of nonnative pronunciation and deviance in segmentals, prosody, and syllable structure. *Language Learning*, 42(4), 529-555.
- Bowen, E. W. (1909). *Questions at issue in our English speech*. New York: Broadway Publishing.
- Bregelman, F. H. (1970). Generative phonology and the teaching of spelling. *English Journal*, 59, 1113-1118.
- Bregelman, F. H. (1980). Orthoepists, printers, and the rationalization of English spelling. *Journal of English and German Philology*, 79, 332-354.
- Brown, S. W. (2007). From unregistered words to OED3. *CogSci Librarian*. Retrieved from <http://cogscilibrarian.blogspot.com/2007/08/from-unregistered-words-to-oed3.html>
- Carney, E. (1994). *A survey of English spelling*. New York: Routledge.
- Eisenstein, E. L. (2005). *The printing revolution in early modern Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Finkenstaedt, T. & Wolff, D. (1973). *Ordered profusion; studies in dictionaries and the English lexicon*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Fisher, J. (1996). *The emergence of standard English*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- Hitchings, H. (2005). *Dr Johnson's dictionary: The extraordinary story of the book that defined the world*. London: John Murray.
- Johnson, S. (1755). *A dictionary of the English language*. London: Richard Bentley.
- Lewis, P. (2009). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. Dallas: SIL International.
- Lindgren, H. (1969). *Spelling reform: A new approach*. Sydney: Alpha Books.
- McCrum, R. & MacNeil, W. C. (1986). *The story of English*. New York: Viking.
- Mugglestone, L. C. (1997). Cobbett's Grammar William, James Paul, and the politics of prescriptivism. *Review of English Studies*, 68, 471-488.
- Nesbitt, A. (1957). *The history and technique of lettering*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Potter, R.A.(1991). Chaucer and the authority of language: The politics and poetics of the vernacular in late medieval England. *Assays*, 1, 91.
- Rollings, A. G. (2004). *The spelling patterns of English*. LINCOM studies in English linguistics (04). Muenchen: LINCOM EUROPA.



Runnels, *Influence of the Printing Press*

Rondthaler, E. & Lias, E.J. (Eds.) (1985).

*Dictionary of American spelling*. New York: American Language Academy.

Schultz, W. E. (1930). College abbreviations.

*American Speech*, 5(3), 240-244.

Scragg, D. (2011). *A history of English spelling*.

UK: Manchester University Press.

Sterling, L. (1962). *The doctrine of correctness in*

*English usage 1700-1800*. New York: Russell & Russell.

Stockwell, R. (2002). *Studies in the history of the*

*English language: A Millennial Perspective*.

Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Sweet, H. (2005). *First middle English primer*.

Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing.

Venezky, R. L. (1976). Notes on the history of

English spelling. *Visible Language*, 10, 351-365.

Wells, J. C. (2003). *English accents and their*

*implications for spelling reform*. London: Simplified Spelling Society, University College London.

Wheeler, B. (1906). *Simplified spelling: A caveat*.

London: B. H. Blackwell.

Wijk, A. (1959). *Regularized English*. Stockholm:

Almqvist & Wiksell.

Wingfield, F. S. (1931). Among the spelling

reformers. *American Speech*, 7(1), 54-57.

## Join the TED Editorial Advisory Board Become a Manuscript Reviewer

The Teacher Education and Development SIG publication *Explorations in Teacher Education* seeks members interested in becoming members of the founding Editorial Advisory Board of *Explorations in Teacher Education*.

Editorial Advisory Board members would act as reviewers of manuscripts to assist in the development of other teachers. Manuscript reviewers would evaluate articles submitted to *ETE*, comment on the content, provide feedback on the improvement of the articles to the author(s), and help mentor their colleagues through the editorial process.

This step will help make *Explorations in Teacher Education* a more responsive

publication, and one more in line with TED's mission of creating a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively.

Help us to help other teachers by becoming a member of the inaugural Editorial Advisory Board of *Explorations in Teacher Education*.

Anyone interested in becoming a reviewer and TED Editorial Advisory Board (EAB) member should contact Tamara Swenson:

[ta.swenson@gmail.com](mailto:ta.swenson@gmail.com)

Please use the subject line: TED EAB.

# The Revival of BELTA: Professional Development in Bangladesh

Rubina Khan<sup>1</sup> and Steve Cornwell<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Dhaka, <sup>2</sup>Osaka Jogakuin University

Contact: cornwell@wilmina.ac.jp

This article provides a reminder to teachers of the foundations of the JALT Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) SIG, an organization that many members of JALT TED-SIG, as well as teachers from many other countries, have been involved in during the past several years. The steps taken in the revival of the the Bangladesh English Teachers' Association, along with the knowledge that the participants from every country gained from the seminars, helped to create a foundation for THT to build a strong series of mutually beneficial seminars in other countries. For more information, please see the THT website ([www.tht-japan.org](http://www.tht-japan.org)).

*Originally published in 2006 in The Teacher Trainer Journal, Vol. 20, No. 3. Reprinted with permission.*

While teachers everywhere can benefit from professional development, the need for teacher training is especially great in developing countries where often it is volunteer service organisations that take the lead in providing professional development opportunities. The Bangladeshi English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA) is one such organisation. BELTA was originally founded in 1984. Sponsored by the Asia Foundation, it was an active forum intent on conducting grassroots teacher training. However, by the mid 90s, the association had lost momentum and, as is common in numerous volunteer organisations, when a new generation of leaders had not been developed, BELTA, unfortunately, went dormant.<sup>1</sup>

BELTA remained inactive through the rest of the 90s; however, by the early 2000s a group of dedicated Bangladeshi teachers of English who were interested in professional development and the future of English education in Bangladesh were becoming frustrated and discontent. Time after time at international conferences they would hear about how teacher organisations in other countries in the region worked to support and develop trained teachers. When asked about teacher development in Bangladesh, they could not point to a national service organisation. These teachers were concerned about how to address what they perceived as an ongoing crisis in English teaching and learning at all levels of English education in Bangladesh. (See below.) The stories of how teachers in other countries benefited from having organisations that provided forums in which to discuss teaching and

learning led them to commit to create a similar forum in Bangladesh. Thus after lying dormant for a little over a decade in 2003 BELTA was officially revived at a special meeting attended by 29 teachers. Since its revival, BELTA has gained in both strength and momentum and is making concerted efforts to fulfill its mission of 1) providing for the development of teachers through effective in-service teacher training programs and 2) empowering teachers by providing them with a forum to discuss issues facing them at the local level.

### **The Context**

The Bangladesh education system follows a British model with students studying 10 years before earning a secondary school certificate (SSC). English is a compulsory subject for those 10 years. After earning an SSC, students can go on to study for their higher secondary certificate (HSC) where English is still compulsory. After receiving their HSC, students can pursue a bachelors degree. Schools at the elementary and secondary level in Bangladesh can be divided into two categories: English and Bangla medium. English medium schools conduct all their classes in English and are known for producing students who can use English; on the other hand, Bangla medium schools conduct their classes in Bangla, so students' only contact with English comes in their English classes, which use grammar-translation methodology to teach the topics necessary to be successful when taking the national examination—grammar, reading, and writing.

Within this system, there are several challenges to English teacher development that have led to the crisis mentioned earlier. (See Selim & Mahboob, 2001 for a concise summary of the challenges facing ELT Education in

Bangladesh.) Topping the list is the fact that many English teachers at the secondary level have not received any training in the teaching of English; instead they are political science majors or history majors who have been assigned to teach English by their headmasters. Estimates range that between 80 and 90% of teachers have not received any teacher training and part-time teachers in nonformal schools receive only 14 days of preservice training (Basic Education and Policy Support, 2002; Selim & Mahboob, 2001).<sup>2</sup> Although new texts have been developed following current ELT (four skill coverage, schema activation, pair work, etc.), due to the lack of training teachers do not know how to use them properly and thus continue to teach in a teacher-centered manner with old, comfortable methods such as grammar translation. In addition to a lack of basic training, teachers attending BELTA workshops report other problems (such as large classes, short class periods, and lack of resources). Class sizes are extremely large with 80 to 100 students not uncommon. These large classes often meet in small classrooms with immovable benches. At 45 minutes classes, teachers see classes as being too short, and sometimes end up being only 40 or 35 minutes after roll is taken and other administrative functions are dealt with. Open windows on both sides of a classroom make implementing communicative language teaching methods an issue for teachers. One hundred students doing pair work or completing an information gap activity all at the same time can cause quite a racket that may disturb adjacent classrooms. Teachers report that they are expected to control their classes and headmasters see noise as a sign of lack of control. Finally, a lack of resources further complicates the teaching situation. Teachers often do not have cassette players,

teacher's books, or access to a copy machine. These problems make teacher training a challenge for associations like BELTA since many of the common tenets of English language teaching (ELT) certificate programs are difficult even for experienced teachers to apply.

### **Teacher Training in Bangladesh**

Of course, BELTA is not the only organisation involved with teacher training in Bangladesh. There have been ongoing efforts by the government, teacher training colleges, and private organisations to improve the standard of teaching by providing teacher training. One such project was the highly successful English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) jointly sponsored by the government and Britain. One of its goals was in service/inset training. For a three year period (1998-2001), many foreign teacher trainers were brought in and a cadre of teacher trainers was developed. In addition, regional resource centers were set up in major cities throughout the country. Another project called the Program to Motivate, Train, and Employ Women Teachers (PROMOTE) in rural secondary schools was funded by the European Commission through grant aid to the government. Its key objective was to strengthen the quality and gender sensitivity of teaching in secondary schools. In addition, there are several teacher training colleges which train students interested in becoming teachers. These teacher training colleges fulfill a great need by helping increase the number of trained secondary teachers. As mentioned earlier, many teachers have never had any teacher training. In addition, other organisations such as the British Council and the American Cultural Center have a long history of supporting teacher development and both have been influential in helping BELTA reach out to

teachers. It is in this context that BELTA has been striving to fulfill its mission. With its focus on ELT at the grassroots level BELTA is creating a niche for itself within the English education community.

Since its resurrection in 2003, BELTA has been extremely active. It has increased its membership to over 500 and in addition to setting up a homepage at [www.belta.banani.info](http://www.belta.banani.info), holding a monthly meeting for teachers, and sending out newsletters to members, BELTA has conducted a national conference, a week-long workshop, two special seminars for high school teachers, an international conference and is planning another week long workshop for the spring of 2006. In addition to bringing in foreign ELT professionals to assist with many of these programs, BELTA is also making use of local trainers and developing a new generation of ELT leaders. Members and nonmembers alike profusely thank BELTA for providing so many networking opportunities to share teaching ideas, learn new techniques, and even just compare teaching situations. One such networking opportunity was the ESL seminar, Teaching Strategies for the ESL Classroom.

In March 2005 a five-day seminar on ESL (English as a Second Language) entitled Teaching Strategies for the ESL Classroom was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was the result of networking that began when Bill Balsamo, President of the Himeji chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) and Arifa Rahman, President of the Bangladesh English Language Teaching Association met at the Asia TEFL meeting in Seoul, South Korea in November 2003. Balsamo was able to schedule a follow-up meeting with BELTA members in Dhaka in December 2003 where he proposed a teacher training seminar featuring teacher

trainers from Japan. The next year was spent planning the seminar which was held in March at the Presidency University, one of the many new universities being founded in Bangladesh.

Balsamo led a team of six resource persons to present multiple sessions at the seminar.<sup>3</sup> The team consisted of three men and three women. Four team members were U.S. expatriates living and working in Japan; one was a retired teacher from the U.S. with work experience in Japan; and one was a Japanese teacher of English with extended experience living in the U.S.

The seminar consisted of hour long plenary sessions where all the participants listened to one of the visiting speakers; joint sessions where participants chose between two simultaneous sessions; and afternoon panel discussions where participants listened to and asked questions of a panel consisting of four or five of the visiting speakers. There were 18 different sessions scheduled with some sessions being repeated so that participants would not have to miss any of the presentations. The presentations can be divided into four broad categories: reading and writing including grammar (8 sessions), communication including a session on formal presentations (4 sessions), computers and technology (4 sessions), and curriculum design, and research (1 session each). The afternoon panels covered issues that the BELTA organisers thought would be pertinent to Bangladeshi teachers of English including: English as an Asian Language, Comparative English Language Education in Bangladesh, Japan, and the USA, Interactive Methodology, Fluency vs. Accuracy, and Testing and Assessment: Evaluating student work. One reoccurring theme that came up during the panels was the desire to know the right way to teach. This came up in questions about which was

better—British or American pronunciation, which teaching method was best, and which was more important—fluency or accuracy. Another theme was wanting to know how Bangladeshi's English and Bangladesh English education compared to other areas in the world.

### **English as an Asian Language**

There has been much debate concerning the role of English in Asia and its growing importance in the education, commercial, and business life of Asians throughout the region (Canagarajah, 1999; Kam & Wong, 2003). English is now being spoken throughout Asia with growing importance and has taken on regional variations. There was much concern about the standard of English now being used in Bangladesh and the local quality of language usage as compared to that of other Asian countries.

*Comparative English Language Education in Bangladesh, Japan, and the USA:* Panel members briefly described educational systems in Japan and the United States with an emphasis on English education and audience members described education in Bangladesh. It was in this panel that the question of British versus American pronunciation, an issue of interest to many participants, came up.

*Interactive Methodology:* The panel members addressed the challenge of using communicative strategies in teaching when the educational system stresses examination results. Audience members wanted to know which system was best: the direct method, grammar-translation, audio-lingual or communicative language teaching. The panel suggested that more important than methodology was teacher involvement and enthusiasm in using CLT in imaginative ways.

*Fluency vs. Accuracy:* From the very beginning it was clear that this topic was as interesting to the participants as it was controversial. Before the panelists could complete their opening statements, a question came from the floor asking whether or not errors should be corrected in the language classroom. The panel took the position that the question of fluency vs. accuracy is not and cannot be an either or question, but is rather a question of balance.

*Testing and Assessment:* Evaluating student work The panel consisted of two Bangladeshi English medium school principals, one Bangladeshi university English teacher, and two of the invited resource people. The different purposes, ways, and functions of classroom testing were discussed along with ways of giving feedback on classroom writing tests were also discussed. Participants especially wanted to know more about national exams like the Secondary School Certificate and the Higher Secondary School Certificate English Exams.

### **Participants' Feedback**

We sometimes worry that when participants are not used to giving feedback, they give feedback that seems too positive. However, as you will see the feedback for this seminar seems to be balanced with many positive comments, but some critical ones as well. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, participants rated the workshop 8.4. Positive comments thanked BELTA and the resource team for providing the seminar. Here is one example of the praise that many participants gave to BELTA:

*It can be asserted without the least hesitation that this was the best ever moment for ELT professionals in Bangladesh adorned with the largest no. of resource person from abroad.*

*I offer my heartfelt gratitude towards BELTA for arranging such beautiful programme.*

When asked whether the seminar was appropriate for Bangladeshi teachers, the responses were mixed with the large majority saying that it was and some saying that not every session was appropriate. Participants went on to provide specific comments:

*I think the entire seminar was excellent but some of the topics wasn't belong to Bangladesh.*

*It would be more meaningful if it [the seminar] was designed keeping Bangladeshi students' situation and contexts in mind.*

*The panel discussion were effective with the participation of Bangladeshi experts with the foreign experts.*

Finally, some participants commented on the value of meeting with their peers, while some bemoaned what they say as irrelevant questions:

*I got to know there are a lot of similar minded people.*

*It would be more effective if some participants asked more sensible questions. Only the sensible questions should have been answered.*

### **What can be learned from this seminar?: A critical look**

What did we learn? By looking at both the participants' comments and reflecting on the seminar, several things come out.

Some topics were inappropriate for the Bangladeshi context. For example, the strand of the seminar that dealt with computers and online projects was inappropriate because the majority of teachers do not have access to computers let alone the internet. Thus, those four sessions were inappropriate for all but a handful of teachers.

(It is interesting to note, though, that some participants asked for more multimedia sessions.)

Several of the panels did not have any Bangladeshi experts as panelists. The first three panel discussions only had members of the resource team on them. Thus, the discussion of English as an Asian Language was conducted without any Asians on the panel; likewise, the panel on comparative education only had panel members from the U.S. and Japan with Bangladeshi teachers only offering comments from the audience. As noted in the feedback, some participants aptly point out that the inclusion of local people on the panels would have made them more relevant. They go on to praise the panel that did have a mix of foreign and Bangladeshi teacher trainers on it as being “more effective.”

In retrospect, some of the visitors’ advice looks simplistic and based on inaccurate and incomplete understandings of the Bangladesh context. Comments were made that Bangladesh pronunciation is superior to Japanese pronunciation and that radio is an excellent way to deliver English lessons. These comments seem naïve and simplistic. The resource team had only been in Bangladesh for a short time and did not really understand the complex Bangladesh education system with both English and Bangla medium schools, large class sizes, short class periods, few resources, etc. Most of the teachers at the seminar were from English medium schools in the capital thus the seminar participants were not typical of the majority of teachers who work in Bangla medium schools. In the visitor’s defense, the panel topics were introduced after the resource team arrived; thus, some members did not have a chance to prepare for the discussions.

However, this does not excuse the far too simple suggestions made.

Different participants have different expectations. Some participants criticized other participants’ questions, suggesting that only sensible questions be answered. The question that begs to be asked is what are sensible questions? However, we agree that participants sometimes made comments that were off-topic, but we are not sure why. Perhaps it was due to language ability or it may be that the comment was something that was dear to the participant and needed saying before an audience of peers. Either way, allowing participants to ask or make a wide range of comments helped create a sharing atmosphere, one where participants saw that others were facing the same issues. Many participants commented that if they only took one substantial, workable idea away from the workshop, they would feel the entire workshop was worthwhile.

### **What can be done to address the above issues?**

It is our hope that this paper will open readers’ eyes to the realities of those working outside of countries where English is the L1 and resources are plentiful. If you are a local site inviting outsider expert help, you should make sure contextual information is provided, and if you are an outside invited speaker, you should seek out information about the local context. It is imperative that outside experts have knowledge of the local context including the social and educational milieu. In addition to awareness of the local context, trainers must be sensitive to the needs of the participants considering the following variables and how they interact: the learning/ teaching environment, the resources available, the educational system.

In addition, local expertise must be involved in the delivery of training. By working together, local experts and invited guests can tailor material and methodology to suit the context. This might involve giving participants new methodology in small doses and helping them think of ways to adopt and adapt new ideas. If local expertise and outside knowledge can be integrated, it will lessen the gap between the invited trainers own experiences and the local teachers lived realities. Moreover, local experts can help with the dissemination of ideas and can serve as resource people helping replicate the workshops, making them accessible to teachers who were not able to attend the sessions.

## The Future

In order to achieve its two-fold mission of teacher development and teacher empowerment, BELTA leadership has forged the alliances and implemented the programmes described in this article. Through its most recent programs, BELTA has also reaffirmed that to best achieve its mission, it is crucial that its training programs (along with any “new” methodology introduced) be appropriate and sensitive to the Bangladeshi context. To do so, BELTA must make sure that outside trainers/speakers invited to participate are aware of the local context. Change will come incrementally and as a local teacher training organisation BELTA must deal with teacher resistance to new ideas sensitively, acknowledging that many of the concerns Tomlinson (1988) raises about short in-service courses are applicable to BELTA courses and could be exacerbated by lack of knowledge of the local context. He provides a list of six possible dangers of short in-service courses showing how participants might resist new ideas for a variety of reasons or if they do adopt them, do so

without support and often have to return to their former teaching methods as they run out of ideas or confuse their students. Tomlinson goes on to suggest that the causes of the damage include trainers who do not know the local situation, do not acknowledge local expertise, or provide recipes without helping participants learn how to develop their own activities.

In the future, BELTA intends to continue developing effective in-service teacher training programmes; to liaise with the education ministry and local boards of education; to cultivate relationships with the relevant public and private sector groups involved with ELT improvement programs; and to offer assistance to voluntary teachers of English working with organisations such as the Peace Corps.

BELTA is well positioned to be instrumental in taking ELT to new and accessible heights in Bangladesh. It is determined to discharge its responsibility and help produce a community of trained teachers. BELTA is bent upon providing robust training to the English language teaching community in Bangladesh—training that is not just one off, but rather training that is part of a sustainable plan of action. Many teachers in Bangladesh have given BELTA a vote of confidence and are looking forward to its future programs. BELTA is making continuous efforts to include in its programs teachers who need development the most—those from schools and colleges outside Dhaka where in-service training is seldom available. With membership at over 500 and growing, the future seems bright for BELTA and for ELT in Bangladesh.

## References

- Basic Education and Policy Support Consortium. (2002). *Teachers and Teacher Training: (Formal and Nonformal)*



*Bangladesh Education Sector Review Report No. 4.* (United States Agency for International Development Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00), Washington, DC.

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kam, H. W., & Wong, R. Y. L. (2003). *English language teaching in East Asia today: Changing policies and practices*. Singapore: Easter Universities Press.

Selim, A., & Mahboob, T. S. (2001). ELT and English language teachers of Bangladesh: A Profile. In F. Alam, N. Zaman, & T. Ahmed (Eds.), *Revisioning English in Bangladesh* (pp. 141-151). Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

Tomlinson, B. (1988). In-Service TEFL: Is it worth the risk? *The Teacher Trainer*, 2(2), Retrieved December 27, 2005 from [http://www.tttjournal.co.uk/frs\\_library.htm](http://www.tttjournal.co.uk/frs_library.htm)

### Notes:

1. BELTA's early history can be found on its web site [www.belta.banani.info](http://www.belta.banani.info).
2. The 80% figure refers to teachers in HSC schools and the 90% figure refers to teachers in nongovernmental schools of which there are 19,000.
3. This seminar was the precursor to Teacher's Helping Teachers, a seminar that has been held in several countries since this inaugural program in Bangladesh. For more information about Teachers Heling Teachers, please see the THT website at: [www.tht-japan.org](http://www.tht-japan.org)

Rubina Khan (Ph. D., ELT, University of Warwick) is an Associate Professor in the department of English, University of Dhaka. Her areas of interest are testing, evaluation and teacher education. She is the President of the Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA).

Steve Cornwell (Ed. D., Curriculum, Instruction and Technology in Education, Temple University) is a Professor in the Department of International and English Interdisciplinary Studies, Osaka Jogakuin University. His areas of interest are curriculum design, learners' identity and investment in learning English, and teacher education. He is the JALT Director of Programs.

# **Full Circle: A Reflection by the Former Coordinator of TED SIG**

**Deryn Verity**

The Pennsylvania State University

Contact: dpv3@psu.edu

The very first ESL teaching job I had after finishing my MATESL degree was at the University of Vermont, where I taught the ESL section (yes, one section) of the freshman composition course. I honestly can't remember what I was expected to teach or how well I did; given the early-80s date, I'm sure I was tasked with explaining the "writing process." I do remember that many of my students were French speakers from Quebec, whose general sophistication about the world, including English grammar, was noticeably greater than my own!

Thirty years later, I have taken a new position here at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) in the Department of Applied Linguistics, where I direct an ESL writing program, the bulk of which (15-20 sections, depending on the semester) consists of the ESL sections of the university's first-year composition program (we also offer a few writing and presentation classes designed to support graduate students who are on teaching assistantships). Officially, I am the

Director of ESL/EAP Programs; what this means is that I schedule, hire, oversee, mentor, support, and educate a small legion of funded Teaching Assistants, adjuncts, and lecturers who do the hard work of actually teaching the classes.

I'm happy to be back in the US full-time, after many years in Japan (and some other places along the way). I'm happy to have found a perch on a beautiful campus, where the climate, the flora, and the landscape provide happy reminders of my childhood (I grew up only 400 kilometers to the east of where I'm living now; the sharp smell of freshly-fallen oak leaves, and the fiery reds and golds of the sugar maples in October are familiar and comforting to me). But most of all, I'm happy to be working with writers and writing. For though I've done many things in my 30 years in the field, I have always had a certain native affection for the hard task of putting words onto paper and the even harder task of helping other people do it better.

Even as a very novice, unwashed adjunct instructor in 1982 I somehow figured out that writing teachers had two enormous advantages over teachers of speaking, reading, and listening: first, we got—almost without expecting it or asking for it—wonderful insights into our students as the complex, layered, growing, reflecting people they really were. By putting their words onto paper, and then into my hands, the students in my class gave me a window into their lives, their beliefs, and their experiences. Even though I can't remember a single student from that class, I can still remember the bond that was created in that classroom: I was sort of stunned by the trust they put in me, and tried very hard to treat their words with respect. I remember reading their papers with genuine, avid interest, while encouraging them to keep improving, experimenting, and challenging the texts they produced. Writing ideas down gives them a power than even the most beautifully spoken words can't match.

In addition, in that class, and in every subsequent writing class, I knew—for sure—that I am giving each student feedback that is especially tailored for them. Yes, it's time-consuming to correct written assignments, but every mark I put on a paper is in response to that student's own, individual effort. There were very few scattershot moments in my teaching that semester, despite my inexperience—it was direct, pointed, relevant, and individualized. In fact, the one event I do remember (cringingly) from that term is the day that my supervisor came to observe. A novice observee, I dropped my regular lesson plan, and created some dumb kind of “overview of writing” handout that was full

of rhyming catchphrases (I remember only one, thank goodness: “Be wise! Organize!”) Beverly was merciful and gave me a satisfactory rating, but really, I think she knew that the lesson was mostly for display.

Writing is a precious skill: it illuminates our thoughts, for others but also for ourselves. It is a tool that helps us to both calibrate and signal our position, whether in a hierarchy or an argument. It is both physical activity (nothing makes me hungrier than writing several pages) and mental challenge. Computers have reduced the physical toll on fingers and wrists, but added immeasurably to the mental origami of folding ideas into each other, trying to flare out the edge of an argument or crease a criticism just so. Always a fluent writer, if not a very disciplined one, I've depended upon writing to help get all sorts of things done. Having to write a paper, an article, a teaching exercise, a lesson plan, etc. . . . has helped me many times, through my career, to put my ideas out into the public forum, and even more often, to clarify for myself what it is I am trying to do, to say, to achieve. At my college in Japan, I did a lot of curricular writing; that massive task, which took up way too many Friday afternoons over the years, also gave me a chance to practice putting clear instructions, goal-driven activities, and relevant goals into well-chosen, efficient phrases.

Still, it is my widespread, if informal, observation that most teachers, not to mention most students, view writing with alarm. They see it as being an activity of risky self-exposure (“I'll make a mistake; I'll write something that other people think is silly”). They view the idea of writing up a lesson plan for a journal or a

newsletter as unbearably laborious (“It takes me so long to write anything....”). They believe that writing has to be (a) perfect; (b) wordy; and (c) difficult-looking (“If I don’t use big words, or jargon, nobody will take me seriously”).

In this essay, which is both a valedictory for my years with TED SIG, and also a welcome to our new Editor, Tamara Swenson, I’d like to lay siege to these misconceptions, with the goal of encouraging you, the average member of the TED SIG, to feel more comfortable in picking up a pen and getting some words out onto paper. Tamara is the editor of the new version of our SIG publication, and her hard work for the SIG will be best honored by sending her lots of things publish!

## Writing is more than writing

Having said that, I think it’s important to understand the writing process as involving lots of other activities than just writing, and being not exactly the smooth cyclical process that we illustrate for our students, but sometimes a slow trudge through the underbrush of thought.

In the writing program that I direct, I meet with the instructors once a week. Sometimes we troubleshoot specific problems and some days I grab an idea from the conversation and elaborate on it, eliciting from the people around the table personal and professional experiences that flesh it out. This is to illustrate a fundamental belief of mine:  *talking*  is one of the most important parts of writing. Getting into a discussion—of the topic you’d like to address, of the problem you’d like to research, of the lesson that you led and now want to immortalize in print—is really helpful. It activates the words you will need, it gives you

a low-pressure forum in which you can test out your thoughts, and, maybe most important of all, it makes you  *want*  to keep working on your ideas. I tell my instructors every week: “Get your students to talk, and you can lead them to write.”

Writing also involves  *reading* ; our composition class at Penn State calls itself a class in critical reading and writing. The instructors frequently tell me that this is the most difficult challenge they have: to motivate their students to do the reading HW assignments, and to impart to them the relationship between the readings they take in, and the writing they are expected to put out. Lots of research shows that good writers are typically good readers. But I don’t think you have to go to the research. Writing, especially in a college context, consists of a lot of borrowing: if we borrow only old chestnuts, our text is cliché-ridden (itself a cliché), but if we didn’t borrow at all, our text would be unreadable. Good writing is an artistic balance between the stolen and the constructed (or the conventional and new). Where to steal, sorry, borrow, from? Why, from readings, of course! If you aren’t sure how to start an article, just grab a quote from an article on a similar topic and write in response to it. One of those sentences will almost surely become your opening line.

It would be conventional of me to list editing as a third point in the process. But I think the term begs the question: if you do not feel comfortable writing, how on earth will you feel comfortable editing? So I’m going to say that  *experimenting*  is the third element of the writing process. When you’ve gotten a first draft into shape, go back and read it slowly and critically, preparing yourself to change many things. I usually start out by

changing small things, and those small changes lead me to see that if I just cut out this whole section . . . so . . . the piece falls into place. Then I might go back to my first sentence: am I trying to hook the reader, or calm them down? Am I trying to make an impression, or an entrance? I don't really know – until I try. So experiment with other ways of saying things, and experiment with ordering the sections of the piece, and compose new headings and add a flourish . . . like writing, editing in this exploratory, experimental way takes practice.

Talking. Reading. Experimenting. That doesn't sound so bad. And if you're lucky enough to have 30 years to practice, or even 30 days, I can promise you that it becomes easier and more enjoyable. Doing anything well carries its own reward, and writing is not an exception. In my job these days, I am not really writing curriculum, but I do prepare classroom observation notes to give to my instructors (usually in the form of questions, so that my opinions do not come across

as either judgments or requirements); descriptions of classes; ideas for marketing our online program and recruiting new students; emails to applicants; feedback on assignments; and other texts that take their meaning from my current context. I haven't quite worked up my Penn State style—that's still under construction. But I'm enjoying the chance to use the skills I've been brushing up on since 1982.

Although I'm not in Japan anymore, I'm on email; I encourage everyone in TED to support our new roster of officers, including Peter Hourdequin as Coordinator; Mike Ellis as Program Chair; Mary Hillis as PR/Web Chair; Mizuka Tsukamoto as Treasurer; and Tamara Swenson as Editor. But if you need an extra boost of confidence, please don't hesitate to contact me at [dpv3@psu.edu](mailto:dpv3@psu.edu) where we can talk, read, and experiment together!

University Park, PA

November 8, 2012

---

## Submissions Welcome

The Teacher Education & Development SIG welcomes submissions for its publication, *Explorations in Teacher Education* that address aspects related to the SIG's core mission of expanding and exploring issues in teacher education.

Submissions must conform to the Guidelines of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (APA, 6). Manuscripts should be prepared using either MS-Word or as a text document. Graphs and figures should be sent as PDFs in separate files. Author names should NOT be included on the manuscript. The Author

Names and contact information should appear in the body of the e-mail.

Manuscripts must be submitted by email to:

**[ta.swenson@gmail.com](mailto:ta.swenson@gmail.com)**

Please use the subject line:

**TED ETE submission: Author Name**

Replace "Author Name" with the name of the contact author.

The body of the e-mail should include the names of all authors and a contact address (for email and postal mailing).

# **A Story from a Teacher (in the Middle of a Journey)**

**Mizuka Tsukamoto**

Contact: mizukawk@gmail.com

*When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood: like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes a story at all. When you are telling it to yourself or someone else. (Atwood, 1996, p. 298)*

## **How I Became a Teacher**

When asked why I became a teacher, I always answer that I am an accidental teacher. Though my part-time job when I was an undergraduate student was home tutoring and teaching at cram schools, I never thought I would be in a teaching career. After completing my master's degree, in a non-education or teaching related field, I started to work in an office, which is not related to education. I got an emergency call to take over a class in a college for a short period of time. This short period of term turned out to be long years. For several years, with permission from my boss in the office at that time, my life balanced around two completely unrelated jobs. Then, a time came for me to make decision, for various reasons, I decided to leave the office and I worked at the one college, I had meant to make it "for the time being." Surprisingly and thanks to the people around me, within less than a year I started working for three different universities

that made me decide to stay in the teaching profession. Considering the difficulty of finding part-time positions at universities now, I must say that I was lucky (or was I really? as there was still a possibility of pursuing a non-teaching related career).

After I decided to stay in my teaching career, my attitudes towards teaching gradually started to change. With no academic background in teaching, I had to teach myself to teach and manage my classes, making changes each term/year through my findings during classes and feedback from the students. I, of course, cannot forget the support I got from the tenured colleagues at the college I worked at, many of whom were also my teachers when I was a student. However, the more classes I taught, the more I became interested in teaching, which eventually led me to take CELTA (currently known as Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.)

## Attending CELTA

Becoming more aware of what I was missing because I did not have a background in teaching, I was encouraged to be enrolled in a doctorate programme (as I already had a master's degree), but doing this made me feel very uncomfortable and very challenged, as I did not see my master's programme as a step towards doctorate. As I was "quite up to my neck" with all the preparation and marking/grading I had to do for the classes I taught, I could not see a way to fit anything else in my schedule. This changed when one day, a colleague told me that he was thinking of taking CELTA course. He already had an MA TESOL but was not interested in research, hence not interested in a doctorate programme, but wanted to improve his teaching. I then, quickly researched CELTA and found that I was also eligible to apply for the course. While my colleague did not, for whatever reason, decide to apply for the course, I did, and was fortunately accepted.

I should probably leave it for another time to write about the whole experience of taking CELTA, but it was something worth attending, even though I had to sacrifice a lot in my life in general. I learnt some new things, and the program led me to see various aspects of teaching; reasons behind each activity, looking at a lesson from students' perspective. However, above all, for me, it was more important that I was able to get some kind of basis for what I had already been doing in my classroom. I was able to feel that what I was doing in classroom was right (Although it is not easy to define or to generalise what is right and not right in a classroom). I felt more comfortable in the classroom.

## After CELTA

After completing CELTA, I became more interested in creating and managing effective and efficient EFL classrooms. I also discovered that I found myself having more questions towards what was happening in the classroom than I had before. In addition, the course also left me with interest and importance of having a critical viewpoint. Through my experiences, I decided that there were some aspects of the course that I wanted to share with other people. This became my first small research project that led to my first publication and later a presentation.

I also became more interested in professional development and started to attend conferences. Attending presentations made me realise that there is more to learn in the field, excited about the prospect, and allowed me to meet people in the profession. I have also flown to a few countries to conduct workshops on teaching. I have been quite happy to share what I had learnt and what I do in my classrooms that seemed to work. In addition, seeing the teaching situations in various countries has led me to see a new world.

## Where Do I go from Here?

So where do I go from here? I am still in the middle of my journey being a teacher. There is still a lot to learn. As Atwood (1996) writes, my story will not be a story until I am through with my teaching career. For the time being, I will walk in the dark of not knowing what to expect, but I will be excited and look forward to adventures. This cannot be done without the support of my dear colleagues, friends and family.

## Reference

Atwood, M. (1996). *Alias Grace*. Anchor Books: New York.

# TED Directions: Some Thoughts from the TED Coordinator

**Peter Hourdequin**

Tokoha Gakuen University

Contact: ted@jalt.org

The Teacher Education and Development SIG (TED) is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. This is the mission statement you will find in TED's constitution, and on our web site, and it resonates with my experiences in the TED SIG since joining as program chair a little more than two years ago. At the 2012 JALT Conference, I took over as coordinator, in place of Deryn Verity, whose exemplary leadership has helped TED become one of the most popular special interest groups (SIGs) in JALT. Here, I would like to briefly explore some of the things we have done as a SIG, and consider where I see our group heading in the years to come.

First though, I should introduce myself: I am a mid-career EFL teacher currently working at a small, private 4-year university in Shizuoka. I have been fairly actively involved with JALT since 2009, when I helped out with that year's conference near my university in Shizuoka city. Deryn Verity was then conference co-chair, and after the conference she asked me to join TED as program chair. The opportunity seemed like a great way to stay involved with teacher education

and development (what the conference represents for me) all-year round.

In the past two years, TED has been involved in various initiatives such as supporting JALT's mentoring partnership with Cambodia TESOL, organizing two very dynamic interactive kamishibai forums at the JALT International Conference with the College and University Educators (CUE) SIG, and sponsoring teacher expertise expert Keith Johnson's appearance at the JALT 2011 International Conference. This past June, we also co-sponsored our first EFL Teacher Journeys Conference with Shizuoka JALT. The event was a big success, bringing together educators from across Japan into a discussion about our personal and professional journeys as teachers. Papers from this conference are available in the Summer, 2012 issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*, which you can find on line (<http://jalt.org/ted/ted/Publications.html>), along with other back issues.

## **The NEW TED team**

I am very pleased that we have in place a very talented team of officers to keep TED SIG moving forward in new directions. Apart from Jan Vischer—our stellar membership chair—all officers



are new to their positions this year. After some training and shadowing from outgoing treasurer Tim Knowles, Mizuka Tsukamoto took over the position in May. She has been doing a great job, and the transition has appeared seamless. This is a tribute to Tim's orderly management of our finances until his departure, his mentoring of our new treasurer, and to Mizuka's own diligence and acumen for the job.

As of this October's AGM, Mike Ellis replaces me as program chair. Mike plans to run the EFL Teacher Journeys Conference (or some variation of this) in the coming year, in a new location. SIGs lack the geographical cohesion possible with chapters, but by moving our events to different locations in Japan, and partnering with local organizations, we will be able to sustain a sense of community throughout the year.

Mary Hillis, our new publicity chair is someone who is well equipped for helping our community thrive even when we are not face-to-face at events around Japan. Mary has a background in online communities of learning, and so she is an ideal fit for helping TED reach out to our members and the larger teaching community. Stay tuned to [www.jalt.org/ted](http://www.jalt.org/ted) for positive changes to our web presence, Facebook page (coming soon), and Twitter avatar Ted SIG.

Finally, an important new member to the TED SIG board is Tamara Swenson. Tamara has an extensive background in publishing (both with JALT publications and elsewhere), and we are lucky to have her as our new publications chair. We look forward to the new directions she will take this journal (we are graduating from the "newsletter" moniker under her leadership).

### **TED's Key Component: Members!**

The most important component of TED though is you, the members. We really look

forward to working with you over the coming year, and to seeing you at our events, online, and at the national conference. With our largely new executive board, I am excited for TED to grow in new directions as we explore innovative ways to serve our members, and the broader teaching community, in Japan.

Last summer, for the first time, I was asked to lead some teacher training courses for elementary school teachers who were adjusting to the incorporation of English into their already busy curriculums. As a novice teacher trainer, I wasn't sure what kind of value I could bring to these classes. Feeling somewhat inadequate, I prepared extensively, and, in the end, I think I was able to offer some useful SLA theory to help frame some practical ways to use the required text in effective classroom activities. But I think I may have been the one who learned the most from the experience. What I found is that when you get a group of teachers together and provide some basic structures and conditions for discussion and sharing, the outcome is sure to be rich and creative. In their model lessons, the teachers I taught displayed incredible creativity, skill, and apparently endless energy. Even though the course was taking time away from their summer vacations, the teachers really seemed appreciative of the chance to share ideas about their practices and to try things out with each other while offering and receiving feedback.

It is my hope that TED can continue to be a group that creates spaces for this kind of dynamic interaction among teachers, enlivening each other's practice through the sharing of ideas and experiences in creative and constructive ways. I look forward to meeting you at one of the future TED events or interacting with you electronically as TED Coordinator.

# From the TED Program Chair

**Mike Ellis**

International Christian University High School

Contact: maikeru.desu@gmail.com

Hello, TED membership. I am both humbled and delighted to be able to introduce myself as the incoming program chair of such an active and motivating group of educators as TED-SIG. I'd like to take this opportunity to briefly explain my own path of teacher education and development up until this point, and then focus on the great events we are planning for 2013.

My first teaching experience as a part-time elementary school ALT came in 2005 when I was studying in Japan as an undergraduate exchange student. This experience, though simple and stress-free to a fault, confirmed my long held desire to pursue a career in teaching EFL. I took a couple courses in my school's education department, and when I returned to Japan on the JET program in 2007, I thought that I had already figured out everything there was to know about teaching. Dozens of failed and otherwise substandard classes later, I knew I had to take teacher training more seriously. In 2009, I moved to Tokyo and enrolled in Teachers College's MA TESOL program.

Teaching at my current school while studying TESOL has taught me that teacher development is an ongoing process, so while I was relieved to graduate from the program this past fall, I

also felt nervous about the future of my personal teacher education. We all have met and worked with teachers, contentedly fossilized in the methods of yesteryear. I wondered if my own teaching development would stagnate without a guiding force to push me to question standards, to research, to experiment, to reflect, to learn and to grow as a teacher.

While I still can't deny this fear of stagnation, I can say that becoming a part of TED has calmed it. Based on my own experiences in each of my past teaching contexts, I truly believe that a passionate and supportive group of teachers is the best possible environment to encourage growth and fend off stagnation. As program chair, I hope that I can help TED to continue to be such a positive environment.

## **JALT PanSIG 2013, May 18-19, 2013**

My first order of agenda will be to bring a TED presence to this year's JALT PanSIG conference at Nanzan University in Nagoya on May 18-19. The theme of this year's conference is "From Many, One: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Community." This theme, consistent with my own beliefs on language learning and teacher

development, will give TED the opportunity to work with other SIGs to set up a two-day program. Specifically, we will be working with the Extensive Reading (ER) and Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) SIGs to create a forum on setting up extensive reading programs overseas. We are still looking for people to join in, so please refer to the call for presentations (see below) and contact me directly if you are interested.

### **EFL Teacher Journeys Conference**

Following up the success of last year's conference, held in Shizuoka, TED will hold the second EFL Teacher Journeys Conference this June in Tokyo. This conference is an opportunity for EFL teachers of all students and contexts to share their personal narratives as teachers and start dialogues, which we hope will lead to furthering our education and understanding of our own teaching practices. This year's conference

will be a cooperative effort with Teachers College, Tokyo alumni association. As a member of both groups, I anticipate that this collaboration will create a meaningful and stimulating conference for presenters and attendees alike. Please look forward to a formal announcement of the date and venue, and a call for presentations early next year.

### **Beyond**

As the new program chair, I still have many things to learn, but I hope that the changing of officers this year can become an opportunity to expand on the presence TED has within JALT. As such, I'd like to ask TED's membership for continuing feedback on past and present events, as well as suggestions for future ones. Is there something TED isn't doing? Something we could be doing better? Please share your ideas so that we can continue to make TED a lively SIG!

## **Call for Presentations:**

### **Joint Forums at JALT PanSIG Conference 2013**

TED, together with the ER (Extensive Reading) SIG and the THT (Teachers Helping Teachers) SIG, will join a forum on setting up extensive reading programs overseas at the JALT PanSIG Conference May 18-19, 2013 in Nagoya. We are looking for presenters/discussants to participate, as well as a moderator to represent TED throughout the forum. If you've set up ER programs or participated in a THT program, we'd love to know about your experiences and expertise. If interested, please contact Mike Ellis ([maikeru.desu@gmail.com](mailto:maikeru.desu@gmail.com)) for more details.

## **JALT Teacher Education & Development SIG**

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 help educate other teachers.

### **Become a TED Teacher!**

#### **Joining:**

TED is a special interest group (SIG) of the Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT). To join TED, you must be a JALT member. Information on joining JALT is available on the JALT web site ([www.jalt.org](http://www.jalt.org)).

If you are already a JALT member, you can also add a TED SIG membership to your existing JALT membership. Please see the JALT membership page for information on joining JALT joining in the TED conversation.

#### **Benefits:**

Joining TED connects you to a network of teacher colleagues who are interested in growing professionally. Members receive the most current issue of the TED's newsletter by email (and in print if requested), and can participate in our Yahoo group / mailing list. TED also sponsors and co-sponsors events throughout the year, to which members are welcome.

### **TED SIG Officers**

#### **SIG Coordinator:**

Peter Hourdequin  
*Tokoha Gakuen University*

#### **Membership Chair:**

Jan Visscher  
*Medical English Consultant, Nakamura Systems Inc.*

#### **Program Chair:**

Mike Ellis  
*International Christian University High School*

#### **Publications Chair:**

Tamara Swenson  
*Osaka Jogakuin University*

#### **Contact:**

[ted@jalt.org](mailto:ted@jalt.org)

#### **Treasurer:**

Mizuka Tsukamoto

#### **Web site:**

Mary Hillis  
*Kansai Gaidai University*

#### **Member-at-Large:**

Deryn Verity  
*The Pennsylvania State University*