

Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG Newsletter

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**The Teacher Education SIG AGM will be in room 907 on Saturday,
November 21st from 5:45pm to 6:45pm.**

**Teacher Education SIG sponsors plenary speaker Chris Casanave!
Her plenary is from 10:30am to 11:30am on Monday 23rd in Chu Hall.**

And Now a Word from...The Editor

Hello and welcome to the Conference edition of *Explorations in Teacher Education* (Volume 17, Issue 3), the newsletter of the Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG) of the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT).

This issue has been timed to coincide with the JALT National Conference 2009 in Shizuoka, so I hope at least some people will read it there! To anyone reading this at the conference I hope you enjoy yourself. The Teacher Education SIG AGM will be in room 907 on Saturday, November 21st from 5:45pm to 6:45pm.

This issue of the newsletter has four articles. The first is, "Students' Viewpoints on the Teaching Licence System in Japan," by Anthony Robins. It's an informative and interesting article, which follows on from the one Anthony wrote for the Conference 2008 issue. The second is, "Tweak your Teaching: Advantages of Upgrading Through a Part-time CELTA Course," by Graham Taylor, in his first contribution to *Explorations in Teacher Education*. Hopefully, there will be more to come. The third is, "An Examination of the Characteristics of a Group of Initial EFL Teacher Trainees," by Hideo Kojima, who also published in the Conference 2008 edition. The last one is, "It's the 21st Century – why can't my students use computers?" by Melissa Senga who was interviewed in the summer edition and who is the president of the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ).

We are again a major sponsor for one of the plenary speakers. This time we have sponsored Christine Pearson Casanave to the tune of 300,000 yen. Her plenary, entitled "Perspective Taking" is from 10:30am to 11:30am on Monday 23rd in Chu Hall. The biodata below is taken from the conference handbook.

Christine Pearson Casanave lived and worked in Japan for over 15 years, most of them at Keio University's Shonan Fujisawa Campus, and also as adjunct at Teachers College Columbia University and visiting professor and adjunct at Temple University Japan. She has a special fondness for writing (reflective and essay writing, academic writing, writing for publication), for professional development of language teachers, and for narrative, case study, and qualitative inquiry. One of her long-term goals is to help expand the accepted styles of writing in the TESOL field, and another is to argue for more humanistic, less technology-driven second language education.

Hope you enjoy the issue, Simon Lees

Students' Viewpoints on the Teaching Licence System in Japan

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

1: Introduction

For many final-year undergraduate students, that last year of studies is something of a respite before the beginning of their working lives. They may have finalised their job in the previous year and may have relatively few course credits left to obtain. They do, however, have the challenge of their 'sotsugyo rombun' (graduation thesis), which is usually due around the turn of the year. In contrast, though, there is one group of students which faces greater challenges, particularly through the final hot summer before they begin work. They are the students who want to gain a 'kyouiku shokuin menkyojo' (teaching licence) to work as qualified teachers. One component in this, teaching practice, was covered in my article in a previous newsletter (16, 3). The intention of this article is to explain the examination part of the process and, as in the previous article, to reveal students' opinions about this process.

Before introducing the views of the students, I would just like to highlight the Japanese system in contrast to another one, taking the UK as an example. In the UK, a student effectively qualifies as a teacher by taking an undergraduate course (BA/BSc/BEd) or a one year course following graduation, in the form of a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), and successfully completing a probation year. There is no regional (city, county, or state) accreditation of teachers, as in Germany, Japan or the United States, something which perhaps helps to facilitate mobility of teachers in the UK. However, one change from 2001 onwards has been that students have had to take tests in three areas: numeracy, literacy and ICT (Information and Communications Technology). These take a total of just over two hours, require at least 60% to pass, but can be taken "as many times as you need". These tests have been added to the existing need to have basic qualifications in English and Mathematics. While they are supervised by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and overseen by the General Teaching Council for England, in true modern style, authoring and operation of the tests is outsourced.

To gain an insight into the Japanese system, I have consulted a number of students who are currently engaged in the process. For the largest scale feedback, I am indebted to Ms. Miki Murase. She is currently a graduate student and is taking her teaching licence examination for the second time. As she is taking it in a different location, she is in a valuable position to be able to

indicate contrasts between different examinations. In addition, seven final-year undergraduate students have offered their views on the examinations they are taking in different locations, with five taking the Aichi Prefecture junior high examination, one taking the Nagoya City junior high examination and one taking the Shizuoka Prefecture junior high examination.

2: A Time and a Place

Firstly, let's consider when and where students take the teaching licence examinations. Having completed their teaching practice in June, they then take examinations in two stages. The first stage is in early to mid July, with results in early August.

Having passed that, a student is eligible to take the second stage in late August. Miki's experience is typical in that the majority of the applicants take the examinations in their home area. However, as she explains, she has had two successive options:

"The first exam that I took was that of Nagoya City, but the second one that I am in the midst of taking is that of Aichi Prefecture. Usually, if you want to become a teacher of a certain place, you have to take the exam of that prefecture. However, since Nagoya is an ordinance-designated city*, it has its own exam. However, there are only a few (probably less than ten) city senior high schools, so the number of new teachers that the city employs is very small, and hence, it is very difficult to pass the exam. I decided to take Aichi Prefecture this year because the prefecture has instituted a new policy. If you pass the exam this year but decline that eligibility because you intend to keep on studying at graduate school, you only have to take the final step of the exam (the private interview) next year in order to pass."

* NOTE 1: meaning one of Japan's 18 larger cities

In this response, she reveals three points. First, the greater competition for a senior-high licence as compared with a junior-high licence. Taking senior-high licences first, in Aichi in 2009, there were 2,284 applicants vying for about 280 places, a ratio of 8.2 to 1, compared with 2,258 vying for about 240 places in 2008, a ratio of 9.4 to 1. When it came to junior-high licences, 2009 saw 2,753 people apply for about 400 places, a ratio of 6.9 to 1, compared with 2008 when 2,776 people applied for about 600 places, a ratio of 4.6 to 1.* This incidentally also shows the fluctuations in numbers from year to year. Second, that there are variations in examination conditions and organisation depending on location, an area which we will consider next. Finally, prefectures with large cities, described in Japan as 'ordinance-designated', offer a second choice to local students. For example, in Shizuoka Prefecture, examinations are offered by Shizuoka and Hamamatsu Cities, as well as the prefecture itself.

* NOTE 2: Comparative ratios for elementary school licences were 3.3 (2009) and 3.1 (2008).

3: What makes up the typical licence examination?

Miki next explains the organisation of her current examination in Aichi Prefecture, describing the two parts in July and August as follows:

"There are two parts to the exam. The first part consists of two paper exams (60 minutes each) and one interview (20 minutes). The first paper exam tests the examinee's general knowledge and knowledge of the teaching profession: laws to do with education, psychology, contemporary issues, and history of teaching methods. The second paper exam tests your English. In the interview, five examinees are interviewed by three interviewers at once. However, actually, there were three absent people in my group, so it was more like a private interview. Usually you are asked about yourself, such as why you want to become a teacher, your strong/weak points, what club activities you can supervise, and so on.

The second part of the exam takes place for two days. On the first day, you submit a certificate of health. You also take the Kraepelin test* (50 minutes including intermediary break) and another English test (60 minutes). As opposed to the English test you take in the first part, which is all multiple-choice style, you have to write full answers. In addition to the Kraepelin and English tests, there is also an essay to write in Japanese, in which you have to write 900 characters in one hour. On the second day of the second part of the exam, there are two interviews. The first is a discussion held in a group of eight. The topic of the discussion is usually something that may happen at school, such as "How would you promote good reading habits?" or "What will you do if you find bullying?" At the end of the discussion, each participant has to summarize the discussion in one minute. The second interview is a private interview, in which you are asked everything from why you want to become a teacher, to your strong/weak points, to how you spend your free time, to how to solve real-life situations."

* NOTE 3: Named after the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926), this is also known as the Uchida-Kraepelin test and is a personality test that requests examinees to add two single digits in lines. It has thirty lines and examinees have to begin a new line every minute.

How do examinations in other locations differ? One of the final-year undergraduates is taking the examination for a junior high licence in Shizuoka Prefecture. In this case, competition was more severe in 2009 as opposed to 2008, with Shizuoka Prefecture offering only 30 licenses and thus posts (total for all subjects, not only English), compared to 60 in 2008. The number of applicants

sitting the examinations annually is in the range 120 to 150. In this case, the first stage is somewhat different, with three parts on the first day and one on an additional day. The first day consists of a test of liberal arts knowledge and pedagogy (60 minutes) and English (80 minutes) in the morning. In the afternoon, this is followed by a practical test lasting 10 minutes, preceded by 20 minutes preparation time. The practical test includes dealing with 'mock students'. The second day, while involving waiting time, is a relatively informal interview with a single candidate and three interviewers. As to the second stage in August, this consists of one day encompassing a group interview (30 mins), three individual interviews (each 10 mins) in the morning and two types of personality test, the Yatabe-Guilford Personality Inventory involving answering 120 questions and the Kraepelin test (see above) in the afternoon.

4: Preparing for the Examinations

Wherever they take the examinations, how do the students prepare? Miki indicates a contrast, when she explains that:

"When I applied for Nagoya City last year, I didn't prepare that much for two reasons. Firstly, the paper exams are very short, and it is not realistic to study for them, because anyone could probably get a reasonable score. Secondly, the interview of the first part of the exam is rather special for Nagoya. Every year it changes, for example last year was a discussion about a general topic, for example, my topic was something like, "From the four seasons, choose the one which you think you can have the most fun in." However, the year before that, the examinees were divided into two groups, and one group had to act as foreigners who had come to Japan, and the other group had to explain Japanese things like 'furoshiki', 'sumo' and 'kabuki' to the first group (in Japanese, of course).^{*} In other years, there have been activities like role-play, in which one group acted as sales representatives in a cellular phone shop, and had to try to sell cell-phones to the other group. The way the interview is done changes every year, so although I did practice with my friends, we used past questions, so it didn't really prove to be useful on the real day.

^{*}NOTE 4: It may seem strange that this is carried out in Japanese. This is because the examinees do not only consist of those who want to be English teachers and it is supposed to replicate a situation where teachers have to explain something simply to children!

However, with experience 'second time around', and a change of location, her strategy changed, as she relates:

"This year, I studied a lot (well, compared to last year) for the paper test, because the paper exams for Aichi Prefecture are longer, and whether you study or not does make a difference.

However, the essay and interviews, from what I have heard, seem to be the most important parts of the exam. Therefore, for the essay, I am practicing writing with friends by using topics from previous years, and exchanging and checking each other's essays. For the interviews, again I am practicing with friends. We check each other's posture and content of our utterances, as well as trying to get used to the style of the interviews. In addition, I have made an 'interview notebook' in which I have written questions that have been asked in previous years, and my own answers to them."

How did the other students prepare? While two indicated that they had started studying a year before, the majority really focussed their energies from March or April, with one student reducing part-time work to two days from that time. What strategies did they use? The student taking the examination in Shizuoka Prefecture outlined specific strategies for each part of the test (described at the end of section 3):

- 1: liberal culture test - watched TV news and read newspapers
- 2: pedagogy written test - initially by herself, but from winter she took courses organised by the university co-op (seikyo)
- 3: English written test - attended all English classes and "took them earnestly"
- 4: English practical test - worked out teaching plans and visualized them
- 5: Interview - practiced with friends and assistance from the career support department at the university

The other students referred to various strategies, with two mentioning practising group discussions with friends and the same two referring to studying guidebooks which specifically outline strategies for these examinations. In addition, one of those students plus one other took seminars at the university, organised both by the university co-op (seikyo) and the university itself.

5: Positive and Negative Aspects

What do students see as the positive and negative aspects of the teaching licence examinations? Having taken an examination for the first time the previous year, at the time when I surveyed the students, Miki was the only person who had experienced both stages of an examination (July and late August). She can be seen as outlining three positive areas:

"I guess checking a person's knowledge about things related to teaching is important, because people probably don't study much about basic principles such as laws and regulations, children's development, and various theories related to teaching after they become a teacher, so this is the

only chance to become familiar with them. I also think the fact that there are many interviews is also good, because you cannot check factors like a person's attitude, his/her communication skills, and how he/she reacts when something unpredictable comes up in paper tests. Another positive factor in my opinion is that there are many types of screening. For example, people who have good English skills (measured by TOEFL, TOEIC and/ or Eiken scores) are exempt from the English interview. People who have had teaching experience may not have to take the paper test. People who have achieved good records in particular sports, and art contests and competitions are also exempt from something. If you have a special background of some sort, that part of it is taken into consideration."

Thus, she seems positive in many ways. However, she also criticizes the last point concerning exemption from the English interview, as will be seen later.

At the time of the survey, as indicated above, the other students had only taken the first stage of their respective examinations, which might be seen as limiting the breadth of their responses concerning the positive aspects. In fact, the student taking the examination in Shizuoka Prefecture wrote directly, "I don't come up with any ideas about it now." The six others, taking the Aichi Prefecture or Nagoya City examination, each came up with distinct but perhaps overlapping positive responses as follows:

- 1: Appears successful in eliminating people "who don't want to be a teacher"
- 2: Appears to put more importance on personality than level of study
- 3: Through using multiple-choice marksheet answers, it appears to make it easy to select students
- 4: Multiple-choice marksheet answers are attractive as they avoid the need "to write full sentences"
- 5: The breadth of the examination seems to test widely
- 6: It offers a chance to learn much information and review knowledge

It can also be seen that these opinions, particularly the pairs 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 take account of efficacy both for the examiners and examinees.

In addressing her feelings about negative points of the examinations, as she has experienced them, Miki makes two points. The first will be familiar to anybody who realizes the 'all or nothing' nature of many examinations, while the latter indicates a negative side of the exemption for those who have passed well-known English examinations:

"I think the most negative point is that a person cannot (probably) see the personality of a person in three short interviews. Although an interview does require many skills, for example, speaking as if you are confident although you are very nervous, listening to people's opinions, and speaking your own thoughts while taking other's into consideration, and so on, one mistake, one flaw may destroy the whole thing. Another factor which I think is negative is that if you have a good TOEFL/TOEIC/Eiken score, you are exempt from the English interview. While the Eiken does have an interview with an examiner in front of you, the TOEFL and TOEIC do not have an interview of that kind. Therefore, I think it is strange that people who are exempt do not have to take the interview, but do have to take the English paper exam."

As to the negative points raised by other students taking the examinations in Nagoya or Aichi, one sees it as too long and focussing on knowledge, rather than the ability "to teach and communicate with children", indicating 'another side of the coin' to positive responses 5 and 6 (above) and at odds with response 2. Two more responses are more congruent with each other, with one seeing the English tests as too grammar oriented and the other decrying the lack of a listening test and an interview test in English. The other four negative responses are logistics related, with two bemoaning the hot and non air-conditioned environment where the examination takes place, one critical of the timing as too soon after the teaching practice period and so leaving too little time for study, and finally, the student who took the examination in Shizuoka Prefecture considers the level of competition as too great (see the change from 2008 to 2009 described in section 3).

Perhaps Miki shows a more positive attitude concerning the complaint about timing related to teaching practice when she considers the long-term, rather than short-term, preparation which students should do:

"I have three pieces of advice. Number one, you should study your major. This is probably especially for students who want to become English teachers, but you cannot brush up your language skills in three months, so you should work on improving your skills and knowledge about your major steadily. Secondly, when you go to teaching practice, try to get involved with students as much as possible, because that is experience that you can talk about in the interviews. In addition, ask your supervising teacher about students; their general way of dealing with students, and how they react when a problem comes up. Finally, try to practice saying your opinions briefly. In the interviews, saying your opinions and feelings concisely is important, because whatever you say, you have to accurately get it across to the examiners or other examinees. You cannot speak for too long, because that will make your main point blurred. Also, for both Nagoya and Aichi, there are

points where you have to summarize a discussion or your thoughts in one minute. This requires a lot of practice if you are not used to it, so the earlier you begin practicing, the better! One more piece of advice: if you still have your textbooks from high school, do not throw them away, because they prove to be quite useful in preparing for the more general parts of the exam!"

While being far from comprehensive and covering only a small sample of students, I hope that this article has indicated some of the hurdles that the final year student looking for a career in teaching faces. While the number of stages is actually fewer than the three or four stages of interviews and tests required for other jobs in Japan, their timing, during what students aware of employment conditions refer to as 'the last vacation' can be seen to apply particular pressure.

Success at this stage is not the last stage. As Roehlen and Le Tendre wrote in 1998, "The training of Japanese teachers is not thought to begin until they start their first teaching job, at which point they begin a long period of apprenticeship-like training in which they are supervised by master (experienced) teachers." (p.217) As in Britain, a probation year now has to be passed and 301 teachers in Japan failed to complete this successfully in 2007. However, it is more like Britain than Germany, where a two-year teaching apprenticeship on a reduced salary followed by the second and final stage of licence examinations takes place.

In addition, perceptions concerning the quality of serving teachers and the need to deal with a changing school environment have led the Japanese government to begin a system of teacher relicensing courses during the current 2009-10 academic year. Although the incoming government now proposes to scrap this system and focus on a six-year period of training including a one year internship, at the time of writing, teachers need to take these courses every ten years after their initial licence. According to the 'Mainichi Shimbun', the Ministry of Education initially accredited 83 universities and other colleges to teach these courses by the end of the 2008-9 academic year. However, it was expected that 360 universities and colleges would be involved by the end of the 2009-10 academic year, enabling 105,000 applicants to be handled. To conclude, by returning to a comparison with the UK, a new schools white paper* at the end of June 2009 includes a plan for relicensing every five years.

*NOTE 5: A white paper is a document for discussion as a prelude to preparing a parliamentary bill followed by passing an act of parliament.

Sources:

Daily Telegraph <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>> (30 June 2009) 'Licence to teach' to be required in schools (accessed 7 August 2009)

The Japan Times <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp>> (28 August 2009) Train teachers over six years: DJP (accessed 28 August 2009)

Mainichi Shimbun <<http://mdn.mainichi.jp>> (20 January 2009) Teachers to learn how to deal with 'monster parents' under new license renewal training (accessed 20 January 2009)

T. P. Roehlen and G. K. Le Tendre (1998) *Teaching and Learning in Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge.

Application statistics for Aichi Prefecture (Japanese):

<http://www.pref.aichi.jp/cmsfiles/contents/0000025/25710/1ji_jukenjoukyou.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2009)

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Licence information for UK: UK Training and Development Agency for Schools (accessed 7 August 2009)

License information for US: information on a typical state's certification tests:

http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/NY14_teachercertification.asp

Related Article:

A. Robins (2008) *Coming Back to their Youth and Acting as a Man: Teaching Practice through Students' Eyes* in: *Explorations in Teacher Education* 16, 3 (p.15-23)

Anthony Robins taught in Britain and Greece before coming to Japan, where he first worked in a language school followed by several public universities. His present position in a university of education has led to increasing interest and involvement in the Japanese teacher training system.

Tweak your Teaching: Advantages of Upgrading Through a Part-time CELTA Course

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Abstract

Many English language teachers employed at either a Japanese university or high school may be contemplating improving their practical teaching abilities, their teaching theory, or simply wishing to beef up their resume with further education through a recognized certification course. An M.A. in TESOL or in Applied Linguistics is a popular choice, and is often available through multi-year distance education programs (Dunkley, 2006). This paper will introduce another option, the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), which can be completed through full-time intensive study in one month, or by part-time, less pressured study extended over anywhere from three to five months while allowing learners to maintain their Monday to Friday work schedule. While Croker (2008) has already described features of the full-time CELTA course and numerous reasons for doing the CELTA course, this paper will focus on the benefits of the part-time course while also giving examples of practical techniques taken away from the CELTA course which the author found particularly useful.

Introduction

Are you a language instructor with a lot of experience but little or no formal training in education, or are you an instructor confident in theory but looking to refine and improve your practical teaching ability? Perhaps you are contemplating undertaking an M.A. in TESOL or some other ELT-related degree. Hold that thought, and take a moment to learn about a twenty-day intensive certificate program offered through the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations called the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). This paper will provide you with an introduction to the CELTA as well as a brief overview as to why the CELTA ended up being the right choice for this author. A very brief outline of some examples of effective teaching practices attained pursuing the CELTA course will be discussed followed by a number of advantages of taking a part-time course, rather than a full-time course.

So what exactly is the CELTA course? It's a demanding, twenty-day teaching practice and theory course in which a small group of candidates works together to learn the principles of effective teaching, to develop practical skills, and to build confidence, as instructors in their own classrooms

through hands-on teaching practice. Each day is divided roughly in half, with three hours of 'teaching practice' using volunteer students, followed by feedback from the course trainers and from peers. The remaining four hours are devoted to 'input sessions' filled with interactive lectures, demonstrations and discussions. Unlike most distance education programs, which are often theory-heavy, the opportunity for practice and analysis of your own teaching is the central focus of this course. Through ongoing feedback at each session, you have the chance to sharpen both lesson planning and classroom management skills, in a supportive environment that is often not available to you in your own workplace where demands such as grading or a heavy course load often take the focus away from your opportunities to develop as a teacher. There are also four demanding written assignments, that address language, language skills, the learner, and the instructor. Although only recently becoming known in Japan, the CELTA is internationally recognized with over 10,000 successful candidates completing the course every year. For more complete information regarding the CELTA course go to:

<<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/celta.html>>

or look at Croker (2008).

Now that you have a general idea of what the CELTA course is, let me explain my situation, and how I came to enroll in the CELTA. In 2002, when I came to Japan, it was to teach English and learn Japanese – in which order I'm not quite sure. As a lifelong learner wishing to immerse myself in an environment focused on learning, I had set my sights on ultimately making it to the university level as an educator, fluent in Japanese. The path I would follow to reach my goal was not yet determined at that time. Initially, my quest lead me along a route of teaching English at conversation schools, then teaching English at junior high schools. En route, I also earned language certification qualifications through the Japanese proficiency exam, and earned my Masters Degree in Japanese Language and Society by distance education through The University of Sheffield. However, none of these experiences or accomplishments provided formal training in EFL teaching, nor did they give me the breakthrough to English university teaching that had been my starting and continuing goal. It was not until after my final undertaking, a five-month, part-time CELTA course, where I received such training and authentication of my teaching ability, that I reached my goal. The CELTA course also improved my language awareness and expanded my teaching toolbox with tools that bolstered my confidence for my first year of university teaching.

Actually, it was an English university professor at a Japanese university who explained to me that, like many teachers in Japan without formal teacher training, I needed to confirm my ability as a

teacher if I ever hoped to qualify for a teaching position at a university. This CELTA-qualified professor suggested that not only would the CELTA serve this purpose but, without it, I would be lost in my first year of teaching at university. Upon researching the CELTA course online, I discovered that it was offered around the world, at over 286 approved centers in 54 countries, in both full-time four-week courses, and part-time multi-month courses. While the idea of jetting off to Thailand for my summer vacation to do a full-time course on the beaches of Phuket appealed to me strongly, leaving my wife home alone for the entire time to tend to our seven-month-old son was not an option. The only way for me, in my circumstances, to do the CELTA course was via part-time study through the Language Resources office in Kobe: <http://www.languageresources.org/>. My decision was made, and less than a year later I was finally rewarded with the achievement of my long-term goal of teaching at university level in Japan.

Five Examples of Tweaking my Teaching

While a comprehensive list of upgrades to my teaching gained through taking this course is far too great to cover in a single paper, I would like to very briefly share five examples of things I have acquired and incorporated into my teaching repertoire. These five examples, including; phonology familiarity, the concept checking technique, the 'task, text, check' listening process, improved lesson planning, and insight into peer observation, have been chosen for two reasons. They are examples of teaching principles, practical skills, or language awareness that were either in need of enhancement in my own teaching or, aspects of teaching that could be potentially beneficial to some of my colleagues at university. Hopefully, some of these ideas may be relevant additions to your own teaching toolbox, as well as encouragement to learn more about the CELTA course.

Developing Phonological Awareness

Like many native English speakers, having acquired the language naturally, instead of through explicit study, I had a lack of theoretical knowledge of pronunciation. The CELTA course helped me gain confidence in dealing with aspects of phonology like connected speech, intonation, and stress.

First, during input sessions, candidates were taken through the phonemic chart, forms of connected speech, word stress, sentence stress, and intonation and given ideas for how and what to address when teaching them. Next, opportunities to practise this newly-acquired theory were created in teaching practice. Finally, specific feedback on progress made in teaching pronunciation was provided.

Concept Checking

Concept checking (CCC) is a way of eliciting student responses in an effort to guide students towards, and confirm their understanding of, the core meaning of words and language concepts. The CCC technique uses closed questions, which are easier for students to answer, and through their ability to respond to these questions correctly, you can be assured of your students' understanding (or lack of it). CCC avoids the long silences and the awkward uncertainty that often follows the phrase "Do you understand?" In using this technique, the teacher should choose one or two stronger students in the class to direct their questions at. For example, this technique can be used to explain the word 'cozy' in the situation "She sat down in a cozy chair."

Teacher: In this situation, is cozy an adjective or a noun?

Student: Adjective?

Teacher: Yes. Is a cozy place warm or cold?

Student: Warm.

Teacher: Yes. Is a cozy place uncomfortable?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: No, it's usually soft or comfortable. OK. I'm in a cozy place. Is it big or small?

Student: Small.

Teacher: Yes. Do I feel safe in this place?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Good.

Task, Text, Check

Listening without a purpose is unnatural, but in some English classes students are instructed to just "listen." The CELTA prescribes a method for performing reading and listening practice that follows the pattern: task, text, check. This pattern ensures that students have a purpose for listening called a 'task'. After receiving their task, students are given the 'text' (reading/listening sample). Finally, students are given a chance to 'check', or compare answers with each other before being asked to share an answer with the class. Students who are encouraged to give reasons supporting why they chose their answer are often able to, as a pair, reconstruct or clarify portions of the conversation, as their partner may have heard other parts of the recording that they did not hear. This opportunity to consult with a partner boosts confidence because even if they can't complete the task, checking confirms for students what they have heard, instead of what they didn't hear. The three simple steps; task, text, pair check can be repeated over and over to examine the same material in further depth.

Better Teaching Through Better Planning

With a syllabus to follow and a textbook to finish, teachers (including myself, from time to time) may lose sight of what it is they are trying to achieve in the classroom everyday. The CELTA course trains candidates to create detailed lesson plans and set specific lesson aims to ensure that candidates are prepared to do more than just 'finish pages 63 to 64 of the textbook in 90 minutes'.

CELTA lesson plans include:

- student-student interaction patterns
- a whiteboard plan
- grammar form and phonology tables
- a list of likely student language concept problems and strategies to deal with them
- individual stage timing
- stage objectives which must all relate to the overall lesson aims in the specified context.

Having considered all of these details in the lesson planning stage ensures:

- students have a variety of interactions
- an organized whiteboard so the candidate doesn't run out of space
- candidates are prepared to handle any questions or difficulties that may arise during class
- a fluid lesson
- the lesson is relevant to student interests, which in turn leads to improved learner motivation.

The Power of Observation

A major advantage of the twenty-day CELTA course is that it has more than 35 hours of classroom observation from both highly qualified teaching professionals as well as peers with varying experiences and backgrounds. For example, my eight peer candidates came from 5 different countries, and with a range of classroom experiences including teaching at public schools, cram schools, conversation schools, and private businesses.

Even instructors with very comprehensive language awareness may be lacking in opportunities to observe and be observed in a constructive way. I have continued to set up observation opportunities, to pick up original ideas on how to:

- arrange seating
- present grammar forms
- teach pronunciation
- check for students' understanding

- keep instructions brief
- use worksheets more effectively
- link lesson stages smoothly
- set up activities
- develop a rapport with the students

“In my own teaching career, I have found that one of the most useful things is simply to watch other people teach.” (Scrivener, 2005, 11)

Advantages and Challenges of a Part-time Course

Perhaps you are interested, but you don't know which format of the CELTA course is best for you – the part-time or full-time study format. Well, for many teachers who have long summer, winter, or spring breaks, the choice to do a full-time CELTA course is simple. Not only do you have the option of travelling to an exotic location, and finishing before the next school semester starts, but the cost of the course is often significantly less than completing the course here in Japan (even when including return airfare). That being said, the part-time course offered here in Japan on 20 consecutive Saturdays definitely has its advantages. While catering to the needs of those who cannot leave their families or jobs for a long continuous period, it may also be attractive to those free to choose either format. To help you decide which is best, in the section to follow, I will highlight some of the advantages and disadvantages of the part-time course, in comparison with the full-time course.

Weathering a Formidable Workload

“Some people stop showering after the first week,” was a comment made by my CELTA trainer, of the effects of the course workload on a number of candidates enrolled in the full-time course. Without question, the CELTA course is very demanding! Preparing to teach a lesson during which you will be highly scrutinized and in which you are expected to incorporate any number of principles that have been introduced throughout the course, and demonstrate you understand them, naturally commands more attention than any class usually would. Doing this almost every day of the course, in addition to reviewing the day's feedback, reading up background theory from the input session and from teaching practice, and working on four written assignments, will leave you working very hard when you are not in class.

While the severity of the demands of the course will vary depending on your experience in teaching and your English language awareness, according to the Kobe Training Center (Language

Resources, 2009) an average of anywhere from five to ten hours a week is required. Consider now that candidates on the full-time course would have only overnight periods to do all of these same 'next class' preparations. Moreover, the time frame allotted for your written assignments while attending the part-time CELTA is obviously much greater. Compare four or five days allotted in the full-time course for each 1000-word assignment to two or three weeks in the part-time course. Although you may have other family and work commitments vying for your time during the week, for me this additional time definitely reduced some of the time pressure experienced by participants of the full-time course.

Ample Time for Review, Reflection, Development and Practice

While I was in class, my day was filled with incredible learning opportunities with little time to digest the current material. An advantage of the part-time course is that I had additional time to review my lesson plans, teaching performance, and the input sessions. I also had time to reflect on my own observations, to develop my own teaching principles based on these reflections, and to practice using these new principles outside the CELTA classroom. Having an entire week to review the day's activities in full really allowed that day's actions to settle in before coming up with a lesson plan. It also provided ample time to review, revise, and improve my lesson plan. Additionally, my practice time was not limited to the CELTA classroom sessions alone. From Monday to Friday, between each of my weekly Saturday CELTA, I was able to practise new teaching ideas at work in my junior high school. Compared to a full-time course candidate who would have a total of only six hours of teaching practice, taking the part-time course gave me over 100 additional classroom hours for development and practice.

Scheduling Advantages: Start Fresh, Stay Focused

Each CELTA training center is free to devise its own training schedule to fit the needs of its candidates and volunteer students. At my training center in Kobe, teaching practice sessions were run in the mornings, with feedback and input sessions immediately following in the afternoon. This is the opposite of Croker's (2008) experience in which teaching practice took place last thing in the afternoon. I believe the scheduling at the Kobe center was advantageous to candidates because, first thing in the morning, we as candidates could be clear-headed and full of energy, ready to apply a whole week's reflection to our lesson plan. After completing the teaching practice (which we were evaluated on), we could relax and focus on the input session that followed. Conversely, in Croker's (2008) situation, candidates did not receive feedback on their teaching practice until the following morning. Additionally, morning input sessions might have fatigued or flustered candidates before

their teaching practice, or alternatively, thoughts of teaching practice might have distracted candidates from fully focusing on morning input sessions.

Coordinating CELTA, Family, and Career

Since lessons are usually broken into parts and taught sequentially by teams of candidates, communication between candidates regarding lesson sequencing was very important. On the full-time course, fellow candidates would often be staying together in the same lodging and so this coordination could be done face-to-face. However, on the part-time course, we were away from the center during the week and it was crucial that we kept in touch with each other by email to ensure we understood what the first teacher would cover in his or her half of the lesson.

On the other hand, taking the course part-time meant that I didn't have to be away from my family for more than a day at a time (with the exception of two Saturday-Sunday weekends). Moreover, I continued my work at junior high school without a single absence.

As the preparation for each Saturday CELTA session was still very demanding, I did require the support and understanding of my wife because I was seldom available in the evenings for discussions or socializing during the course. My wife and I discussed this prior to me committing to the CELTA course and I recommend anyone considering doing the CELTA course to consider the need for a significant time commitment. The end result, however, was that I could reach my goal of teaching at the university level without changing my lifestyle in any major way.

Challenges Can Be Overcome

For me, the only real negatives of the part-time course format were geographical limitations and cost. Firstly, the CELTA course is currently offered at only two locations in Japan, Kobe and Tokyo. If you aren't fortunate enough to live near one of these centers, the commute to and from the training center could make the part-time course logistically impossible, or considerably more expensive. Secondly, even though the course is externally moderated to ensure your experience is the same regardless of where you take it, the difference in cost between training centers is based on such things as the cost of living, different wage rates for the trainers, and higher facility costs for training centers. Depending on your center, the cost of taking the course in Japan ranges between 310,000 yen and 420,000 yen. Compared with training centers in, for example, Thailand, the cost of the CELTA in Japan is approximately double. All factors considered, however, the quality of the course certainly outweighs any monetary or time commitments, and I firmly believe that I got my

money's worth and more!

Conclusion

I hope that through sharing some examples of things I have taken away from the CELTA course I have stirred your interest to learn more or encouraged you to consider signing up for a CELTA course. Whatever format you may choose, I can assure you that if you follow through on your decision to enroll in the CELTA course, it will be a decision you will look back on with satisfaction, as the CELTA course really is a rewarding professional development tool for instructors at any stage of their career.

Resources

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An Examination of the Characteristics of a Group of Initial EFL Teacher Trainees

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Introduction

If teacher trainees, who are learning how to teach, know their own characteristics, such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, risk-taking, learning styles and strategies, this is likely to help them to make their language learning and teaching more successful. The process of learning to be an effective EFL teacher in many ways parallels the process of learning to be an effective EFL user. This survey aimed to examine the characteristics of a group of teacher trainees at a Japanese university and to support the individual trainees in their efforts to be autonomous teacher-learners. It followed up the author's previous survey (Kojima, 2004).

Method

Purpose of the study

The central purpose of this follow-up study was to examine the characteristics of a group of initial teacher trainees focusing on their learning styles and strategies. By providing them with systematic opportunities to check their own learning styles and strategies, I hoped to help them to achieve a greater sensitivity to their language development, and thus to be able to control their subsequent EFL learning and teaching. It was hoped that this survey would supplement and support findings in my previous survey, which showed that teacher education programs would be expected to be more concerned with metacognitive processes of critical reflection and collaborative processes of communicative group work, on which practical models for teacher development could be built. The research question was: What kinds of styles and strategies do the trainees have in EFL learning?

Participants

This survey involved 53 teacher trainees (40 second-year university students and 13 third-year university students) in pre-service EFL teacher education at my university, with low intermediate to high intermediate levels of English. They were totally inexperienced teacher trainees, undertaking coursework in EFL teaching theory and practice which only the second and third years could take. The second year students consisted of 20 students at the faculty of education and 20 students at the faculty of humanities, but the third year students were all at the faculty of education. Most of them hoped to obtain a teaching license and to work for primary or secondary schools after graduation. The third years were required to have their teaching practice in school classrooms in

September.

Material

I used the same material in both this survey and the 2004 survey: a learning styles checklist composed of eight questionnaires from Brown's guidebook, *Strategies for Success: A Practical Guide to Learning English* (Longman 2002), which "is designed to supplement an existing intermediate-level text in English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL)" and whose chapters "offer a systematic program of strategies that will span most courses of study" (Brown, 2002, p. vii). The questionnaires contained the following characteristics of individual trainees: reflective or impulsive style, general self-confidence, two kinds of motivation, "left-brain" and "right-brain" processing, language ego, extroversion and introversion, seven kinds of intelligence, and individual learning strategies. Each of the questionnaires was designed to help learners to assess their own learning styles on Brown's scales.

Procedures

I administered a learning styles checklist and made sure that the trainees understood how to fill out the questionnaires. I stressed that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers and that their honest opinions about themselves would benefit them most.

I facilitated small-group sharing of feelings underlying their responses, so that they could discuss key concepts and develop strategies to be utilized immediately in the low-risk context of small-group work.

I encouraged the trainees by telling them how important it was to understand their own learning style preferences and to develop effective strategies in order to promote their learner autonomy. I gave some advice on why certain practices might be successful or unsuccessful.

Results and Discussion

The following tables show four kinds of figures: the numbers/percentages of the third-year trainees, the numbers/percentages of the second-year trainees, the total numbers/percentages of both years' trainees, and the total numbers/percentages of the trainees in the Kojima 2004 survey. I mainly compare the total numbers/percentages between this survey and the 2004 survey.

Reflective or impulsive

Table 1 Questionnaire 1: Reflective or Impulsive

Score	3 rd years n=13 (%)	2 nd years n=40 (%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)
46-50 (Very reflective)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.7)
30-45 (Reflective)	9 (69.2)	30 (75.0)	39 (73.6)	57 (78.1)
15-29 (Impulsive)	4 (30.8)	10 (25.0)	14 (26.4)	14 (19.2)
10-14 (Very impulsive)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Table 1 shows if the trainees were “reflective” or “impulsive” when they were working on their English. In this survey, a total of 39 (73.6%) trainees were labelled “reflective”, but no trainee was “very reflective”. Moreover, a total of 14 (26.4%) trainees were “impulsive”, but no trainee was “very impulsive”. In the Kojima 2004 survey, 78.1% of the trainees were “reflective” and 2.7% of the trainees were “very reflective”. In each survey, more than 70% of the participants showed reflective style tendency rather than impulsive style tendency. Neither style is necessarily good or bad, but there are advantages and disadvantages to whichever style. It might be better for very reflective trainees to aim for more balance in their decision-making speed, considering that fluency is thought to be as important as accuracy in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is becoming popular in EFL education in Japan.

General self-confidence

Table 2 Questionnaire 2: General Self-Confidence

Score	3 rd years n=13(%)	2 nd years n=40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)
26-32 (Very high)	2 (15.4)	6 (15.0)	8 (15.1)	10 (13.7)
20-25 (Quite high)	8 (61.5)	23 (57.5)	31 (58.5)	50 (68.5)
14-19 (Satisfactory)	3 (23.1)	10 (25.0)	13 (24.5)	12 (16.4)
8-13 (Quite low)	0 (0)	1 (2.5)	1 (1.9)	1 (1.4)

Table 2 reveals how the trainees felt about themselves and their own abilities. In comparison with the Kojima 2004 survey, the total rate of “quite high” in this survey (58.5%, 2004: 68.5%) was lower

by 10 %; that of “very high” was a little higher (15.1%, 2004:13.7%); and that of “satisfactory” was higher (24.5%, 2004:16.4%). Although 73.6% of the trainees (2004: 82.2%) claimed to have high levels of self-confidence, the other trainees, whose scores were 8-19, could perhaps ask themselves why they did not feel self-confident. It is now necessary for us to consider various ways to enhance their self-confidence, such as creating a positive learning environment, using cooperative learning activities, and using diaries or dialogue journals inside and outside the classroom.

Two kinds of motivation

Table 3 Questionnaire 3: Two Kinds of Motivation

Part 1 score	3 rd years n=13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)
13- 20 (High self-motivation)	10 (76.9)	39 (97.5)	49 (92.5)	72 (98.6)
5- 12 (Low self-motivation)	3 (23.1)	1 (2.5)	4 (7.5)	1 (1.4)
Part 2 score				
13-20(High motivation from others)	1 (7.7)	0 (0)	1 (1.9)	4 (5.5)
5- 12 (Low motivation from others)	12 (92.3)	40 (100)	52 (98.1)	69 (94.5)

Table 3 shows how strongly the trainees’ motivation to learn English came from inside (Part 1) or how strongly other influences were pushing them to learn English (Part 2). Part 1 refers to *internal* motivation, and Part 2 refers to *external* motivation. In both this and the Kojima 2004 survey, over 90% of the trainees claimed to have high levels of internal motivation and low levels of external motivation. It might be natural to expect that almost all trainees in the methodology classes are motivated by their own wants and needs. They could perhaps look at their goals frequently and track their progress. A few trainees, who might have neither internal nor external motivation, need to reconsider their goals of being EFL teachers in the future.

“Left-brain” and “right-brain”

Table 4 Questionnaire 4: “Left-Brain” and “Right-Brain”

Score	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n=53 (%)	2004 n=73 (%)
28-32 (High right-brain)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4.1)
23-27 (Moderate right-brain)	2 (15.4)	5 (12.5)	7 (13.2)	24 (32.9)
18-22 (No particular preference)	8 (61.5)	33 (82.5)	41 (77.4)	40 (54.8)
13-17 (Moderate left-brain)	3 (23.1)	2 (5.0)	5 (9.4)	5 (6.8)
8-12 (High left-brain)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.4)

Table 4 shows which processing the trainees liked to use more, “left-brain” processing or “right-brain” processing. In comparison with the Kojima 2004 survey, there was a different feature between the two: this survey had no trainee labelled high “left-brain” or high “right-brain”; the total rate of the trainees labelled “moderate right-brain” was much lower (13.2%, 2004: 32.9%); and that of the trainees labelled “no particular preference” was much higher (77.4%, 2004: 54.8%). It may be important for the trainees to know which type of processing they tend to like, but it may also be important for them to be able to use both types of processing in EFL learning and teaching.

Language ego

Table 5 Questionnaire 5: Language Ego

score	3 rd years n=13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53(%)	2004 n=73(%)
7- 13 (Weak)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
14- 21 (Moderate)	8 (61.5)	29 (72.5)	37 (69.8)	42 (57.5)
22- 18 (Strong)	5 (38.5)	11 (27.5)	16 (30.2)	31 (42.5)

Table 5 shows how strong the trainees’ language ego in English was. No trainee claimed to have a “weak” language ego in either this or the Kojima 2004 survey, but in this survey more trainees were labelled “moderate” (69.8%, 2004: 57.5) and fewer trainees were “strong” (30.2%, 2004: 42.5). The trainees, who have a strong language ego, are probably already fairly good risk takers. They are quite confident in themselves and do not mind too much even if they make mistakes. Since the

third years in this survey were more accustomed to learning English at university level, it might be natural that the rate of the “strong” third years (38.5%) was higher than that of the “strong” second years (27.5%). The moderate trainees might be afraid that other people will think that they are stupid. They need to consider becoming greater risk takers and making their mistakes work for them.

Extroversion and introversion

Table 6 Questionnaire 6: Extroversion and Introversion

Score	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n=53(%)	2004 n= 73(%)
8- 9 (Very extroverted)	2 (15.4)	5 (12.5)	7 (13.2)	8 (11)
6- 7 (Somewhat extroverted)	8 (61.5)	12 (30.0)	20 (37.7)	25 (34.2)
3- 5 (Somewhat introverted)	2 (15.4)	18 (45.0)	20 (37.7)	31 (42.5)
0- 2 (Very introverted)	1 (7.7)	5 (12.5)	6 (11.3)	9 (12.3)

Table 6 shows if the trainees were extroverted or introverted in their feelings and activities. In comparison with the Kojima 2004 survey, the total rate of the trainees who claimed to be “somewhat extroverted” was a little higher (37.7%, 2004: 34.2%), and that of the trainees, who were labelled “somewhat introverted” was lower (37.7%, 2004: 42.5%). The extroverted trainees might enjoy collaborative learning, where *collaboration* is regarded as a learning strategy for developing an individual trainee’s learner autonomy through communicative group work. The level of extroversion in the third years was higher than that in the second years. This might be because the third years had experienced collaborative learning in my classes and already had positive attitudes towards collaborative group work. The introverted trainees may enjoy solving problems on their own and have good study skills. If they are afraid to take risks in communication, it might be better for them to try strategies to interact with their peers and trainers. Introverts in Japan often have the patience and focus to attend to clear articulation in a foreign language. Both introversion and extroversion have advantages and disadvantages and one is not better than the other.

Seven kinds of intelligence

Table 7 Questionnaire 7: Seven Kinds of Intelligence

	Linguistic				Logical-mathematical			
Score	3 rd years n=13(%)	2 nd years n=40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)
7-8 (Very high)	1 (7.7)	7 (17.5)	8 (15.1)	17 (23.3)	3 (23.1)	6 (15.0)	9 (17.0)	10 (13.7)
5-6 (Moderately high)	7 (53.8)	19 (47.5)	26 (49.1)	42 (57.5)	6 (46.2)	23 (57.5)	29 (54.7)	40 (54.8)
3-4 (Moderately low)	5 (38.5)	11 (27.5)	16 (30.2)	14 (19.2)	4 (30.8)	9 (22.5)	13 (24.5)	23 (31.5)
1-2 (Low)	0 (0)	3 (7.5)	3 (5.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5.0)	2 (3.8)	0 (0)
	Spatial				Musical			
Score	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53 (%)	2004 n= 73 (%)
7-8 (Very high)	4 (30.8)	8 (20.0)	12 (22.6)	12 (16.4)	5 (38.5)	17 (42.5)	22 (41.5)	34 (46.6)
5-6 (Moderately high)	9 (69.2)	27 (67.5)	36 (67.9)	55 (75.3)	6 (46.2)	17 (42.5)	23 (43.4)	29 (39.7)
3-4 (Moderately low)	0 (0)	5 (12.5)	5 (9.4)	5 (6.8)	2 (15.4)	6 (15.0)	8 (15.1)	7 (17.8)
1-2 (Low)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (4.1)
	Bodily-kinesthetic							
Score	3 rd years n= 13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n=53(%)	2004 n=73 (%)				
7-8 (Very high)	2 (15.4)	12 (30.0)	14 (26.4)	21 (28.8)				
5-6 (Moderately high)	4 (30.8)	23 (57.5)	27 (50.9)	28 (38.4)				
3-4 (Moderately low)	7 (53.8)	4 (10.0)	11 (20.8)	22 (30.1)				
1-2 (Low)	0 (0)	1 (2.5)	1 (1.9)	2 (2.7)				
	Interpersonal				Intrapersonal			
Score	3 rd years	2 nd years	Total	2004	3 rd years	2 nd years	Total	2004

	n= 13(%)	n= 40(%)	n= 53 (%)	n= 73 (%)	n= 13(%)	n= 40(%)	n= 53 (%)	n= 73 (%)
7-8 (Very high)	1 (7.7)	15 (37.5)	16 (30.2)	19 (26.0)	3 (23.1)	9 (22.5)	12 (22.6)	4 (5.5)
5-6 (Moderately high)	9 (69.2)	22 (55.0)	31 (58.5)	39 (53.4)	5 (38.5)	18 (45.0)	23 (43.4)	38 (52.1)
3-4 (Moderately low)	3 (23.1)	3 (7.5)	6 (11.3)	13 (17.8)	3 (23.1)	11 (27.5)	14 (26.4)	25 (34.2)
1-2 (Low)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.7)	2 (15.4)	2 (5.0)	4 (7.5)	6 (8.2)

Table 7 presents seven kinds of intelligence which the trainees claimed they preferred to use, and shows in which kinds of intelligence the trainees were found to be stronger or weaker than others. The most important lesson for the trainees here may be that they can make use of many different kinds of intelligence in learning English. Most trainees in both this and the Kojima 2004 survey were found to be strong in spatial intelligence (90.5%, 2004: 91.7%), musical intelligence (84.9%, 2004: 86.3%), and interpersonal intelligence (88.7%, 2004: 79.4%). As for linguistic intelligence, the total rate of the trainees labelled “high” in this survey (64.2%) was much lower than in the Kojima 2004 survey (80.8%). On the other hand, regarding logical-mathematical intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, over 70% of the trainees were found to be strong in this survey, although less than 70% of the trainees were strong in the Kojima 2004 survey. The trainees in this survey might be expected to strengthen the types in which they were weak, such as linguistic intelligence (35.9%) and intrapersonal intelligence (33.9%). Needless to say, linguistic intelligence is essential for EFL teachers. The trainees labelled “moderately low” or “low” in linguistic intelligence may need to develop their communicative competence in English if they would like to be EFL teachers. Also, intrapersonal intelligence may be helpful for them to develop learner and teacher autonomy in language learning and teaching. Over 30% of the trainees (over 40% in the Kojima 2004 survey) claimed to be weak in intrapersonal intelligence, which includes self-knowledge, self-analysis, and self-reflection. They may need to consciously make use of various metacognitive strategies, which involve “thinking about the mental processes used in the learning process, monitoring learning while it is taking place, and evaluating learning after it has occurred” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 329). Independent study, self-assessment, and journal writing are also metacognitive strategies for success.

Using individual learning strategies

Table 8 Questionnaire 8: Individual Learning Strategies

Score	3 rd years n=13(%)	2 nd years n= 40(%)	Total n= 53(%)	2004 n=73(%)
16- 35 (Seldom use)	1 (7.7)	3 (7.5)	4 (7.5)	6 (8.2)
36-63(Sometimes use)	11 (84.6)	35 (87.5)	46 (86.8)	62 (84.9)
64- 80 (Often use)	1 (7.7)	2 (5.0)	3 (5.7)	5 (6.8)

Table 8 shows how often the trainees believe they used learning strategies by themselves. Learning strategies are important for EFL learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing learner autonomy and communicative competence. The trainees showed similar tendencies between this and the Kojima 2004 survey. Several trainees reported frequent use of learning strategies. However, over 90% of the trainees claimed that they only seldom or sometimes used learning strategies. In the teaching-centered classroom, they might scarcely have learned how to learn English. The trainees' strategy training experiences might be useful for them to help their students become good language learners in the learner-centered EFL classroom.

Conclusion and implications

This follow-up study represents a first step towards understanding the teacher trainees' characteristics in EFL learning. As a whole, it seems that the trainees in both this survey and the Kojima 2004 survey had similar tendencies in general self-confidence, internal/external motivation, spatial/musical intelligence, and individual learning strategies. Most of the trainees in both surveys were considered a) to be reflective rather than impulsive; b) to have quite high self-confidence; c) to have high internal motivation; d) to have moderate/strong language ego; e) to be moderately high in spatial intelligence; f) to be very/moderately high in musical intelligence; and g) to use learning strategies sometimes. Most of the trainees claimed to be slow in reading, writing, and speaking English. I could observe their reflective style tendency in the classroom. I might say that they lacked fluency in English probably because they could live in the community without using English. Some of them hoped to teach English in the future classroom probably because by studying English very hard inside and outside the classroom, they could have high self-confidence, high internal motivation, and moderate/strong language ego. However, in the teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented classroom, teachers might give them a lot of knowledge, but might not teach them learning strategies. Regarding spatial intelligence and musical intelligence, most of them

seemed to like listening to music, and they might have used materials from video clips, photographs & pictures, and maps & charts, or audio, visual, and mechanical aids. The similar tendencies between the two surveys may well reflect common features of the two groups of teacher trainees at Hirosaki University. However, it would be dangerous to generalize the results. It must be understood that the individual trainees have individual styles and strategies in language learning.

Although none of the differences were statistically significant, it is very natural that there were some differences between the two surveys because the subjects were different. The levels of extroversion, bodily-kinesthetic/interpersonal/intrapersonal intelligence in this survey were a little higher than those in the Kojima 2004 survey. This is probably because the trainees in this study tended to be more outgoing, to like nonverbal communication with other people, and to be more self reflective. As for the trainees in the Kojima 2004 survey, the levels of their linguistic intelligence, “right-brain” processing, and language ego were higher than those in this survey. There seemed to be more trainees whose English proficiency was generally high in the Kojima 2004 survey.

The trainees were expected to make the most of their style preferences. They also needed to extend themselves beyond their *stylistic comfort zone* to use the techniques and behaviours that might not initially feel right to them (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). In order to encourage the individual trainees to promote their learner autonomy in EFL learning, I advised them to understand their own unique styles and proclivities, and to develop effective strategies for many learning contexts and skill areas. Taking the results of the survey into consideration, I implemented learner strategy training in my classes. This experience would help the trainees to understand their future school students’ learning styles and to implement strategy training in the classroom.

It is important for me to bear in mind that the survey has relied heavily on self-report data. The data could be affected by the participants’ knowledge, experience, and personalities. The trainees did not necessarily report their attitudes and preferences accurately. Regarding implementing questionnaires, Dörnyei (2003) points out nine problems: a) simplicity and superficiality of answers; b) unreliable and unmotivated respondents; c) respondent literacy problems; d) little or no opportunity to correct the respondents’ mistakes; e) social desirability (or prestige) bias; f) self-deception; g) acquiescence bias; h) halo effects; and i) fatigue effects. In an attempt to conquer these limitations, I asked the respondents to write their names on the self-check list; I emphasized that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers; I stated that their honest responses would benefit

them most; I facilitated small-group sharing of feelings underlying their responses; I encouraged them to develop various strategies to promote their learning and teaching, such as cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies; and I advised them to promote professional consciousness-raising of their own learning styles and strategies.

For the examination of the participants' characteristics I used Brown's (2002) checklists. Even though this book has many advantages as a practical guide for strategy training, there are issues relating to the reliability and validity of some of the checklists. Findings relating to these types of processing should thus be treated with caution. And, as for seven kinds of intelligence, these cannot necessarily be reliably measured by a series of short "paper and pencil" tests (Gardner, 1999). The utilization of qualitative data as well as quantitative data, and the triangulation of research methods may go some way towards mitigating the problems with these data.

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It's the 21st Century – why can't my students use computers?

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The benefits and virtues of CALL have been trumpeted since the mid 1970s. Then it was expected and accepted that students were unfamiliar with the technology and would need lessons on both the hardware and the software that teachers wanted to use. Even in the mid to late 1990s the internet was still seen as something relatively new and so exciting for students, with them being eager to take part in the internet “boom” that was happening in Japan at the time. They were also motivated by the fact that they would need to use computers and computers in English for their careers (Muehleisen 1997).

So why is it then, that more than 30 years after the start of CALL and 10 years after computers and the internet became an everyday household item in most of Japan, that the majority of my 1st year university students still don't know, and don't want to know even basic computer operations? They can easily understand the vast number of functions and uses of their cell phones but asking them to “click and drag” icons on a computer screen seems like a totally unknown concept to many. I realize that this accusation of computer illiteracy and lack of interest in computers is a sweeping generalization and I can only apply it to the students in the two womens' universities I teach at, but it has caused me to pause and wonder why.

When I first started to ponder this lack of interest in computers one of the things that struck me was the total passivity of the students in relation to the technology. Having prepared students for the next lesson to take place in a computer room, I will walk into the room and students will be sitting quietly or chatting in front of a blank screen. Perhaps two students out of 25 will have actually thought to turn on their computers. If I have remembered this problem from a previous class and instructed the students to turn on their computers when they enter the room, maybe 1/3 of the class will have done so. Perhaps some of this can be explained away by the fact that the students are not familiar with these particular computers, but as most are Windows desktops that all turn on with no hidden switches and it is at least seven weeks into the semester when I do this, I am slightly bemused. The Mac machines, which have a less obvious “on” switch have instructions, written in Japanese and taped to the bottom of the screen, about how to turn them on. Yet still the screens are blank. Even once they are turned on I often run into difficulties with students not knowing their user name or password.

I use computers in several different classes and for several different purposes. In one class I use a textbook that comes with student DVD ROMs in each book. This disc has a selection of vocabulary, grammar and listening exercises that make very useful revision activities. I have found however, it's important to have an introduction to the DVD in class, as initially the exercises are difficult to access as there is a copyright policy that must be agreed to as well as a sign-in screen. While it is easy to understand students baulking at the mass of text for the copyright and being unsure of what they should do, once they are through that and the screen says "Type your name here," they still sit and wait to be told the next step.

Headphones are also needed for classroom use of the DVD and this can be another area that causes problems. Occasionally students plug them into the microphone socket (despite the colour-coding and picture), sometimes the headphones themselves have an on/off switch and volume control. These technical features often manage to defeat my students.

While most students are proficient at internet surfing in Japanese, when asked to transfer these skills to English they mentally freeze. They find it nearly impossible to think of English words, or to choose key words, to put into a search engine and often end up trying to input entire sentences. When asked if they would do this in Japanese they always answer that of course they wouldn't. So why do they do it in English? A blank look follows, if you ask them the question. Another skill that gets lost in translation is that of scanning. While most of my students are avid shoppers, surprisingly very few do any on-line shopping or browsing. When given items to locate on an on-line shopping site, instead of scanning for the key words which are given in the worksheet they become totally bogged down in the mass of information they are presented with. They are able to scan in both Japanese and English on a printed page, but when they are presented with a similar task on a screen, this ability disappears.

As well as four-skills classes where I occasionally use computers as an addition to our usual classroom activities, I also teach a class in which the internet is the main focus. The aim of this class is to introduce students to using the internet in English so they can access ELT game, quiz and general learning sites, on-line dictionaries and chat rooms and generally make use of on-line information that is not available in Japanese. To this end students are taken through various exercises; familiarization with basic computer and internet terminology and functions, using a chat room, typing in English and searching for information of various degrees of complexity and with

differing amounts of guidance. They are also directed to a variety of English learning sites and towards the end of the course students build their own wiki or social networking page in English.

While many students gain a lot of confidence and interest in using the internet for more than just updating their Japanese social networking sites, others, after 15 weeks will still be confused when told to “Go to the link and order your favourite pizza”.

Which brings me back to my question, “Why is there such a lack of interest in using computers?” In the late 1990s a lot was written about how motivating computers, and the Internet in particular, were for students. Muehleisen (1997) mentions the intrinsic motivation of learning a practical skill and how students enjoy seeing English in an international context. Fox (1998) agrees and says that all teachers are attempting to present a system of education that is intrinsically motivating rather than one in which the motivation comes from outside influences. In other words, we want to see our students develop interests in the subjects we are teaching that they will pursue on their own, rather than because of outside pressures such as homework, tests, and the like. The use of the Internet in language education seems to fill, at least with many students, the criterion of promoting this type of motivation. Singhal (1997) says that language and culture are inextricable and interdependent. The Internet allows students to understand the culture of the target language and enhances understanding of the language.

So why don't the majority of my students follow these motivational ideals?

My first idea is that because they use their cell phones so much and they have so many functions available on them, they don't see the need to use a computer. Internet, e-mail, music, TV and photos are all available to them 24 hours a day in a portable, relatively inexpensive form. Also in 1997 when the above writers were espousing the motivation of the Internet, it was still relatively new in Japan. As we all know, new things are always of interest to students in Japan. These days the many functions and especially to my female students, the latest fashion, of cell phones are much more interesting. Computers in the main are not very sexy, not particularly portable and are expensive.

Muehleisen (1997) refers to the motivation of getting job skills and seeing English in an international context. As an instructor at Waseda University this was probably a very valid point for her. When questioned about career hopes the majority of my students hope to be OLs (low level

secretaries), “clothes shop staff” (shop assistants), “brides” (housewives) or “pretty young mothers”. While this might not be the reality they face when they graduate, as they are currently only 18 or 19 years old and having grown up in an affluent society that in the main has tried to give them every advantage and cater to their every desire, they cannot understand that perhaps their dream will not be their reality. They don’t really see the point of doing things that they cannot immediately see the benefit of.

So what will I do in my classroom? I will continue with my various kinds of computer lessons. Everyone appreciates the change of scenery and the opportunity to do something a little bit different from the normal class. Even if 90% of the students come away from the class with nothing more than the knowledge that there are a lot of things you can do, in English, on the Internet, or that you have to plug the earphone jack into the earphone socket, then they have still gained something. For the 10% that have actually learned to use the Internet in English a little bit better, or have become interested in the world the Internet can open up, then it is worthwhile.

As a teacher I always come away from the computer room with two valuable lessons for myself. The first is that going to the computer room, even if I have a well thought out and planned lesson, is not as easy option. I spend more time racing around the room helping students than I ever have to do in my usual classroom setting. The second is that no matter how well planned the lesson, there is always something that will go wrong. There are usually some hardware or software glitches that require some kind of technical expertise that I have to make up on the spot. This could be something simple, ranging from a student jamming their DVD into the drive and so disabling the computer to the school intranet system crashing and so cutting off access to the Internet, when the whole lesson is based on internet access. It’s always a good idea to have a back-up plan when dealing with any kind of technology.

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Melissa Senga taught at secondary schools and language schools in Australia and England before coming to Japan. She has taught at universities in the Nagoya area for the past 10 years. Having not grown up with computers but enjoying them now, she was curious as to why Japanese students seem not to be as comfortable using technology as their counterparts in other countries.

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