

Literature in Language Teaching SIG Forum: Literature Across Borders

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At the 40th annual JALT Conference, the Literature in Language Teaching SIG forum focused on the conference theme of language across borders. In the forum, the various speakers considered the notion of borders in different ways. Each presenter gave a short talk of 10-15 minutes, and after the presentations there was an interactive question and answer session in which audience members were invited to comment on and talk with the presenters about their topics. In this paper a summary of each talk is given in 6 short sections in order to document the event in the proceedings of the conference.

40周年を迎えたJALTコンファレンスにおいて、LiLT SIGフォーラムは、今回のカンファレンスのテーマでもある領域を超えた言語教育の研究に焦点をあてた。これらの領域を超えた文学の学習と研究において活発な議論が行われた。それぞれの発表者は10分から15分の短いスピーチを行い、その後、発表者の論題にそった質疑応答や話し合いを行った。この研究論文では、このカンファレンスにおいての記録を残すため6つの短いセクションにわけて話し合いの内容を要約する。

JALT2014 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



THE LITERATURE in Language Teaching (LiLT) forum at the JALT2014 international conference was titled Literature Across Borders. Speakers at the forum were invited to consider various ways in which literature can cross metaphorical, physical, and imagined borders and how literature, fiction, and storytelling can be used in language learning contexts in a variety of ways. Three of the presentations were focused on poetry and three on reading and writing classrooms. This paper comprises summaries of all presentations given at the conference forum in the order of presentation and concludes with some notes from the moderator. The Literature in Language Teaching SIG was formed in 2011 (see Bibby & McIlroy, 2013, for an introduction to the SIG), and interested JALT members can find out more about the SIG via the SIG webpage at <http://lilt-sig.org/>

Between the Lines: Teaching Inference to Students Who Do Not Read

Anna Twitchell

It is not often that instructors meet a classroom of students who seemingly have no interest in the subject matter, but when it happens, they must try to understand the underlying causes of the students' lack of interest and develop course goals and materials to combat student apathy using an educational approach that matches the students' learning styles. In the case of a required literature course, I was faced with a group of relatively linguistically proficient learners who had limited experience and minimal interest in reading. By the end of the first class, I had what I felt was a Sisyphean task of determining how to teach literature to students who genuinely had no interest in reading.

I encountered these reluctant readers while teaching a literature course to adult students of Arabic L1 background at an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the United States. Even though the students' aim was to enter an American university, where coursework

is often text heavy, they had a notably negative view of reading. It was determined through a class discussion that text length and comprehension were two of the primary factors in these students' apathy toward reading. In order to address the first issue, I used Burke's (2000) concept that readers need to build stamina over time, and we began with six-word stories of the kind attributed to Ernest Hemingway, and gradually increased the length of text to the point where the students could read a 10-page work of short fiction during a single class period.

I also incorporated Keene and Zimmerman's (1997) technique of making textual connections with my lessons in order to give students the chance to derive their own meanings from literature. This was done by focusing on inference skills, thereby forcing students to link their own thoughts about a text's implicit meaning to the explicit text on the page. These students were given the following questions to help facilitate this process:

1. What are the facts of the story? (*explicit meaning*)
2. What does the story mean? (*implicit meaning*)
3. Why do you think so? (*think about thinking*)

By answering these questions, students were able to start making inferences and interpretations that reflected their own experiences. This led to an extension activity in which students created six-word stories of their own to share their own experiences and try to have others guess the implicit meanings of their explicit texts.

We used a number of works by Neil Gaiman in the class because he has written a copious amount of work targeted at a variety of reading levels. At the end of the course, we analyzed the short story "Feeders and Eaters" published in the anthology *Fragile Things* (Gaiman, 2006). At first, students were given only the title of the story and asked to predict what kind of story it would be, what might happen, and then explain their reasoning. Following a short class discussion, students were presented with the first page of the story and given a list of guided questions:

1. What is happening on this page? What specific sentences or words help me understand this?
2. Is there an implicit meaning that is not explicitly stated by the author? Why do I think this?
3. Can I connect what is happening to my own life, or something that happened in a different media (film, video game, and so on)?

In pairs, the students worked through the story page by page to make logical conclusions about the meaning by referring back to the explicit text, so that by the end of the story they had helped each other comprehend the story.

My observation was that these students responded well to this social approach to reading, which encouraged them to make connections between what was happening on the page and their own experiences. By the end of the course, most of these students appeared to feel less intimidated by the task of reading, evidenced by the increasing readiness with which they began to participate in the reading activities as the course progressed. By building stamina over time and learning how to question their understanding of a text, these reluctant readers completed the course with a set of tools that they could use during text-heavy university courses and that encouraged them to approach the task of reading with a more positive mindset.

Haiku in Second Language Education

Atsushi Iida

Nowadays, the use of *haiku*—a three-line poem with 17 syllables—is not restricted to Japanese in the L1 context. *Haiku* is used in different languages and various educational settings (Iida, 2012). However, there are few reports on the use of *haiku* in L2 education. This section discusses a theoretical framework and practical approach for teaching L2 *haiku* writing and explores the value of composing *haiku* as a literacy practice in the Japanese EFL classroom.

One of the principal reasons for using *haiku* in the Japanese EFL classroom is its cultural familiarity. According to the national curriculum guidelines (MEXT, 2008), Japanese students are supposed to study *haiku* in Japanese (L1) classes in the third or fourth grade. This means that they have opportunities to develop knowledge of this genre in primary school. Bringing this cultural and genre knowledge to the L2 classroom can allow students to read and write *haiku* in English.

Poetry writing in English is an unusual task for Japanese EFL students. However, it is seen as an effective L2 literacy practice from several perspectives (Chamcharatsri, 2013; Hanauer, 2010; Iida, 2012). First, writing poems enables L2 learners to express their emotions in the target language. Second, it helps them to construct and develop their voice, which is “the articulation of their personal needs, interests, and ideas” (Iida, 2010, p. 28) in English. Third, it provides L2 learners with opportunities to use the target language to communicate their messages. Thus, through poetry writing, L2 learners can focus more on content than form in the learning process. This perspective is true especially in composing *haiku*. Since L2 writers always need to follow the structural (i.e., 5-7-5 syllable) pattern in composing *haiku*, they do not have to write grammatically correct sentences. Choosing appropriate words is more important than writing grammatically accurate sentences. This can lower L2 learners’ affective filter in producing English texts. Traditionally, Japanese students have been expected to acquire L2 grammatical and structural knowledge in an accurate form in the language classroom, but this approach has failed to develop their confidence in using English. Literacy practice through *haiku* writing can overcome this problem because it involves a series of negotiations in the composing process through which each writer constructs and produces meaning by making linguistic and reflective choices. Composing *haiku* provides L2 learners with opportunities to use the target language in terms of making meaning and conveying it to readers. In this sense, this literacy practice can be used as a way to develop L2 learners’ communication skills, which is one of the major goals of ELT in Japan.

From a practical viewpoint, it is important to teach L2 learners the process of composing *haiku*. Iida (2010) suggested four steps: reviewing the concept of *haiku*, collecting materials for *haiku*, composing *haiku*, and finally, peer reading and revising. Of particular importance in composing *haiku* is the choice of topic. If teachers choose a topic unfamiliar to L2 students, the activity may be unsuccessful. One possible topic in the classroom is “a significant moment in life” (Hanauer, 2010). This topic leaves each writer the freedom to choose a life experience and allows for self-reflection on that experience. Following this writing process, a 1st-year Japanese college student wrote the following *haiku*.

Summer vacation

Part-time job, beach, festival:

HOMEWORK . . . , Let’s forget!!

The *haiku* describes an experience the student had during summer vacation. It expresses his happiness and excitement at doing different activities such as part-time work, going to the beach, and attending a festival. Although no emotional word is used in this poem, it evokes the reader’s thoughts. A sense of happiness and excitement is represented here. The *haiku* enables readers not only to imagine the poet’s emotional state but also to understand what he did and how he spent his summer vacation.

Writing *haiku* in English is a challenging task for Japanese students. However, as the above poem shows, composing *haiku* enables L2 students to gain awareness of linguistic choices in the target language and ultimately develop the ability for self-expression in English. The use of *haiku* creates a new possibility for teaching and learning English in the Japanese EFL classroom, and composing *haiku* has the potential to develop L2 literacy with a greater sense of voice in L2 writing.

Shadowing the Masters: A Revision Activity for Narrative Writing

Li Hsin Tu

Revision is a process that even the most experienced authors find daunting. For most L2 writers, producing a complete draft is already an unprecedented accomplishment. How can teachers guide their students through the revision process in a foreign language? The process of revision itself is part of the creative process that professionals in a range of contexts follow. Professional actors and athletes study films of legendary performers; painters, and illustrators and analyze and emulate the styles of the greats; language learners immerse themselves in the language and culture of native speakers. Expressing oneself in writing is also a skill that can be developed through shadowing and emulating the work of the masters. The following activity shows how I use model texts as part of the revision process in the narrative writing unit for my university-level 1st-year writing class.

The first model text I introduce in this activity comes from the opening page of *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien (1937/2003), which has the opening line: “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” (p. 1). I demonstrate how to copy the style of introducing a character through the description of a place by putting my own personal narrative into the same pattern: “In a little city in the land of the rising sun there lived a tired English teacher.” Afterwards, I provide two more demonstrations, modeling my text after opening lines from different genres of texts.

After each demonstration, the class is given 10-15 minutes to experiment with applying the style to their own narratives, followed by discussion and sharing of the sentences they have produced with their writing group. When I am confident that the students understand the main aim of the task, I ask them to find their own model texts to work with.

When the students have collected a number of possible leads for their personal narratives, it is time to rewrite the beginning of their draft. I often compare this process to adding a new roof to a house. If you really like the new roof, you will need to paint the rest of the house with the same or similar colors or somehow fix the roof to fit the rest of the house better. Most students understand this principle, as evidenced in the marked difference in the tone and language in their new drafts.

Revision is a long and difficult process, especially in a second language. This activity, in which the writers learn to write engaging story openings directly from published texts, is one of the rare occasions when my students have shown much enthusiasm for a revision lesson. The results have been encouraging. Not only do my students make progress in writing, they also show a more positive attitude toward reading. Most importantly, the progress made in the students' subsequent drafts is an encouraging sign that they have acquired the skills to learn beyond this writing course and will continue to develop their skills outside the classroom.

Using Japanese Cultural Formats to Foster Creativity in the L2 Classroom

Morten Hunke

Teachers may never quiz students about their views and expectations of going on in the foreign language (FL) classroom, however, students come to classes—no matter what level they are—with views and expectations of their own as to what an FL classroom is. Students may dread repetitive, mind-numbing sessions or they may be apprehensive of a teacher's communicative expectations; they may even fear every speaking task. Students may hold disparaging views of game-like or role-play activities and may even question the entire notion of having to learn a foreign language. They may even think that learning languages, especially studying abroad to do so, is detrimental to a successful future career in Japan. What follows

here are suggestions for language teachers to consider that may motivate learners using familiar genres, or cultural formats, with a flexible and creative approach.

There are a number of reasons why Japanese cultural formats like haiku, *tanka*, *kamishibai*, *rakugo*, and *kyogen** may be meaningfully employed in the foreign language classroom. The use

- demonstrates the teacher's own appreciation of the students' native culture;
- encourages comparative cultural approaches, appropriating the L1 formats for the purpose of learning a new language;
- allows for scaffolding the new and the unfamiliar of the target language using something known, something that is a lot more one's own; and
- lends itself to teaching aspects of pronunciation and prosody, performance and public speaking skills, creative language usage, and awareness of the role of literature in language learning.

Especially in terms of fostering creativity, using cultural genres of the native language is likely to be successful in part because of familiarity, but also because the genres must be adapted for use in another context. Performance genres, for example *kamishibai*, *rakugo*, and *kyogen*, have to be adapted to the conventions of the target language and questions about how to balance the responsibilities of the speaker and the listener have to be addressed. Using L1 genres in the L2 classroom entails the highly creative process of translating the genres for the settings and requirements of the target language. Something that students know well is taken out of the original (cultural) framework, and in doing so students acquire and learn new language material, patterns, techniques, and skills, plus they gain more knowledge about the culture of the target language. What could be both more creative and involving in a foreign language classroom?

Even in the case of written formats like *haiku* or *tanka*, most if not all of the above applies. Choosing a format that employs constraints

in terms of the smallest rhythmic units in the L1 (i.e., *mora* in Japanese), is particularly interesting. In adapting the format to English, students need to substitute the *mora*—a unit which English does not possess—with syllables, which are the smallest rhythmic unit in the target language. Such processes of adaptation, translation, and interpretation pave the way for a very intense and highly creative engagement with the target language and its culture. Just try it yourself with your students and get inspired.

- * A *tanka* is a five-unit poem with a syllable pattern of 5-7-5-7-7; *kamishibai* are stories on large cards with the words on the back; *rakugo* is a long story told by a single performer sitting on stage; and *kyogen* is the comic half of *Noh* theater.

Creating a Literary Quote and Picture Task

Tara McIlroy

This section describes a pilot materials development project using literary quotes in the language classroom. A homework task was devised in which students selected literary quotes and wrote short essays in response to the quotes, using a model provided by the teacher. In addition to the essay responses, students were required to merge the quote with a photograph they had taken, and then present their work in a show-and-tell-style sharing activity. Results of the project revealed that three basic aspects of reading motivation—task success, autonomy, and relationship-building (Grabe, 2009, p. 191)—were enhanced during this activity.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that “The purpose of a work of fiction is to appeal to the lingering after-effects in the reader’s mind” (quoted in Burke, 2011, p. 1). We read not only to gain understanding of the words on the page, but also for the mind to be engaged and stimulated by reading. Using this notion as a starting point, I looked for literary quotes that had particular resonance for L2 readers, thus increasing their interest in reading.

The students involved in this project were in a reading class at a private university in suburban Tokyo that met for 90 minutes, twice a week. The course was equally balanced between time spent on intensive reading and extensive reading. Homework tasks, including the quote and picture project, supplemented in-class reading activities.

At the midpoint of the semester the students did the quote and picture task, using guidelines, a model essay, and a picture created by the teacher. The aims of the project were explained to students in a task sheet. These were

1. to encourage literary reading;
2. to use pictures to enhance meaning;
3. to describe a picture; and
4. to use references.

The homework assignment was to select a quote, choose a photo, and combine the two with a written response. Quotes from authors such as Oscar Wilde, John Steinbeck, and C. S. Lewis were among those that the students selected to write about.

Student work from this task exceeded my expectations and it was highly successful as a homework task that fed into future lessons. Sample quotations from A. A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* and various Roald Dahl novels were familiar to many students in the class. Their engagement with the literary texts through the quotations was evident from their personalized and detailed essays. I also observed that conversations in the sharing session were engaging and prolonged. A number of students chose to talk about books that reminded them of things they had read in the past, such as their favourite childhood novels, or quotes that had inspired them during difficult circumstances. Some students included personal memories of reading or used photographs from their childhood. All the students achieved task success, their choice of quote and picture evidenced learner autonomy, and the show-and-tell tasks were positive for relationship building. Thus, the task could be considered

motivational in relation to future reading. Fitzgerald's suggestion that fiction can linger in the mind long after the book has been put down was realized through this literary quote and picture task.

Accessing the Inward Eye: Using Wordsworth's Poetry in EFL Reading

Neil Addison

Neil Conway

Introducing Japanese university English for Academic Purposes students to authentic English poetry as part of a language program has many linguistic and cultural benefits. Three of the four descriptions of culture offered by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1989) include literature in their formulations. In this section we describe a course taught by two instructors that sought to elicit and better understand student responses to English poetry such as the verse of William Wordsworth. This poetry was selected because it contained some of the major themes in modern Western cultural development, relayed through the introspective and *inward eye* of Wordsworth. The learners were 1st-year university students from three private Tokyo universities, majoring in English, engineering, and economics. Working with general themes such as 19th-century industrialization and globalization, students were required to reflect on each topic in a personal, inward way, and Wordsworth's poetry proved useful for this criterion, straddling themes which were both historically specific and yet also contemporaneously relevant to students' lives.

We first introduced basic concepts of poetry such as simile, metaphor, and rhyme through analysis of popular song verse. Gradually, Wordsworth's texts were introduced, connecting the poetic devices to the cultural-historical themes that underpinned them. These topics were exemplified by showing students short excerpts from Studio Ghibli movies that focus on the tension between human

industry and the natural world. This was then deepened through the use of romantic art from the same period as Wordsworth's verse. Students speculated on the meaning of Caspar David Friedrich's *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) and a series of cloud paintings by John Constable, which all place emphasis on the sublime power of nature to inspire. The students then performed a metaphor and simile gap-fill activity for Wordsworth's "Daffodils" (1807/1996a), before discussing the positive and beneficial meaning of metaphorical terms related to the natural world such as "host of dancing daffodils" (p. 281) that flash upon "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" (p. 282). Following this, the students completed a descriptive gap-fill exercise for the poem "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807/1996b) and discussed how Wordsworth presented the growing industrialized world in relation to the earlier natural world through identifying his use of language and rhyme such as "a sordid boon" and "out of tune" (p. 274).

All students answered a questionnaire both before and after the course that contained six 5-point Likert scale items, and two open-response questions that asked for the students' opinions about their experience. Students rated the extent to which they felt that working with the Wordsworth poems had helped their grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking. Based on a quantitative analysis of the questionnaire results (Conway & Addison, 2015), overall student responses were generally positive, indicating that the poetry lessons had an overall motivating effect.

Introducing authentic English poetry into Japanese English for Academic Purposes classes is a potentially worthwhile exercise. Reading authentic literature can provide students with valuable examples of how English words collocate in lexical chunks, clauses, and adjectival patterns, while also offering cultural enrichment.

Concluding Comments

Tara McIlroy

In this year's forum the balance of poetry and prose was equally weighted, and with these views on literary texts in the L2 classroom, a range of topics were explored. The conference theme of crossing borders was highly suited to our SIG's interests. The conference theme was explored in creative ways, while at the same time presenters used the perspective of the language teacher working with L2 learners. In the question-and-answer session, a number of comments suggested new areas for the SIG to explore in the future. For example, literature through film, literary reading at the PhD level, and literature in storytelling were all mentioned as possible areas for LiLT SIG discussions in years to come. The LiLT SIG would like to thank all members of the SIG and participants in the forum for their contributions and welcomes additional speakers to the next JALT conference in 2015 for the LiLT SIG forum.

Bio Data

Neil Addison teaches English literature and cultural studies at Tokyo Woman's Christian University. His research interests include literary discourse analysis and narrative stylistics.

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