The LLL SIG Newsletter

Coordinator's Message

Tadashi Ishida

I live in Machida city in Tokyo and often attend Yokohama chapter meetings. The workshop held on January 19, 2013 was very interesting.

It was presented by Garold Murray of Okayama University. The title was "Enhancing Students' Motivation: Imagining an L2 Self."

He quoted from Bruner's *Making Stories* as follows.

"We constantly construct and reconstruct ourselves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future."

I think this is nothing but lifelong learning.

One of Mr. Murray's suggested activities is to ask students to write a personal essay in which they tell the story of their life as an English learner. This suggested activity motivated me to write my article in this newsletter.

His other suggested activity is to ask students to write an essay in which they describe their future-possible self and the life he or she will have between the time they graduate from university until they are 92(?). Therefore, I have a plan to write an article " How I have studied English since I graduated college" in the next newsletter.

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Message from the Program Chair

The LLL-SIG invites those teaching languages to young, middle-aged, and older adults to share information through our website [http://jalt.org/lifelong/index.html], newsletter, at various SIG conferences and events (including the Pan-SIG), and at the JALT National Conference, where an annual LLL-SIG forum is held.

This year's JALT Pan-SIG 2013 Conference will take place at Nanzan University in Nagoya on May 18th & 19th, 2013. The theme of the conference is "From Many, One: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Community." With David Kluge as the Conference Chair, it is sure to be a lively, fun, and worthwhile event. The call for papers has ended and the announcement of successful applicants has already been sent out. However, there is still time to register for the conference and we hope that you will be an active participant. Past Pan-SIG conferences have proven to be high-energy occasions for teachers to network and share their knowledge and expertise.

The LLL-SIG will have a table at the Pan-SIG Conference and will hold a forum, in cooperation with the OLE-SIG and JSL-SIG, entitled "Learning Languages at All Stages and Ages." As part of that forum, Rudolf Reinelt (representing OLE-SIG) will give a case study that shows how a very old learner of German came to enjoy success in a language skill that had not been emphasized by his Nazi-prone, grammar-emphasizing German native speaker teachers many years ago. Don Maybin (representing the LLL-SIG) will describe his own experiences learning languages, starting with secondary school French in Canada--which was taught much like he was to find English being taught at Japanese high schools. He will show how selected learning experiences influenced his teaching, particularly with immigrants to Canada, and how it came to inform the blended learning courses he was to develop in his prime.

In addition to the LLL co-sponsored forum at the Pan-SIG, we will also have individual presenters representing us, giving presentations on the following topics: Enriching study abroad programs, Blended benefits: Computer to classroom to Cambodia, English Rakugo and English teaching, Enriching study abroad programs, and Older students as both teachers and learners. On the following page, you will find summaries of the five LLL-related presentations that will be featured at the Pan-SIG.

Our Facebook page can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/jaltLLL . As of this writing, we have nearly 150 likes and we always welcome more. If you "like" us, you will be able to find out about not only our SIG's events, but you can also get tips about lifelong language learning and teaching, and find out about opportunities and events in the community that stretch your capabilities and broaden your horizons, including volunteering possibilities.

Joseph V. Dias
LLL-SIG Program Chair

Summaries of LLL-related presentations that will appear at the upcoming Pan-SIG Conference:

Enriching study abroad programs
This presentation outlines the development and enhancement of a short-term study abroad program (STSAP) to the University of Tasmania, Australia. It illustrates the need for STSAPs to have two essential features: a built-in mechanism to receive feedback from participants, and institutional flexibility to initiate changes to the program to enhance participants' educational experience. As the English education industry is a significant source of revenue for many host institutions, this paper recommends that all STSAPs and hosting institutions be continually monitored for quality. High quality programs are more likely to benefit students and foster motivation for lifelong language learning.

Blended benefits: Computer to classroom to Cambodia
The presenter will describe an accelerated language learning program which integrates online and classroom training to develop basic language skills. Participants of this year's course included four Japanese, one Chinese, one Italian and one Canadian ranging in age from 19 to 65. They studied Khmer over a 3-week period at SIT then flew to Cambodia for testing to determine their ability to communicate and complete tasks. A demonstration of the teaching approach will be followed by firsthand accounts from participants, who will also answer audience questions. This presentation will be conducted in English and Japanese.

English rakugo and English teaching
The presenter/ performer will first talk about Rakugo, and English Rakugo in particular: Its meaning and history, how he got involved in the world of Rakugo, and his English Rakugo classes. English Rakugo can motivate students to study English. It not only improves their English ability but also their presentation skills. Two different kinds of Rakugo in English will be presented, a modern piece and a classical one.

Enriching study abroad programs
This presentation outlines the development and enhancement of a short-term study abroad program (STSAP) to the University of Tasmania, Australia. It illustrates the need for such programs to have two essential features: a built in mechanism to receive feedback from participants, and institutional flexibility to initiate changes to the program to enhance the educational experience of the participants. With the English education industry being a significant source of revenue for many host institutions, this paper recommends that all STSAP and hosting institutions be continually monitored for quality in light of the commercialization of this market. High quality programs are more likely to benefit students and foster motivation for lifelong language learning.

Older students as both teachers and learners
The presenter will discuss possible reasons Japanese learners have for being interested in studying English. He will also report on his activities to help them study English by demonstrations of certain aspects of Japanese culture and a program that matches up non-Japanese visitors with volunteer tour guides. The presentation will end with a case study illustrating what happened at a festival where international students from Waseda University carried a portable shrine with the help of residents of a downtown Tokyo community through the medium of English.

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Attending an EBM (Executive Board Meeting)

By Joseph Dias

LLL-SIG Program Chair

I attended the EBM (Executive Board Meeting) in place of Tadashi Ishida, our LLL-SIG coordinator, on February 2nd and 3rd 2013 to represent the LLL-SIG. It was a well-attended event, with almost all of the SIGs and chapters having some presence, either by their president, coordinator or some other officer from their organizations. The current JALT board of directors are impressive in their professionalism, helpful attitudes, senses of humor, and dedication.

Going to an EBM provides a behind the scenes view of all the sweat and creative energy that holds our association together. I hope that some other officers of the LLL-SIG will have an opportunity to attend one in the future. Perhaps we should all go by turns.

The EBM is a two-day event, taking up most of a weekend, but the time goes by fairly rapidly and I did not feel that people spoke just to hear themselves speak. The meetings were purposeful and productive. Various motions were discussed and voted upon, a new JALT mission statement was proposed, and there were "break-out" sessions, during which chapter and SIG representatives held discussions with their respective liaisons. The EBMs are conducted twice a year and the next one will take place at the Campus Plaza Kyoto at the end of June. The ones in Tokyo will no longer be held at the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center due to some planned reconstruction of that facility.

During the SIG "break-out," all of the following items that have some bearing on our SIG were decided or reported on:

* All SIGs except the Study Abroad SIG will be participating in the Pan-SIG

Conference, to be held at Nanzan University in Nagoya on May 18th and 19th.

* SIGs participating in the Pan-SIG have to collaborate with at least one other SIG to share a forum and, optionally, a fuller program of coordinated presentations.

* Our LLL-SIG will pair with JSL (Japanese as a Second Language) and OLE (Other Language Educators). I asked them to join us and they accepted. The topic of the joint LLL, JSL and OLE forum at the Pan-SIG conference will be "Learning languages at all stages and ages."

* I will be vetting proposals that have LLL listed as their primary area of emphasis. The deadline for proposals was the 15th of February. They had to be submitted at:
http://www.pansig.org/2013/JALTPanSIG2013/Submissions.html .
In addition to a contribution by our SIG to the joint LLL, JSL and OLE forum, the LLL-SIG received four proposals from people who listed LLL as being the area most relevant to their presentation topic.

* For this SIG conference, someone from our SIG needs to play a role on the conference committee in order for our SIG to be an official co-sponsor of the event and to share in any profits it might make. Therefore, I put my name in to be the "Assistant Student Intern Coordinator," one of the few roles that was unspoken for.

* The SIG Liaison, Kevin Ryan, will join each of the SIGs so that he can get a better picture of what we are all doing. Let's make sure that he feels welcome.

This year the SIG Liaison would like SIGs to have their Coordinator's Report prepared by the time of their AGM (annual general meeting) at the National Conference. In the future, it will probably be

required that the document be prepared before (or during) the AGM. This is partly due to the fact that some new SIG coordinators could not get the cooperation of outgoing ones at the end of the year to fill in necessary information in the Coordinator's Report.

It was reported at the EBM that there is a fund called the development fund that is used for new or interesting projects suggested by chapters or SIGs. If we have an idea for something, we can apply to tap this fund when our SIG's savings are low.

Clear skies,

Joseph Dias

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Don Maybin teaches at Shonan Institute of Technology. He is a former director of the Language Institute of Japan and co-creator of www.sulantra.com, a multi-lingual website for training users in basic, functional language skills. This e-article is based on his presentation of the same name given for the Japan Association of Language Teacher's Lifelong Language Learning Special Interest Group on October 1, 2011 in Tokyo.

Facilitating Online Language Training for Mature Learners – Part 3

We now come to the third and final section of my e-article describing the challenges faced in the creation of our "all inclusive" language learning website, www.sulantra.com. In Part 1, I explained the classroom-based origins of the training system and mentioned the "digital divide", an "under-class" of those who have limited or no access to resources online due to gender, geography, economic status or age. In Part 2, I described the technical considerations required in order to ensure the website is all inclusive, in particular, with regard to the design of the user interface. In this final section, I will talk about those aspects of the website which are more obvious for the user, including content, sound and visual components.

The structure of Sulantra.com is radically different from other language learning sites with short modules that are taught in a "horizontal" progression, which moves from topic to topic and automatically recycles and expands language in a giant spiral. On the other hand, the actual content is comparable to other training materials which focus on language specific to thematic areas for learners who intend to travel abroad or use the target language with overseas visitors (e.g. people

working in the service sector).

Content is one area where other websites do (unintentionally) cater to older learners by duplicating materials that are already in print. It is much easier and economical to make minor revisions to an existing textbook, add some obligatory interactive components, then debut a "revolutionary new" online product. Although mature learners may find such "e-texts" friendly and familiar, other users (think secondary school students and up) will most likely be unimpressed and move on. Given the potential for innovative approaches online, a traditional text format just doesn't make much of an impression.

In an attempt to appeal to a younger demographic (i.e. the largest potential audience) creators of online courses generally design for a 20-something crowd using flashy fonts, splashes of color, abstract or "anime" type visuals, hidden menus, and photos of young, perky models. Where is the gray hair (or no hair, like me)? Seriously, the visuals for online language training materials seem to contain no one over 25 and can leave one feeling like a dinosaur!

It is harder to identify with a lesson when you are obviously excluded from the content in terms of scenes, sound and core language. To be fair, some websites do make allowances for mature users but, sorry, putting texts in `larger font` sizes is not enough (not to mention rather condescending). Every aspect of a language training website should be considered in order to truly cater to an older demographic.

On the surface, content may seem almost identical in situational language courses on or offline. But is it really so generic? In the case of Sulantra.com, the study material includes such standard functions as ordering in a restaurant or asking for directions on the street, but it also contains themes of importance for older learners, such as dealing with medical needs.

At the word level, discrepancies become even more apparent. It is quite easy to check an online course to confirm if it has what you are looking for. Simply search for specific words, which are relevant to your reality by simultaneously pushing "control" and "F" (for "find") and typing a relevant word in the box that appears. Chances are sections titled "Introductions" or "Meeting People" will answer the question "What do you do?" with "I'm an engineer." rather than "I'm retired."

This relevancy-to-age variable is also evident when looking at words with the same meaning. Different generations use different terms and, where several choices are available, things can become complicated. Which word do you go with? In Sulantra.com we have tried to include both age-specific language, as well as generic, "universal" language. The result is that some terms may appear slightly dated for younger users; however, these latter items tend to be more polite and generally applicable. For example, in German, the word "schmutzig" for "unclean" or "dirty" is generally understood and polite, but apparently less used by under-30's than "dreckig". After a heated discussion in the studio, specifically between an 83-year-old father and his 24-year-old daughter, we decided to go with "schmutzig".

Another age-related problem in many languages is that of formality with at least two levels of politeness, "formal" and "informal", to choose from. For example, in French "vous" (formal) and "tu" (informal) can be used for "you". Which do you go with? Our rule has been to find a middle register and, if one is not available, to err on the side of politeness. In general, we go with a formal form, unless the polite version is excessively long, in which case we go with the shorter, less formal form.

As it turns out, the polite "vous" is actually easier for the learner to apply since the resulting formal verb forms have less variation and are easier to produce – a fact that surprised the younger French voice actors we recorded with in Bordeaux who felt that "tu" was more applicable. Our work with younger, non-teaching native speakers onsite often shows they lack the awareness of what is more socially acceptable and, in this case, easier for a non-native to say.

Once the core script for a language has been prepared, we get ready to head into a recording studio. Part of the process includes deciding which voices to record. Our goal is to use "natural" language, the kind a visitor to a country would hear on the street. Based on our experiences in the ten languages we have already uploaded, some of the worst voices for this kind of recording belong to teachers and actors! These professionals, who work with language on a daily basis, tend to speak too carefully, analyzing each phrase then delivering it slowly with clear enunciation to "help" the learner. Too bad that no one in the real world speaks like that.

After a few disastrous studio sessions with teachers and actors, we decided to go with "average" people from all walks – and ages – of life. To date our oldest voice actor has been the 83-year-old German speaker, Hans, mentioned above. His voice is obviously older; however, several "younger" speakers in their 60's are indistinguishable from the 20-something voices we have also used. In fact, in informal voice/age recognition tests carried out at conference presentations, the audience inevitably gives the age of one of our Spanish speakers, Javier, as "50 or 60". He was 24 years old when we recorded his voice.

In building Sulantra.com's database of recordings, our criteria has been a standard accent delivered at regular speed, which preserves "natural" speech features, such as contractions, and isn't overly enunciated. Another key criteria for us has been to identify and record pleasant sounding voices, irrespective of age, that you could comfortably listen to for an hour or more.

Perhaps the most obvious feature for the user of any website is what we see on the screen, starting with the dominant color scheme of a site. We think of color as a personal preference, yet the tinted glasses through which we see the world are derived from life experiences with family and friends at school and in the workplace associated with a specific part of the world.

The core team working on Sulantra.com hales from Bulgaria, Canada, China, Japan

and the USA. Choosing base colors for our website proved to be a nightmare. What appeared as a tasteful shade of purple for a younger Bulgarian woman represented the color of a garish love-hotel sign for an older Japanese man. In the end, the only color, which did not have a strong negative connotation, turned out to be green. Subsequent investigation also revealed that green was the holy color of Islam (no tensions in our upcoming Arabic course). It was not offensive for the languages in our system – at the least the ones that we have uploaded so far.

Once we had determined our general color scheme, the next visual component to prepare was the graphics and photos to illustrate the meaning of each item for every language in our database, a monumental task given that there are over 5,000 visuals for each course. As expected, there were once again conflicts based on the different age-based cultures of each user.

On the other hand, certain visuals elicited a uniform – and stereotypical – response. Our user tests showed that, when asked to guess what words were being taught using photos of older individuals, even mature learners tended to associate such visuals with "grandfather/grandmother", not "husband/wife" or "sister/brother". It seems that we have all been conditioned to associate age with a rigid set of meanings. In our website, we consciously include a diverse set of subjects with different nationalities, skin tones and ages to represent a wide range of language items. Our hope is that users will become more flexible in how they view others both online and offline.

Ultimately, the focus of all of our efforts was the people who sign in and study a language course online. In order to confirm that most of the bugs had been ironed out of our system, we ran a series of beta tests with a wide range of users, including mature learners from different language and culture backgrounds. As they say, "the proof is in the pudding" and we wanted to keep as many people as possible happy.

A striking feature of these tests is that despite the difference in cultural

backgrounds, questions and criticisms were surprisingly similar, including difficulties with the content and user interface, an ongoing challenge as we continue to evolve our UI in response to user feedback. For example, three older women (Suzanne in Quebec, Kathy in Colorado and Liao in Szechuan) all pointed out that we had used two different visuals to represent the same family member (*mother*). It was clear that they had become "attached" to the visual component of their courses and found this "aberration" disturbing. (One of the women went so far as to say that she felt "betrayed".) This could possibly be another area where more mature learners (in particular, women?) differ from their younger counterparts.

In an effort to make our language training website all inclusive for mature learners, we have dedicated a great deal of energy into simplifying technical features of the system, adapting the user interface, and adjusting sound, content and visual components. Our goal is to provide a simple, more enjoyable e-learning experience for everyone. Adding design features that work for mature learners, you soon realize that these same features assist *all* learners, both young and old. Hopefully, our ongoing revisions will create a more "flexible" attitude among users – who may realize that a visual of someone over 50 does not mean "grandfather"!

For further discussion of mature learners and language training, visit the author's blog at the following link: **http://blog.donmaybin.com/2011/12/26-improving-with-age.html**

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Introducing podcasts for language learning

This article has been jointly written by three graduate students enrolled in the MA program of the English Department at Aoyama Gakuin University:

Shunsuke Morikawa, Mai Tsukahara & Anna Inaba

What are podcasts and how can they be used in language learning/ teaching?

By Shunsuke Morikawa

Since the iPod was introduced by Apple, podcasts have become very popular all around the world. A podcast is a type of digital media used to express one's ideas through a series of episodes of audio or video files that can be subscribed to and downloaded to a computer or mobile device. There are countless podcasts representing various genres.

Podcasts, like blogs, can be very personal or they can offer more general content and be the official voice of an organization. Generally, the more official podcasts are of higher quality and have more targeted audiences. These podcasts provide listeners with varied content on particular themes. Those related to ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) can be a source of rich exposure to native English for ESL/EFL learners (Diem, 2005; Patten, 2007).

Since it is difficult in Japan for teachers to give students an opportunity to listen to 'real' English, many students believe that they do not need English as long as they live in Japan. Podcasts may be able to compensate for this lack of English exposure. Although a computer or some kind of mobile device is required, and students may not have easy access to them, teachers can use podcasts in class to introduce 'real' conversations engaged in by native English speakers.

For those studying languages other than English, instructional podcasts are also available for students at all levels, either providing extensive listening content—through stories or jokes, for example—or more intensive and explicit instruction on grammar, pronunciation, or the use of phrasal verbs. In this report, several podcasts will be introduced that may be of interest to students and teachers of English and other foreign languages. To find out how you can access the podcasts described in this report, you might refer to Apple's "Tips for Podcast Fans" at

http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/. You may also download iTunes from a link on that page.

Reviews of particular podcasts
Seattle Learning Academy: American English Pronunciation Podcast

Reviewed by Shunsuke Morikawa

Seattle Learning Academy's American English Pronunciation Podcast is a podcast which offers weekly lessons covering many difficult English pronunciation issues that non-native English speakers and ESL students have. This podcast is created by Seattle Learning Academy, which is an English language school in Seattle, Washington, USA. Mandy, a teacher at the language school, is the narrator of this podcast. She aims to help students to communicate better and more clearly by teaching pronunciation and accent reduction. She provides not only the clear recording of the podcasts but also the transcripts of them on her website [www.pronuncian.com] so that listeners can follow the script while listening to make sure they understand what she is talking about. The website also offers hundreds of pronunciation lessons and thousands of American English sounds.

The latest episode, as of this writing, "#167: When to use the informal contraction 'useta'," provides a very clear idea of different pronunciations of 'used to' in various contexts. Mandy describes the formal and informal pronunciation patterns, and offers example sentences for the listeners so that they can learn through context. Although Mandy talks at a very comfortable pitch and speed for EFL students, it may be difficult for them to understand them all fully. The transcripts available on the website play a crucial role for them, as they can check the words that are pronounced simultaneously.

The episode "Special episode: Japanese speakers of English as a Second Language" gives a general idea of what sorts of English sounds Japanese learners struggle with. It introduces lessons (episodes) which may help Japanese learners pronounce _r_ and _l_ sounds, fricatives, glides, stops, and vowels. Although this episode is just an introduction, it presents each sound briefly and leads to several episodes that explain them in more detail. Furthermore, there are special episodes for Chinese and Spanish speakers of English which discuss the English sounds that they struggle with. Each episode will help Chinese and Spanish learners practice their weak points.

Overall, the podcast provides plenty of advice that ESL/EFL learners can use to improve their pronunciation. The website can also be used to review the podcast in more detail and it allows the learners to gain a deeper understanding.

Center for Educational Development: English as a Second Language Podcast
Reviewed by Shunsuke Morikawa

English as a Second Language Podcast (ESL Podcast) provides various episodes related to second language acquisition. This podcast is run by a team of experienced English teachers with over 30 years of experience. Dr. Lucy Tse, from the University of Southern California, writes the scripts and story ideas for the podcasts, and Dr. Jeff McQuillan, also from the University of Southern California, reads the scripts and provides explanations for the listeners. By speaking slowly and using everyday phrases and expressions, they provide many sources of listening content that English learners can use to improve their English.

Although the learners need to register for Basic or Premium membership to download learning guides for each episode (which cost at least $10 for 30 days), all the podcast episodes are free to download and listen to. The learning guides include full transcripts, vocabulary lists, sample sentences, and comprehension questions. It should help learners understand and learn about each episode in more detail, but just listening to the episodes would also benefit learners since they increase the learners' exposure to English and they, therefore, become used to listening to English.

The most recent episode, as of this writing, is "English Café 380." Posted on January 8th, it discusses American presidents. It is very impressive that this podcast updates and posts new episodes more than once a week. This would surely help language learners to improve their listening skills. All the episodes are tagged to one of the following genres: Announcements, English Café, Business, Daily Life, Dining, Entertainment, Health/Medicine, Relationships, Shopping, Transportation, or Travel. On the website (www.eslpod.com), listeners are able to search for the genre of episodes that they want to listen to. The website also provides the Top 10 podcasts which are most listened to.

In the podcast, you can find an episode for teachers. This episode is called "Using iPods and iTunes for Language Education." It is particularly made for teachers. Dr. Jeff McQuillan gives a presentation about what Language Education is about, and how Web 2.0 technology, such as iPods and iTunes can be used efficiently for Language Learning. Teachers can adapt this idea to their classroom and improve their way of teaching. In conclusion, ESL Podcast provides various tips for both learners and teachers in terms of the learning and teaching of English.

Classic French Tales (French Today)

Reviewed by Mai Tsukahara

This podcast offers listeners the world's most well-known stories—such as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Snow White—in French. The creators believe that, since we already know the stories, it will be easier for us to understand them in French. Two versions of the same tale are provided. One is narrated in modern French by Camille Chevalier-Karfis, an instructor who was born and raised in Paris and has been teaching French to adults for 19 years in the US and France, and to people around the world over the phone and by Skype for many years as well. The other version is based on the original tale, often from the 18th century, hence, considerably more challenging.

However, I was puzzled to find that only two versions of Cinderella have been provided so far. The organizers should have recorded, at least, those tales that they included in the description of this podcast, namely, Little Red Riding Hood and Snow White, before releasing the podcast. Despite that, this podcast gives language teachers whose native language is other than French, a brilliant opportunity to hear stories as language learners.

I must state that the pedagogical underpinnings of the podcast are quite the same as those of the Story-Based Curriculum (Allen-Tamai, 2011), which I have been using to teach English to four and five year-old children under the guidance of Dr. Allen-Tamai, a professor in the English Department at Aoyama Gakuin University. This is a method for children learning English as a foreign language (EFL), placing world-famous, traditionally told, stories at the center of the curriculum, which provides a rich and meaningful context for language learning. Children learn to tell whole stories through Joint-Storytelling, with scripts adapted by Dr. Allen-Tamai, so that they are easier to recite and more helpful for children to remember (See Allen-Tamai 2010; 2011).

The second episode presents the story "Cendrillon (Cinderella)", told by Camille Chevalier-Karfis. The story is narrated very slowly, as if it were caretaker talk, so that the listener would not be overwhelmed. Since the characters in this story are almost all female (Cinderella, the stepsisters, the stepmother, and the fairy godmother), she didn't change the pitch of her voice so much. However, she did change her manner of talking to convey arrogance (sisters) and kindness (Cinderella), so that the listener can understand which character she is playing at the moment. Hence, the voice of the storyteller plays a key role in helping language learners understand the story. Speaking from the perspective of a learner, although it was hard to understand all the words, and there were many parts where I lost track of which scene the narrator was talking about,

I felt that I wanted to hear the story repeatedly, which I think derives from the strength of the story itself and the narrator's impressive storytelling ability.

I believe many other listeners will benefit from these podcast episodes. They could have been enhanced if pictures or animations accompanied the stories so that all listeners could follow them. Additionally, had there been some parts that the listener could say along (e.g. through chants or after a pause following each phrase), it would have been much more interesting and more supportive to learning. Nevertheless, I strongly recommend this podcast to all language teachers and learners of French.

All things ESL TOEFL Preparation Podcast
                    Reviewed by Anna Inaba

In the Podcast "All things ESL TOEFL Preparation Podcast", Rebekah Lawrence offers advice for TOEFL iBT test preparation. Rebekah is an English tutor who specializes in teaching TOEFL iBT test preparation, U.S citizenship classes, and English teaching for moms and kids.

Rebekah explains test techniques that can help learners prepare for the TOEFL iBT, including ways to increase their reading speed and help them write better thesis statements and essays. She also offers advice for developing better pronunciation and getting higher scores on the reading, writing, and speaking tests.

Learners will not only be able to obtain higher scores in the TOEFL test, but they also will be able to learn methods for how to perform better in the three English competence skills (reading, writing and speaking). These learning methods are useful not only for EFL learners who will take the TOEFL tests, but also for teachers who teach EFL students preparing for university entrance exams. This Podcast provided me with hints on ways to teach English reading to high school students because there was an episode which introduced how to use "decoding" and "sight words" to increase one's reading speed.

Listening to this episode gave me an opportunity to think back about my reading skills and how I built my English vocabulary in the past. The advantage of this Podcast was that Rebekah provided listeners with informative links and references for further study. For example, to improve vocabulary skills, she introduced "The 2000 most frequently used English words" and "The Academic Word List" as a reference and a good start to memorize vocabulary for academic reading. Each episode was related to the previous and to the next episodes, which helps listeners to remember what they heard in the previous episode and anticipate what they will hear in the following one.

The episodes are released on an irregular basis, once or twice every two months.

Although she introduced learning methods for reading, writing and speaking, she did not create podcasts for listening, which should be included in episodes in the future. In addition, the Podcast should release episodes more regularly, at least twice a month, so listeners can maintain their motivation to study. Despite those minor criticisms, the podcast will surely provide some assistance to those wishing to get higher scores on the TOEFL iBT.

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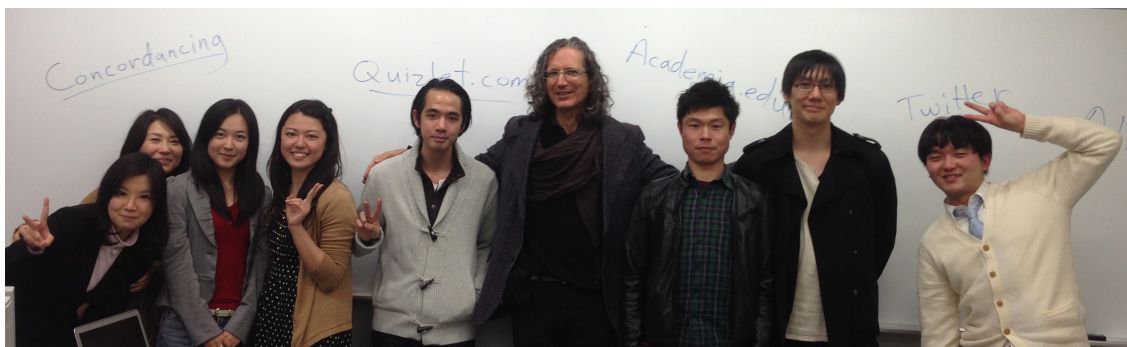
The LLL SIG Newsletter

How I studied English in Japanese schools

Tadashi Ishida

As I am one of the older learners of English, maybe you might be interested to know how I studied English in the Japanese education system. I hope this article will help you when you teach English to older learners.

In short, I was a victim of the way English used to be taught in schools.

During the Second World War, the study of English was de-emphasized because it was the language of an enemy nation. Therefore, many English teachers received draft cards and were killed in battle.

But after the war, the Japanese people were suddenly asked to change their attitudes towards the learning of English because Japan was under the American occupation. Since there were not enough qualified English teachers available, many unqualified teachers were asked to take upon themselves the task of teaching English. There were even math teachers among them.

Thus, in many cases, I was taught English by teachers who were not comfortable with the language.

Furthermore, I was taught English under the exam-oriented Japanese education system. I studied English as if it were an ordinary school subject to be tested instead of a social activity. I was trained by my school experiences to feel that learning was only worthwhile if it was assigned, tested and approved by a teacher.

Teachers were given great respect in Japanese society and expressing disagreement with them was felt to be impolite. Passiveness on the part of students was emphasized in Japanese education. Although teachers asked

their students questions, the students rarely asked the teachers a question.

I devoted my energy to doing what I thought my teachers wanted me to do rather than to learning English. Therefore, instead of seeing English as something I could and must learn by myself with the help of the teacher, I saw it as something that was the teacher's job to teach me.

I came to feel that English was something to be read aloud in the classroom if I was called on, and that it was not something to be used outside the classroom in the real world. My teachers never told me that English should be a medium of communication. In other words, I was not required to use English to satisfy my needs in the real world.

Teachers emphasized grammar and translation instead of speaking and listening. This method led me to think of speaking English as a matter of memorization, and translation of words.

In fact, I used this grammar translation method when I tried to practice speaking English with the other members of the English Speaking Society (ESS) in college. I translated sentences from Japanese to English in order to communicate with the other members. Naturally I got very tired.

I gradually noticed that this grammar translation method did not allow for creativity in using English. Simply translating sentences from Japanese to English did not help me very much to learn how to use English, nor did memorizing.

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Call for Submissions for the SIG Newsletter
LLL SIG Publications Chair

The second issue of the LLL SIG newsletter will be published in August 2013. We invite members to send submissions such as teaching ideas for the My Share column, interviews, book reviews, resources for adult learners, teacher or class profiles, or short research articles. Research articles written in English should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style. For information on APA style, please check
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Language: Submissions may be in English or Japanese, or both.

Deadline for submissions: June 17th, 2013

Submissions should be sent to Kazuko Unosawa at:
k-unosawa@msa.biglobe.ne.jp

We look forward to hearing from you!

The editors

原稿を募集中です。My Share のコラムにレッスンのアイディアなどをお寄せください。その他、インタビュー、書評、論文など、どしどしお送りください。論文の書式はAPAを採用しています。APAスタイルの詳細に関しては以下のサイトをご参照ください：http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

言語は英語でも日本語でも結構です。

原稿の締め切り：2013年6月17日

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ご投稿をお待ちしています。

編集担当者一同