

Report of the 'Editor' (?)

Greetings everyone and all the best for 2003. To start with, I probably have some things explain here. First, why is this issue so late? I know, I know, excuses are like &"#%s, everybody's got one. Here goes anyway. Jerry Martin, a previous editor of *The School House*, stepped forward in late December



offering to help out, but had some serious problems with Immigration while I was in Thailand. On my return, we decided to throw this late quickie together until he got back into the country. Second why is the format of this issue different? I can only paraphrase the words of Groucho Marx, 'I wouldn't want to be a member of any organization that would have me as an editor.' Still, I'll do my best, but my computer and technical

skills can't match those of Chris Elvin, the former editor. Almost needless to say, I'm wholeheartedly looking forward to Jerry taking over.

On a positive note, I think there are some excellent features in this issue, as well as the guide to an exciting year for the SIG. This could be called

an international issue, with an article from Hong Kong plus an interview about a newly formed volunteer teacher education group, VEN, which seeks to develop English education in underdeveloped areas of the world. We are also very excited to have an article direct from Monkasho explaining some of the recent initiatives by the Ministry of Education. Enjoy!

Roger Pattimore

Pinch Hitter Editor

Why am I receiving two copies of *The School House*?

I'm sure you are asking this question. Time to pay it forward folks. We need new

members. Part of the cost of receiving this newsletter is to pass it on to another colleague or teacher who is not a member of the SIG. Please encourage that teacher to join.

Coordinator's Report

**Report of the Coordinator and Interim
Treasurer**

If this issue of TSH seems to be arriving a bit late, please accept our humblest apologies. Chris Elvin, our outstanding editor for numerous issues, decided to move on to other projects and we have yet to secure a successor. On behalf of everyone in the SIG, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Chris for a truly commendable job.

I would also like to extend JSH SIG thanks and appreciation to Martin Clifford and Matthew Pakos for their service as officers. Martin very capably handled treasurer duties and Matthew donated his time and talents to the program chair position. We wish Chris, Martin, and Matthew the very best.

At the JSH SIG annual general meeting last November, one of the people in attendance was a researcher from Hong Kong. As a result of that initial encounter, we are very pleased to welcome Dr David Carless to the SIG and to the pages of *The School House*. "Perspectives on team teaching in Hong Kong schools" gives us a glimpse of

developments in the Hong Kong context and brings us a point of view that ranges over EFL in South Korea as well as JALT territory. Readers familiar with team-teaching in Japan's schools will, I think, find numerous connections to their personal experience in what Dr Carless describes.

Since late last year, in addition to the SIG coordinator role, I have been functioning as interim treasurer as well. In that capacity, I am pleased to report that the SIG's finances have been restored to sound condition after an unfortunate sequence of events. I have been biting my nails over the past several months wondering if a particularly difficult problem was going to be resolved. It has and while we are still uneasy about the decline in membership, the SIG is on a sound financial footing. If someone among the current membership would like to pay their dues to the JALT cause and don the treasurer hat, you will be able to add a potentially useful line to your CV.

Please feel free to contact me for information regarding this opportunity.

Also in this issue of TSH is a materials project proposal regarding short plays for secondary EFL students.

Program Chair Report

Report of the Interim Program Chair

I will be acting as the Program Chair until someone else steps forward. The role of the program chair is twofold. One is to organize SIG activities which support teachers in the field. The second is to work with other SIG executive to raise membership. I have been asked (as Membership Chair) why I am so concerned about membership. I think I have answered this question at length before, but, basically, I think the JH/SH SIG is worth saving. As far as I know, it is the only professional organization representing, by far, the largest single group of language educators (junior/senior high English teachers) in Japan. We have to remain above 50 members just as a requirement to be a SIG. Also, more members mean more ideas and more manpower. Therefore, the events or activities planned in the upcoming year should be used to increase membership. Executive members should be present with JALT National and SIG information, in particular a clear explanation of the best way to join.

If the project bears sufficient fruit, the SIG is prepared to finance printing and distribution of a publication to our membership and perhaps make it available to a broader market as well.

I have identified three things that we could do this year. Each activity would be beneficial to JH/SH language teachers. However, each activity needs your cooperation and feedback. Here's the plan:

1. I'd like to organize a mini-conference in Tokyo, possibly in conjunction with other SIGs or interested groups. I'm thinking about something to do with the Super Schools, or CLT. Does anyone have any ideas for speakers? I'd also like to see a sub-program chair put on another conference outside of Tokyo. We have significant groups of people in Hiroshima, Nagoya and Hokkaido among others. We need to involve our distant members, somehow. Within reason, everything would be financed by the SIG, of course.

2. We have talked about a publication. Two ideas have been floated. One is a book of short plays geared towards JH/SH students. The other is a book on tried and tested teaching ideas. We

hope to involve all members in both projects. The SIG will finance the publication and it could be sent to members and sold elsewhere.

3. We have a proposed a poster session and 110 minute forum on AETs for JALT 2003.

Roger Pattimore

Membership Chair Report

Report from the Membership Chair: Can We Reverse the Trend?

It's me again! At the start of 2003, I can't help but think the SIG is facing some major challenges this year. The December SIG Membership listing showed us at 56 members down from 62 in August. As I wrote in my previous column, we need to keep membership above 50. It is coming dangerously close to that number now and, if YOU want YOUR SIG to continue, that trend needs to be reversed. If YOU don't do anything, the SIG could fail in 2004.

On another negative note, the AGM at JALT 2002 was largely a bust. It was poorly attended. Two of our workhorses, Matt Pakos, Program Chair, and Chris Elvin, the newsletter editor, stepped down honorably. Both have given of their time and skills generously to the SIG over the years and we should all extend our thanks. William Matheny (SIG Coordinator) and yours truly decided to give it one more year. I will continue as the official Membership Chair and also fulfill the duties of Program Chair on an interim

basis. Clearly, 2003 will be a decision year for the SIG.

On the other hand, there is some good news. First, neither William nor I intend to let things slide. We have an agenda in mind to try to revitalize the SIG. (See Report of the Interim Program Chair). Second, the SIG table at the JALT conference was rather busy. Perhaps we have the Japanese Ministry of Education to thank for stirring things up with programs like 'relaxed education' and the introduction of language education at the elementary level. In any case, several interested people stopped by, making for some lively discussions. Copies of the newsletter disappeared rapidly, too. Third, some of the people who we talked to at the conference have since become members. Thanks. I hope the SIG will live up to your expectations in the coming year. Finally, after some uncertainty, Jerry Martin, a previous SIG editor has returned to Japan and will take over the newsletter in the coming months. You

can all expect a better product than this!

Roger Pattimore
Membership Chair

Super Feature Article: Ogushi

New Waves in ELT in Japan

The annual international conference of JALT this year was held in Shizuoka under the theme of "Waves of the Future." A lot of JALT members participated in the conference and enjoyed surfing on the new waves of English education. I was among them.

Talking of the new waves, English teachers in Japan are now facing new waves of change. The first wave is coming from the new Course of Study, which was implemented at junior high schools last spring and is to be implemented at senior high schools this spring. The courses of study have been revised approximately every ten years since 1960 and each time they have been revised they have presented some new directions for the improvement of English education. This time the message of the new courses of study is that a foreign language should be taught for the purpose of communication. The new objective for language education is "to develop students' practical communicative abilities." In order to realize this objective, the new courses of

study stipulate that communication activities, in which students communicate in English, should be the main part of English classes. After all, students will learn to communicate in English only through communicating in English.

The second wave is coming from the new English textbooks. In the year 2001 seven different sets of junior high school English textbooks were authorized by the Minister of Education and are now in use. As for the senior high school textbooks, nineteen textbooks for Oral Communication I and thirty-five textbooks for English I were authorized and adopted this year. The contents of Monkasho-authorized textbooks are influenced by the changes in the Course of Study since they are required to be edited in accordance with the contents of the Course of Study.

Some observations concerning the major characteristics of junior high school English textbooks are:

1. They are more spoken-language

oriented (approximately 70% of activities are related to speaking and listening).

2. Basic grammar items and approximately 900 English words are covered.

Super Feature Article: Ogushi

Also, the average number of activities per page is 1.2, which means an English lesson can be organized with student activities as the main part. Even grammar items can be taught through student interactions.

Some observations concerning the major characteristics of the textbooks for Oral Communication I are:

1. The focus is on conversational English in daily life.
2. A considerable amount of material is presented in spoken English.
3. Functions and situations are emphasized more than grammar forms.
4. The contents are mostly related to students' daily life.

The three subjects of Oral Communication A, B, and C have been reorganized into Oral Communication I and II in the New Course of Study. Basically Oral Communication I covers the contents of Oral Communication A and B, but most textbooks include such activities as speeches, discussion or debate. The adoption rate of Oral Communication I is estimated at

3. Approximately 30% of all activities are quasi-communicative or communicative activities.

4. The contents are mostly related to students' daily lives. approximately 60%.

Finally observations concerning the major characteristics of the textbooks for English I are:

1. All the textbooks include "communication activities" which are enumerated in the Course of Study.
2. Materials for reading are given more weight than those for listening, speaking or writing.
3. The textbooks tend to include more authentic, updated, materials, such as pieces of news from radio or TV, newspaper articles, articles from web-sites, etc.
4. Some books are organized on the understanding that teachers will teach with the grammar-translation method, but there are some other books which consist principally of interactive activities between students.

Compared with the textbooks for Oral Communication I, those for English I seem to be still following the traditional, reading-materials-centered editorial principle. This fact reflects the market needs, which are decided by teachers' choice of textbooks. If the majority of

teachers choose the textbooks which include numerous communication activities, the contents of textbooks will

Super Feature Article: Ogushi

The third wave is coming from motivation of learners, improving educational content, improving the qualifications of English teachers and upgrading the teaching system, enhancing English conversation activities in elementary schools, and finally boosting Japanese-language abilities. Related to these educational policy issues, the strategic plan presents a number of measures to deal with problem areas in English education. Some of the measures which I think are of particular concern to teachers are:

1. The implementation of an intensive training program for all sixty thousand Japanese teachers of English in junior and senior high schools within five years starting from the fiscal year 2003.
2. The establishment of targets for the expected English language abilities of Japanese teachers of English and to urge local boards of education to make the possession of the target-level English language abilities one of the prerequisites when hiring English teachers.
3. The increase of the number of ALTs to

become more communicative, adjusting to such teachers' needs.

the Ministry's Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities, which was announced July 12 this year. This strategic plan consists of five key educational policy issues; boosting 11,500 so that junior and senior high school students can be taught by native speakers of English in more than one English class a week.

4. The promotion of the hiring of native English speakers as regular teachers (in the next three years 300 foreign instructors are to be appointed as regular teachers in junior high schools and the future goal is to appoint one thousand foreign teachers at junior and senior high schools)

The fourth wave must originate from the English teachers themselves. The ocean waves come and go. So, rather than be swamped by the barrage of waves, teachers must not only enjoy riding on the waves but also create their own surge of waves in reaction to the challenges posed by them. After all it is only from English classes that any real reformation of English education is to be initiated.

Masanori Ogushi
Chief Senior Textbook Specialist
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Feature Article: Carless

Perspectives on team teaching in Hong Kong schools

Team teaching through the JET scheme has been a part of Japanese school life for more than 15 years. Recent issues of 'The School House' have provided interesting perspectives on this topic through a guide to effective team teaching (Pattimore, 2002), and an interview with a renowned researcher (Gorsuch with Matheny, 2002). In this article, I want to provide some Hong Kong perspectives on team teaching between English native speakers (NS) and local non-native speakers (NNS).

Formal and large-scale schemes which use NS in secondary schools in Hong Kong have been in operation since 1987 and since 1996, these schemes have been called NET (Native English Teacher). NETs in Hong Kong are required to be both trained and experienced, with prior overseas teaching experience desirable. In the secondary school context, they usually teach classes on their own and although on balance the secondary scheme is modestly successful, NETs often experience some professional

isolation. Most recently NS have been working in elementary schools in collaboration with NNS and this will be my main focus in what follows.

As an initial observation, I would like to argue that NNS are not better or worse than NS, they are simply different. For example, NNS know the syllabus well, they know the learning styles and common difficulties of local students. The NS may have wider international experience, a more fluent and idiomatic knowledge of the target language and often an awareness of current international good practices. NNS and NS need to use their respective strengths and weaknesses, to support in partnership the development of themselves and their students. The Hungarian scholar, Peter Medgyes, has written extensively on such issues (e.g. Medgyes, 1994, Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

Currently, I am carrying out two research projects, related to the use of native English teachers in school systems. The first compares how NS are used in

schools in South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong (Carless, 2002). The second seeks to identify, promote and disseminate good practices in collaborative practices between NS and local English teachers in elementary schools.

On the basis of my interviews and classroom observations conducted to date, I would argue that the presence of Feature Article: Carless

NETs in elementary schools carries two main positive elements. Firstly, the impact on teachers appears to be mainly positive. The elementary school NETs are involved in a sharing of teaching ideas and practices with their NNS counterparts and this commonly involves some form of team planning where colleagues plan lessons collaboratively; and team teaching, where both the NET and the NNS are present in the same classroom interacting with the pupils. Given the class sizes of around 35-38, this team teaching provides more opportunities for teachers to interact with pupils and also enables them some additional time to support individual learning needs of the children.

The collaboration between the teachers also helps the NS to understand the school context better and affords them some support from the NNS if language difficulties or discipline problems arise. It involves the NNS in exposure to new and different teaching

ideas, an opportunity to have professional discussions through the medium of English and the NS can also be a language resource who can clarify nuances of meaning or answer language-related questions.

I believe the impact of NS on the pupils is also positive. Pupils have increased opportunities to engage in genuine communicative dialogue with their teachers. In this case, the presence of the NET can provide a stimulus for pupils to communicate their own meanings or messages, something that does not always arise through a textbook dominated approach. This enables pupils to develop more confidence and gives them first-hand experience that language is a communicative tool not just a dry academic subject.

Although I believe that the impact is positive overall, such a scheme is not without its limitations or challenges. One tension is between the local culture of textbook completion, 'serious learning' and testing; and a desire on the part of many NS for a more flexible approach to the textbook where motivation and activities are emphasised. A challenge is to find an appropriate balance so that solid learning and motivating activities can be synchronised.

An advisory teaching team (ATT) which visits schools and offers

support for the scheme is a measure designed to support NETs and to help solve any frictions which may arise. ATTs need a number of skills which may be a tall order to find: good understanding of both NS and NNS and their motivations; excellent interpersonal and communication skills; in-depth understanding of local schools and their cultures; and expertise in English

Feature Article: Carless

language teaching, team teaching and collaboration. For English teachers to function well in an intercultural context, they need a number of such skills in addition to pedagogic ones.

I believe NS should be deployed flexibly. For example, if a NET has a particular talent in music, drama or poetry, let it flourish, but if these areas do not appeal, so be it. And, rather than sitting through lengthy staff meetings in Cantonese, the opportunity to carry out alternative duties must be worth pursuing.

To support collaboration between NS and NNS, some degree of sensitivity is required from all parties. Good interpersonal skills are needed, in addition to the more obvious linguistic skills. Showing a respect and interest in one another's culture is also desirable.

Overall, my response to NS and NNS collaboration in elementary schools is largely positive. During my regular

visits to schools, I see pupils who are noticeably more confident and more willing to converse with me in English than they were a few years ago. I see NS and NNS working together, sharing ideas, sometimes disagreeing but more often than not, finding some compromise that can contribute to the enhancement of English teaching and learning in Hong Kong.

I would like to conclude, based on Carless (2001, 2002), with some wider implications for native speaker language schemes such as JET and NET:

- Team teaching of NS and NNS has useful potential in harnessing each other's classroom strengths, but is challenging in view of the sensitivity and personal qualities required. When carried out appropriately team planning and team teaching carries significant opportunities for professional development for both NS and NNS teachers.
- There is a need for continuity of policy and personnel so as to enable steady progress to be made rather than hoping for quick fixes. Team teaching and collaboration need time to develop and it is important to build on past successes and tackle previous problems.

- A third issue concerns what type of native speakers to recruit? This is a difficult issue, and is obviously dependent on the purposes and financial resources of the program. The JET scheme has mainly focused on young unqualified teachers, presumably on the assumption that they may

Feature Article: Carless

- be more flexible and perhaps more tolerant of a limited role, the so-called “walking tape recorder”. For NETs, a high degree of training and experience is a requirement, but the scheme has difficulty in attracting and retaining sufficient quantity of teachers. One problem for such schemes is that it is difficult to envisage or observe any career development for participants, except by leaving the scheme and taking a position in higher education. For experienced and capable NS, one can easily envisage frustration setting in when faced with systemic limitations and a lack of opportunity to take on the kind of responsibilities for which they might be well-qualified. If a native speaker scheme is to have

powerful long term impact, teachers should be encouraged and rewarded for commitment and experience and ideally, there should be opportunities for career development and progression.

- Finally, the long term future of NS schemes might be in the elementary sector due to the following factors: the here and now context of elementary school language learning; the relative absence of high stakes examinations; the receptivity of young learners towards games, role-play, drama and other activities which are perceived to be handled well by NS; young learners are also usually somewhat less reticent than adolescents in communicating in a foreign language; and elementary school teachers are sometimes at a lower level of English language proficiency than their secondary school counterparts so may have more to gain from interaction with NS. Capturing hearts and minds young may be an attractive way of utilising the available human resources.

References

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Interview: Fitzpatrick

Volunteer Work in Thailand: Call for Adventurers!

From February 9th to the 14th, I was in Thailand doing volunteer teacher development work along with four other people for a group called VEN. Following the workshop, I interviewed Damian Fitzpatrick, fellow volunteer and program coordinator. I see a lot of connections between what VEN is doing and what the SIG hopes to do in the coming year. I hope that this interview will encourage SIG members to join VEN and/or volunteer for future expeditions. We have need of your experience and expertise.

Roger: Hi, Damian. Before we talk about VEN, could you tell us a little about yourself and your role in VEN?

Damian: I am Irish, as you may have guessed from the name, Fitzpatrick. I have been teaching for thirteen years in total, six years in Spain and for the last seven years in Japan. In that time I

have been teaching both adults and children. Currently I am working at universities in Tokyo (Obirin, Keisen and Tokyo University of Agriculture). I am one of two program coordinators for VEN which means that I help to set up the programs that VEN are asked to take part in. The program coordinator is also responsible for planning, designing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the workshops. I also decide on the program location as well as the length of the workshop which depends on the needs of the local group involved.

Roger: What does VEN mean?

Damian: VEN stands for Volunteer Education Network. It is an organization set up to provide English teaching workshops for English teachers in economically disadvantaged regions. This basically means that we establish local support networks for teachers and support sustainable educational development by encouraging local teachers to become regional workshop leaders and presenters and to continue

inspiring teacher development amongst their peers.

Roger: Why was it set up?

Damian: Thailand, where VEN operates now, is not a poor country. It has a well-established education system as well as professional groups for teachers to join (e.g. Thai TESOL). But more often than not teachers in rural areas are unable to participate in these groups and feel cut off from the rest of the country.

Interview: Fitzpatrick

VEN wants to work with this kind of education board / teacher to enable them to have more contact with current education practices.

(Author's note: Many of us in Japan self-fund our own teacher development by joining JALT and other teacher groups, going to various conferences, buying books etc. These expenses, although they add up, are relatively minimal compared to our salaries. On the other hand, a young teacher in Sakaeo earns about 6000 baht per month or about 18000 yen. It's enough to live on there, but not much more.)

Roger: What is the scope of VEN?

Damian: Currently, VEN is focusing on English teachers in the school systems in underdeveloped areas. This means that we work with local lower and upper primary, junior high and high school teachers.

Roger: Where has it operated in the past?

Damian: VEN is a new organization, coming into existence only in September 2002. Officially, its first workshop was held in Sakaeo, Thailand in February 2003. However, VEN emerged from another NGO, CANHELP THAILAND, a Japanese group that has mainly dealt with building programs in the 'Issan' (*Issan' means northeast*) region of Thailand since around 1991. As a secondary activity, they have run English teaching workshops in conjunction with their building programs since 1994, so many of the current VEN members have actually participated in workshops before.

(Note: Sakaeo was also the location of a workshop last summer under the aegis of CANHELP.)

Roger: What are some of the problems Thai teachers face in the region?

Damian: Apart from the problems that all teachers face, the Thai teachers in the

areas that VEN wishes to focus on have three main problems. First, there is the lack of access to various kinds of teaching materials. This can be, for example, technology that we take for granted such as computers, copiers, videos, etc. Current ideas and practices in English teaching are also difficult to come by for the local Thai teachers. Secondly, as most of the teachers that VEN is concerned with come from rural areas, it is difficult for them to have contact with other teachers. One of the benefits of the workshops that VEN organizes is that teachers can contact other local teachers

Interview: Fitzpatrick

and talk about issues that directly affect them. In addition, local networks have been set up so that this contact can be maintained long after VEN has moved on. The final difficulty relates to the new curriculum that the Thai government have introduced. The Education Ministry wants the curriculum to be student-centered and this has left many teachers, particularly primary teachers with lower levels of English, in somewhat of a panic as they attempt to come to terms with a new practice and in some cases a new language.

Roger: Who should be a volunteer?

Damian: VEN runs a professional development workshop, so ideally we are

looking for professional teachers as volunteers. Although it is not completely necessary, some experience of teaching at school level would be a benefit for these are the types of teachers that you would be working with. Some form of volunteering experience would also be useful, as well as being able to work with teachers from a different culture in a non-patronizing manner. Being able to encourage sharing of ideas and a good sense of fun are important, too. The ability to drink copious amounts of Singha beer EVERY NIGHT would not be a bad idea either.

Roger: Except for the drinking beer part, why do you think these characteristics are important?

Damian: The teachers that we work with are qualified and experienced teachers. While they of course are interested in learning new techniques and ideas for their classrooms, such as songs, games, activities, etc. they are also interested in discussing current pedagogical practices. In addition they want to know about issues such as evaluation of students, observation practices, integration of skills in the classroom as well as manipulating the textbook and classroom management.

Roger: What are VEN's plans for the immediate future?

Damian: The next workshop will probably take place in Surin, Thailand in the summer of 2003. After that there will be follow up workshops in Sakaeo where we eventually hope to see local Thai teachers organizing their own workshops and contacting other regions to help them do the same. The whole question of sustainability is an important one for VEN.

Roger: How about in the more distant future?

Interview: Fitzpatrick

Damian: At the moment VEN is focusing on Thailand, but hopefully we will be looking at ways of organizing workshops in other areas in the region such as Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Further on down the line there is the possibility of organizing other subject workshops (there is interest from math and science teachers to also join the project).

Roger: Thanks, Damian. I think this interview will be of great interest to our readers.

Damian: Thank you, too.

We need volunteers and members for VEN. As a member, all of

your money would be going to preparing materials for workshops and sundry expenses involved in the organization of each workshop not directly paid for by volunteers themselves. At the moment VEN has only a tiny budget to speak of. Volunteers are expected to pay their own way including airfare, accommodation and food. However, in our area of operation, Northeast Thailand, the latter two are quite cheap. Depending on room type, six nights at the hotel in Sakaeo was only about 7000 to 10000 yen including breakfast. Lunches are provided and dinners can be as cheap as 200 – 300 yen (+ beer), depending on preference. Readers might ask, ‘Why would I want to be a volunteer?’ First of all, it’s a good thing to do. You’d be sharing your knowledge in a region where it could make a really big difference. Second, it’s a great way to travel. You get to meet what I call ‘real people’, not the usual hucksters on the tourist circuit. Third, it’s not only teacher development for the Thai teachers, but also teacher development for the volunteers, too. You learn a lot from the Thai teachers and other volunteers. Finally, it’s a great start or finish to a longer vacation in Thailand and other SE Asian destinations!

For more information about VEN, how to join or how to volunteer, please



visit our website at:

<http://www.vol-ednet.com>

Roger Pattimore

with Damian Fitzpatrick

Program Coordinator for VEN

When Students Take Control

Since the beginning of the current school year, a young third-year teacher has periodically asked me (a municipal AET) to assist her with elective (選択) English classes. The classes meet once each week and feature a much smaller number of students than regular lessons. During the first half of the school year (April to September), the elective classes were focused on reading English from a broader range of material than is available in the regular textbook or the usual supplementary materials. Students were allowed to bring in their own reading material or could use materials they selected themselves from a teacher-provided library. The course required students to write summaries of what they read and to make brief entries in a cumulative log at the end of each class meeting.

After about three months of the once weekly reading focus, some students expressed a desire to change the emphasis of the course. One student in particular said he wanted to try doing a play in English. Recently, I asked the student about the change. "When you have a group of students assembled, it seems a waste to devote all the class time to individual silent reading. We can do

silent reading at home," he told me and said he was disappointed that there was no oral reading practice included in the course.

Because the focus of the elective course was clearly specified and had, I presumed, been determined by the school English department, I was surprised when the JTE granted the student's request. At first, I was enthusiastic as I envisioned students writing the play themselves. But, after some preliminary discussion, it was decided that the students would produce a story outline in Japanese from which I would create a play script in English.

Now, I expect that ALTs without much ability in Japanese will read the foregoing and quickly dismiss the activity as beyond their reach. However, I'm quite sure most JTEs are capable of translating a student-produced story outline into English and would encourage JTEs to consider a play project for students. Why? Rehearsing a play allows students to practice language with an intensity and purpose that is not usually present in regular lessons. Indeed, some students seem to enjoy repeated oral practice with a text and having an opportunity to spend more time than usual on intonation patterns. Rarely is there time during regular lessons for memorizing lines, for working on

intonation in detail, or for repeated practice of interactions with

Teaching in Practice: Matheny

accompanying physical movement – an aspect which connects with what Russell describes as “deeply held beliefs about how learning should take place.”

“An emphasis on physical repetition echoes Japanese instructional traditions that value 'doing' as part of knowing. The phrase *karada de oboeru* (literally, ‘memorizing through the body’) is commonly used in reference to learning processes, whether one is learning to bow, ride a bicycle, master a *no* dance, or . . . rapidly perform arithmetic calculations” (Russell, 1998: 268).

The discipline required to present a play is also, I believe, in line with and helps achieve some of the broader goals for contemporary secondary education. There is also, of course, the element of fun and glamour associated with the dramatic arts as well as the advantages of materials produced locally.

The third year elective class devoted three class sessions to creation of the story outline. I attended the first of those sessions and saw that students had to struggle a bit to get the creative juices

flowing. There were a total of 9 students in the class -- 6 boys and 3 girls. During the initial outline session, the student who had suggested the activity and his cadre of friends dominated the discussion to the point where the 3 girls hardly participated. The JTE and I stifled our urge to force the lopsided discussion forward, but offered a few subtle suggestions. After the students settled on a genre (sports), I mentioned that many stories are structured on a common pattern consisting of situation, problem, resolution. I also suggested that if the leading character were a girl, the girls in the class might participate more actively (a hunch which proved correct) and that a story set at school would be a bit easier to produce. That was the only input I had on the students' discussion.

Just prior to the end of summer vacation, the JTE gave me a one-page story outline the students produced. Using the structure I suggested, the students had created a straightforward tale about a junior high school judo club. I clarified the meaning of several passages in the outline and started visualizing the story as a short stage production. When I began dividing the story into scenes and pondered staging, I realized that the physical action students envisioned would to be a problem. While students clearly expected to have judo matches as part of the presentation,

a judo match would not provide verbal dialogue. The remedy I devised was to set all of the dialogue on the sidelines and

Teaching in Practice: Matheny

thus away from the physical action of judo competition. Thus, when characters engaged in a judo match, it took place off stage and only those watching from the sidelines appear.

The JTE seemed elated when I showed her a draft of the short play. In producing lines for young actors, I had written with an instinctive sense of a level appropriate for third year students at a particular school. On a few occasions, I consulted the third year textbook, but for the most part I limited the range of language by intuition. I didn't, however, regulate the language I used for stage directions and anticipated that the JTE and students would have to clarify unfamiliar terms for themselves. That is exactly what happened, though I was a bit surprised that the stage directions did not evoke any questions.

Because my work assignment takes me to another junior high school and because of scheduling wrinkles, I didn't see the elective class again until students were ready to perform the play for the video camera. According to the JTE, the students devoted 2 class sessions to reading and practicing their lines and another 2 class sessions to

complete the video tape. The JTE also indicated that it would have been preferable to allow an additional hour for videotaping.

One thing I noticed in watching two video sessions is that students quickly learned to take advantage of the video medium. Instead of setting the camera up to record the play without interruption, students recorded individual scenes and did retakes when necessary before editing the final product. What the students produced, thus, was more like a film or television program than true theater. During the videotaping, it was clear that some students had practiced their parts thoroughly and had achieved a level of fluency one rarely sees in regular lessons. I don't know if the JTE had offered guidance in intonation in my absence, but some of the students had interpreted the intonation quite effectively and in much the same way a native speaker would.

JSH SIG Materials Project Proposal

I have to say that creating a playscript from the students' outline was an interesting experience. Visualizing action on a stage and literally putting words in young actors' mouths was stimulating and an enjoyable challenge. In addition to creating original plays as

described above, it would be wonderful to have a resource of short plays for secondary EFL students. Thus, I would like to propose playwriting as an ongoing Junior/Senior High SIG materials project. If we are able to collect a sufficient

Teaching in Practice: Matheny

number of short plays, we may be in a position to publish the resource with SIG funds and distribute copies to members.

References

Russell, Nancy. 1998. The Kumon approach to teaching and learning. In *Teaching and Learning in Japan*, Rohlen, T. and LeTendre, G. (eds). CUP.

Appendix: Scenes from the Play

Scene One -- Observing school club activities

Narrator: Chie is 13 years old and a second year junior high school student. She lives in the country. When her father was a young man, he was a professional judo "senshu". Now, he is teaching the secrets of judo to his daughter. Chie changes schools. During her first week at the new school, Chie goes to watch the various club activities. One day, Chie visits the judo club.

Chie (watching judo practice intently):
Wow, that boy is very, very good.
What's his name?

Judo teacher: Oh, that's Tomohiro. He's one of our top "senshu". He's a third year student.

Motoki: He always beats me. He's very strong.

Chie: Oh, really? Hmm.

Judo teacher: Chie, I think you would enjoy our club. Why don't you join us. We need another girl.

Chie: You do? Well, . . . (long pause, thinking) . . . Okay, if you want me, I'll join.

Judo teacher: Great!

Motoki (to Eriko offstage): Hey, Eriko, she's going to join!

Scene Two -- First day in judo club

Narrator: It's Chie's first day of judo practice. Motoki and Masahiro hear that Chie's father was a pro "senshu". They think it's unfair and both of them challenge Chie to a practice match. Chie beats them both easily.

Judo teacher: Well well, boys. Our new member is pretty good, isn't she?

(Humiliated, both Motoki and Masahiro nod their heads. Chiharu enters.)

Chiharu: Hey, the new girl looks strong!

Motoki and Masahiro (together): She is! She is!

Motoki (whispers): Shh, here she comes!

(Chie enters the scene, but says nothing. Fingers the towel around her neck.)

Chiharu (proudly): Chie, I watched you against these boys. You did well, but these boys are wimps [弱虫]. (Motoki and Masahiro react to the insult.) You should have a match with me. Then, we'll see how good you are! What do you say?

Chie (eyes Chiharu carefully, speaks slowly, coolly): A match with you? Hmm. (Coughs). Okay

(The judo teacher, Motoki and Masahiro watch as Chie and Chiharu walk away/offstage to the practice area.)

Motoki: Who do you think will win?

Judo teacher: I don't know, but this is going to be a good match. Oh! There they go!

Motoki: Hey! Chie is winning! Wow, she's really good.

Judo teacher, Motoki, Masahiro (in unison): Oh! What a great move! Chiharu won. Tough luck, Chie!

Can you write a short play with your students?

The JSH SIG would like to assemble a collection of short plays created by and for EFL students.

Contact

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Chance to Publish!

The School House welcomes submissions from SIG members and other interested parties. Feature articles should be similar in structure and style to feature articles in this issue. They should be between 2000

and 3000 words and carefully proofread. Teaching practice articles may vary in structure, but should also be not more than 3000 words. Articles should be submitted to owada@hotmail.com as e-mail attachments.

Next Newsletter Submission Deadline

Summer: June 15th.

Announcements

The SIG Wants YOU!

The 2002 executive did a lot to keep the SIG alive, but finally the existence of the SIG rests with the members, meaning YOU. Here are several things YOU could do to help out:

1. Renew your membership promptly. If you are not sure about your membership status, please check with me.
2. Encourage others to become members of JALT. Personal contact is the most effective way to recruit new members. Look among your colleagues or other teaching friends. I have included an extra copy of *The School House* specifically for this purpose. Also, if you need reasons to convince someone to join, please read my report from the July issue of this newsletter for specific reasons, or refer to the inside back cover of *The Language Teacher*. New members may join by attending any JALT chapter meeting or completing the postal money transfer form at the back of every copy of *The Language Teacher*.
3. Complain. What do you want the SIG to do? What haven't we done that we should be doing? Do you have any suggestions about how we could spend all that money that is piling up? Every executive's e-mail address and telephone number is listed in this newsletter. Call or write!
4. Become an executive member or an assistant to an executive member.

We are still looking for people.

5. Get involved in the SIG projects. Two SIG projects are planned for this year. One, a collection of plays suitable for JH/SH students is outlined in this edition.

Mini-conference in your area?

The SIG will fund any reasonable proposal for a mini-conference your area related to junior or senior high teaching or theory.

Contact: pattimore@hotmail.com

JALTCALL 2003

JALTCALL 2003 will be held at Kinjo Gakuin University, Nagoya, June 7-8, with the theme "CALL for All". CALL SIG cofounder, David Kluge, has returned to chair this special 10th year celebration. This year's conference will broaden its focus to include business/conversation schools, pre and elementary schools and the teaching of languages other than English. This broadening will extend to other sections: sessions will include debates, video presentations, and "talk show" discussions in the University's TV studio; presentations on similar topics will be scheduled in nearby rooms; and finally, a tropical atmosphere will be created with participants encouraged to "don Hawaiian clothes!" in what promises to be

"a new, innovative conference experience!" Attendees can enjoy these innovations while continuing to benefit from ongoing quality presentations, friendly staff, and great networking, aspects carried over from 7 previous JALT CALL conferences. Information about our upcoming conference is available online at . Click on "Delegate Registration" to register for the conference and be entitled to the JALT CALL SIG member discount rate. Please note also that the deadline for presentation registration is April 1st, and if your presentation is a software testimony, you may wish to contact the software company directly to sponsor you as a testimonial presenter thereby facilitating the vetting process.

#####David Kluge#####

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Web Editor Needed

Brett Reynolds, Web Editor and unsung hero of the SIG, will be moving on. Thanks for all your help over the years, Brett! The SIG therefore needs a new Web Editor. I assume that this position would involve uploading information to the new website, making look nice and all that other techie stuff. Please contact either William or Roger.

Contacts

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**Is this a complimentary copy from the SIG
or a friend?**

If you like this publication, please consider joining the SIG. If you are already a JALT member, the next time you renew, simply add the SIG to the postal haraikomi (払込) form found in *The Language Teacher*. The cost is ¥1500. You can also join The School House Volume 11 Issue 1 Page 26 of 27 any time using the same form. If you are not a JALT member now, you may join the parent JALT organization and the SIG by going to the next chapter meeting nearest

