Languaging!

The Exploratory Learning and Teaching Newsletter of
Dokkyo University • No. 8 • Winter 2006

Plus 2007 EVO Sessions, Reader's Forum, Languaging! Q&A, and more!

Call for Contributions!

Share Your Learning and Teaching Explorations!

Languaging! is a place to experiment, not just write about experiments. Think about your favorite ways of teaching and learning – fun ways to learn that could help others. Think about the data you might collect: keeping a journal, recording your changing feelings and ideas, having friends observe your classes, visiting friends' classes, quizzing yourself, recording yourself, getting feedback from students on your classes, your materials, or the whole education system! Read a good book? Write about it. Have a good idea? Write about it. Had a good conversation? Write about it!

Writing style: First person narratives are fine. Student writing is great! You should write a draft and give it to friends for comments. Revise it a few times, and then send it by "file attached email" to the editors (by November 15th for the fall issue or by May 15th for the spring). Editors may ask for some adjustments or give suggestions for fine-tuning before publishing.

Length: We hope you will contribute short pieces for consideration. Teachers and students are busy people (or at least they look busy!), and they are more likely to read short pieces than long ones (4 pages or 2000 words maximum, although we also like paragraphs, comments, short anecdotes, etc.).

Get your ideas out in Languaging! And get your students to contribute their ideas, too!

Send submissions for the next edition of *Languaging!* by May 15.

Submissions Editors:
Jim Brogan - jimbrogan@dokkyo.ac.jp
Chris Carpenter - chris@dokkyo.ac.jp
Tim Murphey - mits@dokkyo.ac.jp

Calvin & Hobbes © Watterson

Ye Olde Standard Disclaimer:
The opinions and views expressed in *Languaging!* do not necessarily reflect those of the editors nor of Dokkyo University (and maybe not even of the authors - after all people change their minds all the time!).

Nevertheless, we hope you enjoy!

Omedetou, Namiko!

The editors would like to dedicate this issue to all the wonderful admin. staff who support us at Dokkyo University in Kyoumuka and other offices, and especially to Namiko Shinya who with personality and charm has always been a great help to all the teachers and students.

Congratulations on your marriage. We wish you and your new husband a long and happy life together! You will certainly be missed by all at Dokkyo University. - Eds.

Graduate School:
Shoe Academy for a Teacher's Heart

Aya Sasaki • School for International Training

One day I was watching a TV show, which introduced a "shoe academy" to become a shoemaker. It featured a teacher there and showed some of the classes. Then I thought, "Oh, this is the same thing as I did in a graduate school."

The length of the program at the shoe academy is two years. The curriculum has a variety of classes. For example, students learn about feet from a physiological perspective, skills for shoe sketch and shoe design, the history of fashion business, economics for marketing, and presentation method. I was especially struck by what the first-year students need to do: they are required to make a plaster cast of their own foot. The purpose of the assignment is to let them see their own foot with objective eyes and deepen their understanding of feet and shoes – how delicate they are and how eloquently feet reflect personality and culture of a person.

"As I was writing the paper, I dug deeply into myself and reflected on my past teaching experiences."

The classes I took at a graduate school were just as diverse as the shoe academy. I took English Analysis, Intercultural Communication, Educational Technology, Lesson Planning, Teaching the 4 Skills, Curriculum Design & Assessment, Teacher Training and so on. The most influential one for me was a class called "Approaches." In addition to learning some methodologies, I was frequently asked what my teacher's identity was. "Why did you choose to become a teacher?" "What is your response to the methodology you learned and why?" "What do you want to teach students besides language?" The final paper for the class was "Teaching Manifesto," and to write the paper I needed to solidify my teaching mission and articulate beliefs on teaching. The writing process was very challenging, since I scarcely had a chance to think about and verbalize such a thought although I had them within myself. It was similar to making a plaster cast of myself with liquid and bits and pieces of materials.

In short, I wrote as a teaching manifesto that I have a mission to develop students' potential ability and learner responsibility and autonomy. I also learn from students about English, students, and teaching. As I was writing the paper, I dug deeply into myself and reflected on my past teaching experiences. I could identify what I was as a teacher by looking at my plaster cast. The plaster cast

reflected what I was, and it has become the springboard to aspire what kind of teacher I would like to become in the future.

I realized that in the past I had never had such an opportunity or time to consider a core identity of why I would like to pursue teaching as a career. Most of the lectures and workshops I had in university and in-service training input knowledge about teaching without letting me actually practice the knowledge. In university, I majored in English and took classes for teacher's certificate. The required classes for the certificate at that time focused on lesson planning, language assessment, and educational laws and regulations, and there was a practicum of 2 weeks.

An employment test for becoming a public school teacher heavily leaned on knowledge of detailed educational laws and regulations, history of education, educational psychology. As for the English test, examinees were asked to take reading comprehension test and English interview. The reading comprehension test was quite similar to university entrance examinations. The English interview reminded me of the secondary stage of STEP test. An examinee was given a small card and asked to read it out loud, and then answer some questions from the examinees. I clearly remember that the topic of the card was "tea ceremony" and wondered how it was related to English education.

During the in-service training for the 1st year teachers, I attended many different lectures, observed different schools and companies, made some lesson plans, learned computer technology and even went to a summer camp. I interacted with many other first-year teachers and learned different ideas of them during discussion. Although I wrote a report every week after the training, it was not as profound as to reach my belief and teaching identity.

Throughout the graduate program, I realized how crucial my beliefs and teacher's identity were. They are the basis for my lessons and reflect every single choice I make. While I was teaching as a public English teacher, I tried my best to incorporate communicative teaching. However, I myself was not certain what kind of belief I had and went this way and that way as I learned new ideas. It was as if I started to construct some blocks and pieces of woods without having a foundation of a house.

At graduate school I made a plaster cast of myself, closely examined it, and reflected back my teaching history and my identity as a teacher. The time I spent there helped me to clarify my starting point, which is the place I can always come back to wherever I teach. I learned we are our own best resources and the answer is within ourselves. I am looking forward to teaching lessons at a high school next year, and I need to keep in mind to put myself in my students' shoes.

My Study Abroad Experience in the U.S.A.
And How the Chat-Room Helped Me Through It

Yuko Iwasaki・Dokkyo University

This summer, I went to the U.S. for a month (Jul.31~Aug.30) in Dokkyo University's Wisconsin study abroad program. When I was a junior high school student, I went to Hawaii for a week with my family, so this was my 2nd time to go abroad, but this was the first time for me to go abroad without family. I'd like to talk about my experiences in the U.S. and tell you how much the Chat-Room prepared me for them. Thanks to the Chat-Room, I had no trouble speaking English when I was there. I could understand what people asked me, and I could answer their questions. I enjoyed the life in the U.S. so much, and I'd like to share my experiences with you.

"There were no convenience stores around, nothing to do but just hang around with friends. I really enjoyed these things."

Before this program had begun, I was worried about many things: What should I bring for my host family? What should I prepare to go abroad (Japanese food, formal clothes, etc)? Will I be able to communicate with people there? How will it be? "Don't be so nervous or shy. Have fun," my friends and teachers always said to me. Also, my father said to me, "you should keep a diary everyday, so you can remember what you did and felt during your stay there after coming back to Japan, too." I think these words helped me a lot. Especially, a diary made me feel relaxed. Well, it's also important to understand the cultural difference when you go to other countries. I knew the U.S. culture as my knowledge, but when I went there, I felt the cultural gap more than I thought, especially during my home stay. I think it's important to try to adapt it, too.

Still, on the plane, I was really worried about these things. But when I got to the U.S., I noticed no need to worry about anything. I really enjoyed the month staying there. There were 28 Dokkyo students including me who joined in this program. When we got to the U.S., we were too shy to speak English at first. Some said," I want to go back to Japan soon". But at last, when we left the U.S., I think all of us had more confidence to use English and enjoyed ourselves very much.

We had classes at the University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point (UWSP).At first, we stayed at the dormitory on campus of the UWSP for 10 days; I think this was a good opportunity to make friends. All of us became friends during these 10 days. Then we each went to a different host family's house

for 17 days after that. And the last 3 days, we had a trip to Chicago.

There were 5 counselors at UWSP. They supported us and showed us around the campus. They were with us for the whole month. They came to Chicago with us at the end of the trip, too. They are students who study at UWSP. They couldn't use Japanese, of course, so when we talked with them, we used English. Some of us taught the counselors Japanese slang like "*Majide*?" which means "really?"

The classes began on August 2nd. There were 3 teachers who taught us. At first, we had two kinds of tests to check our level. They were an oral test (interviewed by a teacher), and a grammar test (it was really easy!). There were 3 classes in the morning: Practical Conversation, American Studies, and Speech. In American Studies, we did a research project about America, something like Thanksgiving, Christmas, weddings (comparing Japanese and Western style), etc. We could also choose topics related to Wisconsin, like cranberries (the State Fruit). Each of us chose our topic to research. My topic was Wisconsin State Animals. All of us had a presentation at the last 2 days of the class. In the afternoon, we had a creative writing class. We made some kinds of poetry and we made a Writing Collection Book before the graduation with writings and pictures from all the students.

Not only did we take classes, but we had many kinds of activities. My most impressive one is playing the pipe organ for a few minutes when we went on a church tour with teachers. Because I said "I play the piano" at the interview test, one of the teachers called me and took me to the pipe organ. She took some photos of me, and let me play for a couple of minutes. That was surprising! It was a special experience for me. Other activities were target shooting, going to a cheese factory, the Point Brewery (a factory where beer is made), etc. These activities were done on weekdays. We also had activities on weekends.

"I recommend the Wisconsin program, especially if you like the countryside and it's the first time for you to go abroad."

On the first weekend, we had a one-day trip to Madison (capital of Wisconsin State) and the next day, we went to canoeing. From the second week, because we began staying at different host family's house each other, we had different experiences with them. I enjoyed the activities with my host family. Our family and two other families (they are friends) got together and had a dinner party every weekend. Also, we made vanilla ice cream and went to Noah's Ark together (the largest water park in America). I was lucky to be able to stay with them. I really enjoyed the month staying there.

I chose to go to Wisconsin because I wanted to go to the U.S., and this was my first time to go abroad without family, so I decided to go in a group. Then, Wisconsin program was available for me. I think it was a good choice for

me. When I went there, I felt really relaxed. I like countryside and because I've never lived in countryside before, it was a really good opportunity for me. There were no convenience stores around, nothing to do but just hang around with friends. I really enjoyed these things. I recommend the Wisconsin program, especially if you like the countryside and it's the first time for you to go abroad.

Now, let me tell you a little about the English Chat-Room and how it helped me so much. I think I can't explain my life in the U.S. without the Chat-Room. Without it, I don't know if I could have enjoyed the life in America. In fact, I didn't have any problems about communication in the U.S. and I think one of the reasons is that I had been to more than 100 Chat-Rooms (my proud accomplishment!) before going to the U.S. This fact made me have more confidence.

The Chat-Room is a conversation practice class opened for free, and not only English, but there are Spanish, French, German and Chinese classes as well. As for the English Chat-Room, from Monday to Friday, everyday it opens, but the teachers are different each day. The styles are different from teacher to teacher; some do pair talk, some do group discussion, so you can try them and find what style is the best for you.

I began to join the Chat-Room last year, from April. At first, I couldn't speak English so much. At the Chat-Room, my partner asked me a question, I answered, and then, I became silent. Question, answer, silence. Only these actions continued for a while. I couldn't say to my partner, "How about you?" or "And you?" either. It is the easiest way to ask a question, though... Every time, when I joined, I felt nervous to speak and was afraid of making mistakes. But because I was thinking of studying abroad and wanted to get used to using English, I joined whenever I could. I enjoy the atmosphere of the Chat-Rooms, and this is one of the reasons I keep going. I made friends with students from other departments too, and most all of them are senior to me. Little by little, I could somehow talk better in English.

I owe it to the Chat-Room that I could enjoy my life in the U.S. My studying abroad experience plays a big role for me. I take a teaching curriculum and I think of becoming an English teacher. From my experience, I have learned that it's important to study grammar and structures of English, but it's also important to learn to communicate. English is a language and it would be much better to learn something that interests you in English. Of course, it's important to know your own culture as well. If I become a teacher, I would like to tell students about that.

There's no shortcut to learning. It takes time to improve, but if you want to try and improve your skills, why don't you join us in the ChatRoom? You can practice and enjoy the conversations. The more you join, the better your skills will be! I promise!

About the writer

Yuko Iwasaki is an aspiring teacher and a 2nd year undergraduate student in the English Department at Dokkyo University.

Language teacher, language learner:
Balancing identities as a foreign teacher in Japan

Christopher Carpenter • Dokkyo University

A teacher walks into a classroom and sits down. A student turns to him and says, "Hi, John. Did you finish your homework?"

"Hi. No, I didn't. How about you?" the teacher replies.

"Me, neither," says the student. "I had meetings all morning that I had to prepare for last night. Just not enough hours in the day. Know what I mean?"

"Sure do," replies the teacher.

Just then another teacher is walking into the room, "the" teacher, the teacher of this class, a Japanese class at a small language school in the heart of Tokyo. This teacher, the Japanese teacher, walks to the front of the class as a few other students rush in the door behind her. They are sitting down as she greets everyone, "Konnichi wa."

"Konnichi wa" echoes around the room.

"Mina-san, shukudai o dekimashita ka?" the teacher asks. Turning to John who sits in the front of the room, she says, "John-san wa?"

Moving through the scene above, the reader may experience some odd moments of dissonance, moments where the roles of the characters seem ambiguous, even contradictory, where expectations are thwarted and or uncomfortably realized. The scene is just a fragment with a few ill-sketched figures, but in it we find a dynamic play of identities, changing and negotiating their investments in this particular intersection of time and social space. John's own vectors through this moment appear ambiguous.

"And indeed, for John, shuffling between roles and social contexts, his language learning project has made issues of identity particularly salient."

John is an English teacher at a small private university in Japan. He has lived in Japan for a number of years, and though he loves Japan and finds it annoying when people ask him when plans to return to America, his grasp of the language here is still very basic. He gets around well enough in daily life. He doesn't come off as rude in the cafés and restaurants he frequents. On the other hand, his conversational abilities start to falter after a few formalities and biographical data.

Recently he began taking the Japanese class because, although he is surrounded by native speakers of Japanese all day, he feels he hardly ever has a chance to practice. Of course he speaks mostly English to his

students; that's his job. And around his Japanese colleagues he really doesn't feel comfortable to use more than the usual greetings and polite expressions. They're nice people, and he has good professional relationships with most of them, but these relationships don't seem to have room for awkward, halting, language practice. In fact, he'd just as soon they not know how much of a beginner he really is. Besides, they, like him, are busy people, and often it seems more important for communication to be clear and efficient, a goal much more easily accomplished for John in English.

Outside of work he's developed a few friendships with Japanese people, but he sees them all too rarely (everyone is busy in this country). And when he does see them, though he tries to use some Japanese with them, he knows that one of the reasons he acquired these friends in the first place was that they wanted to practice their English. He also knows this all sounds like a series of excuses for not using Japanese, and he too had gotten tired of hearing these excuses, so he started taking classes.

John is struggling in this class. He understands the grammar, and he is good at writing kanji, but he often feels lost. Sometimes he doesn't even understand what the other students are saying. Some of them work in Japanese companies where they are forced to use Japanese all day. Some are married to spouses who don't speak English well or their first language at all. Some are younger, just in Tokyo to study and enjoy the nightlife. But John feels they are all progressing much more quickly than he is. And he is probably right. His busy schedule doesn't leave much room for studying, reviewing, or previewing outside of class, at least that's how he feels. He sometimes gets frustrated with the class because it doesn't give him enough chance for basic conversation practice. He thinks, what's the use of all this grammar if I can't even use the simple stuff fluently! But really there is more to his frustration than the method of instruction in this class, and he knows it, even if he can't quite articulate it. So he keeps going, hoping he will gradually improve and feel more comfortable in his new home, Japan. And gradually, he does.

The strange thing for John is that although he is a professional language teacher himself, and although he deals with the ambivalence of his students every day, he himself feels different ways about learning and studying Japanese. And though he knows very well the challenges of getting students to participate actively in his classes, when he goes to his Japanese lesson, he finds himself resisting certain things, behaving in certain ways, and having certain thoughts that he knows are not at all helpful to his language learning goals. And he rarely finds time for all the homework.

What is this ambivalence he feels about studying and learning Japanese when he recognizes it as something he wants to do? Why does he so often feel intimidated and uncomfortable in the classroom as a student, when just

an hour ago he was confidently directing activities and giving explanations to 35 of his own students? He tells his students that they must take advantage of every opportunity to use the language, to take initiative in the classroom, to not be afraid to make mistakes around native speakers, yet he himself feels hesitant and unassertive in the same situations. He tells his students that if they want to learn a language, they have to fit it among their daily priorities and devote some time to it every day, and yet he rarely finds time to do his own homework. If at all, it's usually on the train on the way to class.

Are we talking about the same person? The same John?

Perhaps the answer is "yes" and "no." Perhaps we (we teachers, we students, we humans) are not always the essentially stable, consistent, coherent individuals we appear, or wish to appear. When we consider pedagogical issues such as learner motivation, participation, or self-agency, the essentialist view of the individual becomes problematic, something that is not easily captured in the standardized questionnaires often used to measure such things. Even the teacher assessments we often have our students complete fail to reflect the changing, ambivalent nature of our student's conception our classes (Block, 1998). Simple questions such as "What do you want?" or "What do you think?" often assume a subjectivity which is relatively static. But learning is a dynamic endeavor, particularly language learning. As Norton (2001) reminds us, "language learning is a social practice that engages the identities of learners in complex and sometimes contradictory ways" (p. 167). And indeed, for John, shuffling between roles and social contexts, his language learning project has made issues of identity particularly salient.

Poststructuralist theories have attempted to come to terms with these issues by reconceptualizing identity, and viewing "the individual — the subject — as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space," with subjectivity being "multiple and a site of struggle" (Norton & Toohey, 2002: 121). These subjectivities are constructed jointly in dialogue with the subjectivities and communities around us with which we share activities, intentions, and beliefs, and language is often the medium of this interaction (Baktin, 1981). This perspective tends to see language not merely as the signs and symbols of a linguistic system, but as a complex social practice, qualified by power relations between actors and the distribution of resources within a community (Norton, 2000). In such a framework, people are speaking not just to be understood, but as Bourdieu (1977) explains, to be "believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished" (p. 648; cited in Norton & Toohey, 2002), as they negotiate their identities with others and their investments in communities of practice, imagined and immediate (Norton, 2001). This expanded, problematized conception of identity gives us a new way to look at both John's experiences and that of his students.

"If subjectivities are moderated by participation or lack of participation in such imagined communities, then investment in a particular community will naturally lead to a shift or recalibration of one's identity."

When the individual internalizes a community with a sense of belonging to it,

they construct an "imagined community" (Norton, 2001). If subjectivities are moderated by participation or lack of participation in such imagined communities, then investment in a particular community will naturally lead to a shift or recalibration of one's identity. When we think of all the communities to which we may imagine belonging (ethnic, racial, national, gendered, class, language, sexuality, religious, etc), we can see why there is no simple solution to measuring deceptively simple elements such as motivation (Block, 2006). Norton (2001) has chosen to look instead at the concept of "investment," which, in the case of language learners, takes into account the idea that their interaction with speakers of the target language also affects their sense of self and place in the world. As she explains:

> If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world. … [Thus] investment in a target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (p.166)

In her analysis of non-participation by particular learners in language programs, Norton (2001) exposes conflicts between the imagined communities of the learners and their classroom communities. While these learners may have been "motivated" students of English, their investments in the classroom community at times came into conflict with their investments in their internalized communities of practice. Interestingly, when the teacher represented a member of the learner's imagined community (for example, a professional community), a certain dissonance arose in the learner's sense of identity as they confronted a "gatekeeper" who challenged their full membership in a community because of their perceived lack of one of the requirements of membership, fluency in the target language.

What are the imagined communities of our John? In what ways do his investments in these communities come into conflict with each other and thus with his own sense of identity? Is it possible for John himself to interrogate these investments and arrive at some resolution creating a new understanding of his self that will facilitate his goal of learning Japanese? These questions are equally applicable to John's students and the ambivalence he often detects in them. But unlike his students, John has made a foreign land his home and so in some ways has much more to gain, and much more to lose, from his investment.

About the writer

Christopher is a part-time lecturer at Dokkyo University. "John" is a fictional person, an auto-ethnographic device used by the author to give himself some room to more objectively consider his being in the world. Any resemblance to a real "John" you may know is strictly coincidental.

Works cited in this article

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogical Imagination*, M. Holquist, (ed.), C. Emerson & M. Holquist, (trans.), Austin, University of Texas Press.

Block, D. (16 October 2006). Identity in second language learning research: Where we have been and where we are at present. Lecture presented at Dokkyo University, Saitama, Japan.

Block, D. (1998). Tale of a language learner. *Language Teaching Research 2* (2), 178-176.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge: CUP.

Norton, B. (2001) Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In M. Breen, (ed.) *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research.* Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 159 - 171.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson Education.

Norton, B. & Toohey, K. (2002). Identity and language learning. In R.B. Kaplan (ed), The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics. *Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 115 - 123.*

Call for Participation

TESOL Electronic Village Online EVO 2007

A TESOL CALL Interest Section project

Registration: Jan 1 - 14

Sessions: January 15 – February 25, 2007

The Electronic Village Online Sessions

For six weeks, participants can engage with ESOL experts in collaborative, online discussion sessions or hands-on virtual workshops of professional and scholarly benefit. These sessions will bring together participants for a longer period of time than is permitted by most conventions and will allow a fuller development of ideas and themes. *The sessions are* ***free and open to all*** *interested parties. You do* ***not*** *need to be a TESOL member to participate.*

Here are some of the EVO2007 sessions:

- *Beginning Internet Activities*
- *Blogging for Beginners*
- *E-assessment for language teaching*
- *ESL/EFL Student Video Production*
- *Language Teaching with PowerPoint*
- *Web-publishing in Open Participatory Environments*

※ *We strongly recommend that you sign up for no more than two sessions.*

For more information, including how to register and the full list of sessions with detailed descriptions, go to

http://evo07sessions.pbwiki.com

We Teach Who We Are

Parker J. Palmer

I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, then the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind—then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused—and I am so powerless to do anything about it—that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere: in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I though I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art—harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortals to do even passably well!

"The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life."

If you are a teacher who never has bad days, or who has them but does not care, this book is not for you. This book is for teachers who have good days and bad, and whose bad days bring the suffering that comes only from something one loves. It is for teachers who refuse to harden their hearts because they love learners, learning, and the teaching life.

When you love your work that much—and many teachers do—the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but also to serve our students well.

Those tangles have three important sources. The first two are commonplace, but the third, and most fundamental, is rarely given its due. First, the subjects we teach are as large and complex as life, so our knowledge of them is always flawed and partial. No matter how we devote ourselves to reading and research, teaching requires a command of content that always eludes our grasp. Second, the students we teach are larger than life and even more complex. To see them clearly and see them whole, and respond to them wisely in the moment, requires a fusion of Freud and Solomon that few of us achieve.

If students and subjects accounted for all the complexities of teaching, our standard ways of coping would do—keep up with our fields as best we can and learn enough techniques to stay ahead of the student

psyche. But there is another reason for these complexities: we teach who we are.

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from ones inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in the mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.

In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject—not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning. I will know it only abstractly, from a distance, a congeries of concepts as far removed from the world as I am from personal truth.

The work required to "know thyself" is neither selfish nor narcissistic. Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well. Good teaching requires self-knowledge: it is a secret hidden in plain sight.

Excerpt from the introduction of *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* by Parker J. Palmer (1998).

Readers Forum

On Asian Englishes

Toda Taemi

I [was a student in] the Language and Culture department at Dokkyo University from March 2001 to March 2005. I mainly studied English, Chinese, and Japanese language teaching (JSL/JFL). I am the person who wrote the article "Why do we learn English?" in Languaging! No. 2, and I am also the person who gave a speech about my ideal university as was mentioned in "The Petition Process Works!" Languaging! No. 7. [In that speech I said] we should learn more about the Asian Englishes since the people that we are most likely to interact with in English later are other Asians. I was so surprised at reading Languaging! No. 7 to learn that now freshmen in the English Department are learning Asian Englishes in classes. That news made me write today.

Now I have been working at a Japanese language school in Tokyo, as a student support staff member. My main working place is the school office. I often answer phone calls. We get calls from overseas a lot also. I need English communication with visitors and new students who have not learned Japanese, too. I communicated with various people as follows in English during the last one year: Chinese, Korean, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Mongolian, Philippino, Uzbekistan, Malaysian, Indonesian, Singaporean, Indian, Sri Lankans, Egyptian, Italian, Americans, Canadians, Thai, Vietnamese, Nepalis, Cambodians, and so on. Many of them are

Asians, and in many cases, both of us are non-native speakers. I could not understand what they talked well at first, but time helped me solve the problems.

I am a Japanese native, not an English native speaker. They are also non-native English speakers. I am not sure about my English, but many of us must be influenced by our native languages. We do make mistakes and have unique accents based on our native languages. It would be great (best) if non-native speakers could speak with perfect grammar and universal pronunciation, however, in daily communication, the most important thing (at least for me) is to do my best to try to tell what I want to, and to catch (listen to) what they want. Actually we can communicate even making mistakes in many cases (having limitation though).

I have not been to abroad for English study. I have learned English for 10 years in total, mostly in school education. That means, my teachers were Japanese or typical native speakers, and students (classmates) were almost all Japanese. I had only a few non-native classmates who were not Japanese in classes in university.

I am surprised at knowing that freshmen in English department are learning Asian Englishes. I could not believe it because I have not heard [of students] who want to learn it before. But if I was still in university, I would be eager to learn it now.

Communication with non-native English speakers who have different native languages might be a good chance to think about what we learn English for, and what the important things are. I believe their various Englishes help us learn to be more flexible, adaptable and more positive!

Toda Taemi

Don't forget

The Chatroom!

The Best Conversation on Campus

Do your students know about the *Chatroom*? Do you? Do you have students who wish they had more opportunities to practice free conversation in English, French, German, Spanish or Chinese? Then please remind them of the best thing to happen at Dokkyo since the Dok+a bee – **The CHATROOM**!

Every evening, **Monday through Friday**, the Research Institute for Foreign Language Teaching sponsors **free, small group conversation sessions** in English. French, German, Spanish, and Chinese are also offered on regular schedules. All sessions are 45-minutes long, **starting at 4:45 and 5:30.** They are open to all Dokkyo students on a voluntary, first-come, first-serve basis, until they fill up. Students should go to the Research Institute office on the **3rd floor of Building 5** for more information and to sign up for today's *Chatroom!!!*

Professional Development Focus

JALT National 2006:
An Amusement Park for Academics

Naoki Yamaura
Dokkyo University

Let's do a guided visualization for a moment: Imagine for a moment that you are going to an amusement park like Disney Land or Universal Studios with your friends for the weekend. You are sitting on a bench at the corner of the street in the park, and looking at the map of the park that shows so many attractions and their locations. You wonder which one you should go to and perhaps you make a priority list of the attractions you don't want to miss, because there are too many attractions to visit in just a few days!!

Now, back to reality, I just had a very similar experience like this, but not at Disney Land or Universal Studio. It was an academic conference —JALT National 2006— that took place in Kitakyushu. The annual convention focuses on the field of language teaching & learning and has an educational materials exposition. It is a great place to make contacts and offers many opportunities for teachers, researchers, and graduate school students to share their teaching tips and research. JALT 2006 took place for 3 days from November 3rd to 5th. It was my first time to participate in such a big conference, since I began studying at gradate school. So it was really a nice stimulus and pretty much everything was fresh and new to me.

While I was participating, it was my job to videotape some of the presentations including the guest speakers. Most of the presentations I videotaped were related to the field of learners' identity and SLA, the topic for my master's thesis. Even though this videotaping kept me quite busy, it also gave me a great chance and reason to talk with the speakers, who were the experts in the field I'm interested in. The presenters were usually very nice and kind when I asked them if it was okay to videotape. One Professor, Dr. Mehmet Celik from Hacettepe University in Turkey, gave a presentation on Language Learning and Learners' Identity. When I told him that I was studying identity issues also, he gave me suggestions and a copy of his questionnaires that he used for his research. This was but one example of the generous sharing that went on between teachers that weekend.

"Being there" and taking the different rides at the amusement park is, of course, fun. But later, you look at the pictures of your friends and you at the park and talk about them over lunch, and remember all the events and fun times. You relive the moments again and have double the fun. Just like while writing this article, sharing my great experience at JALT with you, I am realizing again how much fun and how rewarding it was. I hope you will some day consider going to such an attractive *academic* amusement park!

What Do Teachers Want?
Reflections on the Dynamic Teacher Communities Symposium

Sanae Sugawara
Dokkyo University

"Professional and Organizational Development: Dynamic Teacher Communities", the symposium at Dokkyo University on November, 6, 2006, was an opportunity for teachers to open their eyes and enjoy themselves. There are three things I would like to share here about the symposium.

First, I thought it was good to remember that *sharing your ideas is healthy*, that not knowing was ok, and that questions of community and identity are important. Second I learned *it is important for me to interact* with other teachers. Teachers should find a way to make time to talk about their teaching and administration problems they face. While I know time is limited, everybody has to have lunch, so they can at least use the lunch hour. Finally, *I enjoyed meeting many people who have similar academic interests*. I had a chance to talk to graduates students from Hawaii, who graduated from Dokkyo and continue studying abroad. It was fun to talk with them and share our academic interests.

The symposium on November 6 offered a great opportunity to share ideas with others, interact with colleagues, and meet new people. *What do teachers want most?* I think they want to improve their teaching and enjoy their jobs more. And I feel that if they are given opportunities to do these three things (meet new people, interact, and share their stories) they will surely improve their teaching.

Refreshed and Energized
at the Dynamic Teacher Communities Symposium

Naoko Takaishi
Kenritsu Kashiwa High School, Chiba

It is this teacher symposium that stimulated me as a teacher for the first time since I got back from Hawaii a year ago. I had been in Hawaii for 2 years to get an M.A. of TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) and resumed teaching English at a high-ranked senior high school in Chiba, Japan. Although I was passionate enough to introduce what I learned in the USA into a "new" environment right after coming back to Japan, the school focus was only on entrance exams and there is no time left but to cover the textbook. Surprisingly, we have neither oral communication classes nor an ALT! In addition, it was really tough to adapt myself to the "new" environment in spite of the fact that I had been working at some senior high schools in Japan for more than 15 years before I

left Japan! I felt that everything was very different from what I thought it used to be. The culture gap between Hawaii and Japan is so huge at least to me! All I could do was recall a pretty fast stream of the teachers' world and a bunch of chores and follow them. I just got to repeat a daily routine.

However, at the Nov. 6 Symposium, I met many enthusiastic teachers and students who tried hard in order to better traditional English instruction in Japan. It gave me a second thought: Am I good enough just to repeat the routine by making the excuse that my school condition is too bad for communicative English? I cannot drastically change many things, but can I change one thing after another little by little as long as I keep my goal in mind?

On the day I even missed the plenary presentations because of my school schedule, but barely attended a few other sessions. One was Dr. Sato's "Building a teacher learning community through university-school collaboration." His presentation was great and very organized including data (not only qualitative but quantitative) and "a video show" in which students are happily speaking English! This was very persuasive and fun. Moreover, he was modest but proud and humorous enough to attract our attention. He might not speak native-like English, but I found it our Japanese ideal presentation style. That is, we don't have to speak native-like English but rather, we need to be proud enough to speak English as long as we keep intelligibility. I attended another one, "Collaborating beyond program boundaries: Does it matter?" presented by Ms. Usui & Ms. Sano who completed their M.A.s in America like I did and resumed their profession at a university. They mentioned strategies that they were trying at their university to lessen the work. They voluntarily devoted their time. They are great, but at the same time, for it to continue, it should be considered by the school system itself. If only a few "special" people are expected to work much harder than the others without any extra payment, that is, if the responsibility is put only on limited volunteers, the new strategies will not spread, I am afraid.

At the buffet after the sessions, I talked to plenary speakers Dr. Donald Freeman & Dr. Bonny Norton, other presenters, and many other teachers and students. (I also talked to my friends whom I had met while doing an M.A. in Hawaii. So long time no see!) Many opinions seemed to be exchanged and I got lots of information about the present academic world which I was sadly away from for a long time.
I drove back home after 10:30 on Monday night, and I had a bunch of stuff to prepare for the next day. However, I felt very refreshed and energetic. For practical teachers like me, it is of great benefit and stimulating to attend this kind of session for continual professional development.

A Rose by Any Other Name
A Conversation with Nakano Koin

Jim Brogan • Dokkyo University

While writing up an interview for *Languaging No. 7*, I asked several members of staff how to pronounce the name of the person I was interviewing. None of them could pronounce his given name. I was intrigued. When I asked Nakano Koin (中野　皓允) if this was usually the case, he told me the interesting tale of his name.

His grandfather had come from a relatively well to do farming family in Aomori but he didn't want to be a farmer. He decided to take 200,000 yen, in place of his inheritance, and he moved to Sakhalin to start a business in the herring fishing industry. Unfortunately he was fishing on the east side of Sakhalin but all the herring were on the west side. The business failed and, because he wanted his son to go to university, he moved to Tokyo. He built a house, bought a sub-post office and ran a billiard hall. A friend of his had said, "If your son graduates as an architect I will give him a job." Unfortunately, once again, the friend's firm had already gone bust by the time his son graduated and he had to get a job as a policeman. His grandfather was not having the best of luck.　So, when his grandson was born in 1934, at the end of the Depression, he decided to invest in a little good luck by giving him a fortuitous name. He went to an uranaishi (占い師), a fortune-teller or augur, and paid the grand sum of ten yen for a good name. The uranaishi gave him the name Koin: Ko, (皓) meaning white or clear, and in, (允) meaning sincerity or faith.

Ten yen may not seem a lot, but in 1934 Nakano san's father's starting salary as a policeman was forty yen a month, a school teacher's starting salary was about fifty yen a month and a carpenter would make two yen a day – about the price of ten kilos of rice. A haircut was 0.4 yen, 40 sen (銭) and a bowl of buckwheat soba would have cost ten sen.　For five to seven hundred yen you would be able to build a five room house on one hundred tsubo (坪) of land in what would now be the Tokyo Metropolitan area, just outside the Yamanote Line. A modern house, with a little border around it, is built on about thirty tsubo.

So was it a good investment? Well, not immediately. His father, who remained a policeman all his working life, was in Sakhalin during the war and on August 15 1945, when the Soviet Union army occupied Sakhalin, Nakano san's mother and his four siblings escaped to Hokkaido. His father, being in a position of responsibility, felt it was his duty to remain. He was sent to

Siberia for five years, returning to Hokkaido in 1950. His father never talked about his experiences in Siberia, apart from one time, when Nakano san was a high school student, when he said, "Last night I dreamt about Siberia." As Nakano san said, "Of course, nobody asked about that. They just said, 'Oh, really'"

Because of his father's job he changed school seventeen times and, of all the teachers he had, only one could remember his name. A friend once said to him, "You could never win an election. Nobody would ever remember your name." Nakano san, as those who read *Languaging No. 7* will know, has had a full and interesting life, but would he recommend others to invest in an uranaishi consultation (the present cost is about 120,000 yen!)? "It is best that parents decide for themselves and an easy to remember name is best." He added, "Anyway, paying ten yen for it was ridiculous."

Snow

By Jared Carter

At every hand there are moments we
cannot quite grasp or understand. Free

to decide, to interpret, we watch rain
streaking down the window, the drain

emptying, leaves blown by a cold wind.
At least we sense a continuity in

such falling away. But not with snow.
It is forgetfulness, what does not know,

has nothing to remember in the first place.
Its purpose is to cover, to leave no trace

of anything. Whatever was there before—
the worn broom leaned against the door

and almost buried now, the pile of brick,
the bushel basket filling up with thick,

gathering whiteness, half sunk in a drift—
all these things are lost in the slow sift

of the snow's falling. Now someone asks
if you can remember—such a simple task—

the time before you were born. Of course
you cannot, nor can I. Snow is the horse

that would never dream of running away,
that plods on, pulling the empty sleigh

while the tracks behind it fill, and soon
everything is smooth again. No moon,

no stars, to guide your way. No light.
Climb up, get in. Be drawn into the night.

More Number Magic
Fun Math Problems for English Practice

Duncan Baker • Dokkyo University

Let me start with a kind of postscript to "Pyramid Number Magic" in *Languaging! No.7*. The second stage of that activity involved a 'magic number' so named because of its most peculiar properties. Ask a student to pick a number between one and nine; multiply this number by nine; then multiply the magic number by this number. The result is surprising:

9 ---> 81 ---> **12345679** x 81
= 999,999,999!

Since writing "Pyramid Number Magic" I have learned that this magic number holds another surprise. If you multiply the magic number by 999,999,999 you get a mind-boggling pyramidal palindrome* of a number:

```
      999999999
    x 12345679
     8999999991
    69999999930
   599999999400
  4999999995000
 39999999960000
299999999700000
1999999998000000
 9999999990000000
= ________________
```

There, I've done most of the number-crunching. I'll let you do the rest. Einstein reckoned the universe is some fifty-eight sextillion, seven hundred quintillion, seven hundred sixty quadrillion miles wide. Our pyramid palindromic is a mere sliver of this at twelve quadrillion, three hundred forty-five trillion, six hundred seventy-eight billion, nine hundred eighty-seven million, six hundred fifty-four thousand, three hundred twenty-one. It should still be enough of a mouthful to twist most students' tongues though.

Let's now move on to more manageable numbers with some mathematical puzzles. I've found the following seven word problems to be very effective in getting students to engage with English closely while in pursuit of purely mathematical solutions.

1. Pickpockets

If you take one coin from your left pocket and put it in your right pocket, you will have the same number of coins in both pockets. However, if you take a coin from your right pocket and put it in your left pocket, you will have double the number of coins in your left pocket than in your right. How many coins do you have in each pocket? (Good for first conditionals this one.)

2. Healthy

A doctor gives you nine pills and tells you to take one pill every half-hour. After how many hours do you take the last pill?

3. Not healthy

A homeless man makes his own cigarettes by collecting cigarette-ends he finds in Ueno Park. It takes seven ends to make one of his homeless-made cigarettes. How many cigarettes can he make from forty-nine ends?

4. Bucolic

A farmer has two and a half haystacks in one of his fields, and four and a half haystacks in another. If he puts them all together in the same field, how many haystacks will he have?

5. Not so bucolic

There is this oil slick in the middle of a lake. Every day it doubles in size. After sixty-four days it covers half of the lake. How many more days will pass before the slick totally covers the lake?

6. Sorting Siblings

Aya is seventeen years old. Her brother Yuta was born seven years after their brother Shigeo. Two years ago, Aya was three times as old as Yuta. How old will Shigeo be when Yuta is as old as their sister is now?

7. Really healthy

I am a busy teacher and there is nothing I like better than coming home after my classes are finished and enjoying a few cans (small cans) of beer. Like Ancient Egyptians, I think of beer as a kind of medicine. More importantly my wife believes me. On Monday last week she bought me a number of cans of beer but I was only able to finish some of them before falling asleep on the sofa. On Tuesday she bought as many cans as remained unopened in the fridge from Monday. That evening I got back from teaching at Dokkyo and I drank ten cans before passing out on our living room floor. On Wednesday my wife bought twelve more cans of beer than she did on Monday but I could only drink as many as I drank on Monday because I had drunk so much the night before. On Thursday she bought three times the number of beers I drank on Wednesday and I could drink only eight of them. On Friday she only bought six cans of beer and I drank twelve fewer than she bought on Wednesday. I don't teach on Saturday so I drank all sixteen beers remaining in the fridge while enjoying a leisurely breakfast.

How many cans of beer did my wife buy on Wednesday?

Editorial comment: Afraid of math? Remember, you probably have many students who know more math than you, so let the students with stronger math skills teach the students who, like us,

are maths- challenged. It may boost the self-esteem of a group who don't normally feel so confident in language classes! Try breaking the class into groups to work on each of the problems separately, then regroup and have the new "experts" quiz their new partners in English. Fun and entertaining problems, Baker-sensei. Thanks! – Eds.

About the writer

The author of this article would like to point out that problem number seven does not in any way reflect his own drinking habits. His wife says he drinks only large cans of beer and has never been known to leave any in the fridge overnight.

Works referenced in this article

He would also like to acknowledge the following sources for these problems:
1 – 5: Discussions A-Z, A. Wallwork, C.U.P
6 & 7: Science Research Associates (Canada) Ltd. 1976.
Thank you, Mary Hayes.

* A palindrome, lest you've forgotten, is a word or phrase that reads the same forwards and backwards, such as "Madam I am Adam" or today's lucky number, 12,345,678,987,654,321.

ANSWERS

1. You have seven coins in your left pocket and five coins in your right.
2. You take the last pill after just four hours, not four and a half. This is because you take the first pill straight away.
3. He can make eight homeless-made cigarettes from forty-nine ends. From forty-nine ends he makes seven cigarettes. After he smokes these seven cigarettes, he is left with seven ends. He makes an eighth cigarette from these seven ends.
4. He will have one big haystack.
5. One more day.
6. Shigeo will be twenty-four when Yuta is as old as Aya is now.
7. You need a bit of algebra to solve this one.
   Let a = *beers my wife buys*,
   b = *beers I drink*.

Day	*Bought*		*Drunk*		
Mon.	(a	-	b)	+	
Tues.	(a - b	-	10)	+	
Wed.	(a + 12	-	b)	+	
Thurs.	(3b	-	8)	+	
Fri.	(6	-	a)	+	
Sat.	(0	-	16)	+	= 0

In this equation, term b cancels out (3b - b - b -b);
(3a - a) – (- 10 + 12 – 8 + 6 - 16) = 0
2a – 16 = 0; 2a = 16, therefore a = 8
Therefore my wife bought twenty cans of beer on Wednesday. Got it?

Banned Clothes? A Debatable Topic

Koko Kato • International Development
Assistance School (IDEAS)

A current topic for discussion in your classes:

A government's ban on the veils of Muslim women in public incites crucial questioning on whether a government can curtail our freedom to choose what to wear. In some European countries, veils covering from head to toe are considered to be an obstacle to Muslim women's integration into society. Mr. Jack Straw, a senior British politician, complained that, "a veil is an unwelcome barrier to integration." Belgium has already banned the veil and other European countries are planning to do so. Muslim women in Belgium can be fined £102 if they are found to be wearing the cover in public.

However, most national constitutions guarantee certain freedoms and rights which most readers also interpret as being free to clothe one's self as one wishes. Mr. Haci Karacaer, the director of a Turkism Muslim organization, asserted that Muslim women should be allowed to dress as they want in a constitutional state. Dutch Muslim groups have also complained that the ban only makes Muslim women victimized and alienated.

In conclusion, it may be true that the veil, in certain circumstances, can be oppressive and even sexist. However, at the same time, western democracies seem to be contradicting their own values of free choice when they insist that people must conform to their fashion standards.

Sources for this article

Bailey Liam: "Britain's Islamic Veil Controversy", OhmyNews International, 15/11/06

Mardell Mark: "Dutch MPs to decide on burqa ban" BBC News, 15/11/06

Tiggeloven Carin: "Will the Netherlands ban the Burqa?" Radio Netherlands, 15/11/06

JITFU Teaching: The Art of Flexible Planning and Decision Making

Tim Murphey • Dokkyo University

JITFU stands for Just In Time Finishing Up, which is about having flexible strategies to help teachers plan and conduct their classes so that they can finish if not on time, then close to it in a relaxed and unhurried way. This is something new teachers need practice with and experience before they can adjust well.

On student ratings, teachers get criticized for finishing too late or finishing too early. "Sounds like a lose-lose situation," says one of my colleagues. Students want their money's worth and expect teachers to use the time allotted, even if they may occasionally welcome a few minutes free at the end of class. Administrators do not look kindly on teachers finishing their classes more than a few minutes early. At the same time, if teachers finish too late, students can be upset and the next teacher may have late students. We all have other classes to run to and other obligations. Keeping to the time schedule and finishing on time is often a rarity and hard to do, especially when your classes are only held once a week and you have a certain amount of things you want to get done.

Estimating the time it takes to do certain tasks can be tricky. When students are really learning, it is good to let the activity continue longer than planned and let learning happen more deeply. And when an activity is obviously not working, it is not professional to make them continue the allotted time just because we planned it. Stop it and try something else. Thinking well on your feet is useful, but planning ahead for possible irregularities and having extra optional activities available is the advice of most effective teachers I have talked to.

PLANNING AHEAD

Effective classroom management of time-on-tasks begins with effective approximate planning. For example, I wanted to do a song as a speed dictation, which my students rate very highly and love doing, but I realized during the planning stage that doing the whole song would just take too much time. So I decided to do it over 4 lessons, one verse a lesson and it worked great.

1. Give students an outline at the start of the class (orally or in writing)

You can simply explain orally to students what you have planned that day, or better, write a short list on the board or on the OHP. This is for you as well as for them. Teachers who do this

tell me that they often write next to the last few items, "if we have time." The outline is actually often more useful for keeping the teacher organized than the students.

2. Do the essential things first

Teachers and students hate being rushed at the last minute copying down homework assignments. Effective teachers often give students the homework assignments right after the outline of the class that day, at the beginning of class. That way they avoid the rush at the end and teachers get better quality assignments. Another option is to have the assignments written on a handout that students will take with them and thus they do not have to write down in a hurry. If the homework is based partially on what you do in class, students tend to pay more attention during the class.

IN CLASS ADJUSTMENTS

1. Got too much planned

Sometimes you will see this in your lesson planning stage and flag several things with "if time". Often however teachers only become aware that there is not enough time in the middle of class when you are still on the first of 6 activities that you thought would take the same amount of time. At that point, you need to decide priorities and "best fit" for student learning in the situation you are in.

> *Example:* In the first class of the fall semester I had planned three more activities after the students talked about their summer vacations in small groups of four. But they were so animated that I did not want to loose the good feeling and the active talk in English and decided to make new groups in which they were to tell about the summer of their first partners and their own. The other activities were held in reserve for another time.

2. Got a lot of time left

Most teachers have the foresight to bring a few extra activities with them just in case. However, if those activities don't fit, then you could try one of the following strategies:

- Ask students to begin the homework assignments in class and verify that they are doing them right. Ask them to collaborate with a classmate while doing it and learn from each other.
- Ask students to collaboratively review previous material for a test that is on the schedule. Ask them to do this by looking in their notebooks or textbooks and asking partners questions.
- Ask students to do a Kwik-write, in which they do non-stop writing about what they learned in class (or recently) and at the end of 5 minutes you see who has the most material. They can then switch papers, read, and do peer corrections. Then ask them to explain the errors to each other and check with the teacher if need be.
- Get a copy of Penny Ur and Andrew Wright's *5 Minute Activities* book (1992 CUP) and skim it for some suitable activities to fill extra time when you need them.

JITFU not only sounds like a new marshal arts, it may be one. Maybe a teacher's balancing act of effective and enjoyable learning activities is exactly that – an art in motion and continual movement.

When Students Have Power

Jason Rhodes • Yonsei University, Seoul

A review of *When Students Have Power*
by Ira Shor, University of Chicago Press, 1997.

This is a book about veteran teacher and critical pedagogy theorist Ira Shor and his experiences one semester with a group of working class undergraduates in a budget-strapped, four-year college in Staten Island, New York. The course was an English elective called *Utopia*. Rather than attempt to provide a detailed summary of the book, I'd just like to respond to some of Shor's practices which stimulated my own thinking about democratic education and which clearly had a strong impact on the students. One of the strengths of the book is that the reader is often treated to student feedback about the experience in their own, unedited words. It's a book well worth reading because it's not about a "super teacher" or about "miracle students," but about ordinary people in run-of-the-mill circumstances. Ordinary people, of course, are pretty remarkable creatures.

"Authority should be held accountable in society, and when teachers are held accountable this way by students, it is a modeling of democratic relations."

Shor wants his students to divest themselves of the passivity which has been foisted upon them by traditional methods of education, and which many simultaneously resist and cling to. He begins this process at the beginning of the semester by opening up seemingly mundane issues to discussion and a vote, such as how desks are arranged and whether students should be called on by the teacher or whether they should simply start talking. This sets a tone and sends a signal to students that they have a say in how the class is run, but this is just window dressing compared to his method of "contract grading," in which he lets students know what they are required to do in order to receive an A, B, or C, and then asks them to negotiate with him as a class over the details and sign a "contract," for their selected grade.

This is more than just a novel, "more democratic" way of dealing with the unpleasant matter of distributing grades. The Utopia class engaged in the "negotiation" process in earnest, and the class (or at least the teacher) was brought to the brink of crisis when an articulate student made a strong case for making attendance entirely voluntary, i.e., for setting up the possibility of contracting for an "A" without having to come to class. The student made a brilliant anti-authoritarian argument which was

right up Shor's ideological alley, and appealed to the bleak reality of her past experience at their second-rate college, in which teachers rattled off the information in the text, while students took notes. This student, named Angela, argued that she could get an A in any class without ever attending (or at least by using a system in which the class of students took turns taking notes, thus minimizing the need to attend). Plenty of students were nodding their heads.

Shor was in a pickle, because he'd opened up this idea of classroom democracy, but was unprepared for the possibility of having the class file out on him, leaving him sitting alone with his thoughts of turning classrooms into spaces which cross-examined the status quo. It should be said that, unlike the votes on seating and regulation of class discussion, the grade contract was not determined by majority rule, but rather by consensus — student and teacher had to come to agreement. In any event, the student's bold proposal forced Shor to spontaneously make two "concessions" to the students, in lieu of having the class disappear. The first was "protest rights," which Shor relates as something that shot out of his mouth without consideration, and which he found himself having to define entirely off the cuff:

> Protest rights means that each student has the right at any time to protest what we are doing. This means that students should notice how you are feeling in class, especially when you are unhappy or uneasy, bored, angry, confused, or lost in any way, and then do something about it instead of only swallowing it in silence or stewing about it in anger or acting out in a negative manner ... With protest rights, students don't have to sit through a class that drives you nuts or leaves you confused or frustrated or angry or insulted or just plain dulled out.

This stood in contrast, and was a response to, the description of the classes endured by the articulate student mentioned above, as an attempt to promise the students that the class would be worth attending. Shor felt the need, however, to "seal the deal" in some way, in order to make sure that the democratic concession made at the beginning of the semester didn't fade away into nothing as students reverted back to passivity. Thus, again spontaneously, Shor proposed the formation of an "after class group," a voluntary group of students who would meet with him after each class to give him feedback on how the class went and suggestions for the next class. Participation in the after class group could be done in lieu of one of the projects students had contracted for at the beginning of the course.

With this, Shor made himself vulnerable, as he created space in which students felt comfortable criticizing his teaching directly to his face. No doubt his twenty years of experience as a teacher helped give

him the confidence to take such a step, but he describes it as one that was difficult to take, and relates that it resulted in several instances in after-class meetings throughout the semester in which he found himself with his ears burning while he did his best to keep a smile plastered to his face.

He also describes a rather extraordinary process, as students found themselves able to play a role in their education that they'd probably never even imagined before. The group took on something of a dual function. In addition to providing regular feedback on the course, the group also functioned as a sort of seminar in which the students discussed the class themes they found most interesting in greater depth. Though the core of the "after class group" was doing it as one of their required course projects, several students not doing it for course work simply showed up out of interest. All members of the group wrote reflections on the experience. This one is typical:

> I really liked being part of the after-school evaluation group. I understood the class discussion much better by being part of the group, since we discussed things in more detail after school. We were allowed to state our opinion on how the class was going ... It was like we made up the schedule for the teacher ... I wish more teachers would take the time and ask the students how they think the class is going and if they have any advice on how to change it for the better, I feel more students would learn better this way and would be more interested in the class. The after-school evaluating group is a great idea and it should be done in more classes.

The point of the after class group was "this is your class, and if you're going to be required to be here, you have a right to a real say in the experience." Authority should be held accountable in society, and when teachers are held accountable this way by students, it is a modeling of democratic relations. As Shor relates, however, democracy is not easy, and true democracy promises occasional discomfort for everyone willing to risk participation.

The after class group came about as a result of the process of negotiating for grades at the beginning of the semester. I'd heard of the "contracting for grades" procedure before, though not the negotiation process. Shor's book makes me realize that democratic negotiation of desk placement, discussion rules, and expectations for grades at the beginning of a course can set the tone, and in this case, create institutions for a democratic classroom.

Shor criticized himself for unilaterally selecting the texts of this course. They were *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*, by The EarthWorks Group, *Walden II*, by B.F. Skinner, and *Ecotopia*, by Ernest Callenbach. He describes processes of giving the students greater choice in reading material which are fairly

straightforward: students can be asked to bring in reading suggestions, explain to the class why they are relevant and possibly interesting, and then student reading can be some mixture of "assigned by the teacher" and "self-selected from the class-created list."

In addition to reading and discussing these texts, students were asked to engage in one or two projects, depending on which grade they had contracted for. Both projects involved working in groups to identify a problem and write an analysis of it, as well as an "action plan" for its solution, and presenting it to the class, with one problem being "a problem at our college," and the other being "a problem in New York City." As students made their presentations, Shor linked the classroom discussion to notions of Utopia found in their texts. While many argued that two projects was too many (in retrospect, Shor agreed), the response to participating in these groups was overwhelmingly positive, with many students saying that it caused them to rethink previously held conceptions of society as well as their capacity to take action for change.

Shor's book provides a practical guide to a democratic pedagogy for adult learners. He shows how negotiating the rules and expectations of the class at the beginning can get students actively involved in determining course structure and content in a way which lasts throughout the course. This process led to the concrete establishment of students rights to comment on, criticize, and make recommendations for the class on an ongoing basis, through the mechanisms of protest rights and the after class group. Finally, Shor shows how students can be given a voice in what they read and what they do outside of class, and how the latter can be directed towards projects which connect thinking and reality for the purpose of change. Shor's practice of "negotiation" makes clear that a democratic classroom involves the transformation of the role of the teacher, not its abdication. All in all, a brilliant, honest, humble, and very practical account of normal, remarkable people engaged in the process of democratic education.

Thank you, Ira Shor.

About the reviewer

Jason Rhodes teaches English at Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea. He also moderates an online discussion group on the topic of the uses critical pedagogy in language teaching at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/spacesofhope

Some Q&A about *Languaging!*

The Exploratory Learning and Teaching Newsletter of Dokkyo University

This article is a summary of a poster presentation given at the recent Professional and Organizational Development Symposium: Dynamic Teacher Communities, held at Dokkyo University, November 6th, 2006.

Q: "Languaging"?… Say what?

A: The term "languaging" emphasizes language as an action, not a thing. As a thing, language is static, and linguists treat it as an object separate from human beings. As an action, language is an integral aspect of our thinking, meaning-making selves. Languaging is how we regulate our social and emotional and cognitive behaviour as well as that of others. Languaging is what it is that we do to transform our thoughts into a shareable resource - shareable with ourselves and others.
~ **Merril Swain**

Q: But what is *Languaging!?*

A: *Languaging!* is …

- a **bi-annual** campus newsletter
- a magazine of **exploratory** ideas
- an **access-publication**
- a **catalyst** for community dialogue
- an interactive **website**
- a **good time** for all involved!

Q: "Access Publication"? … Whazzat?

A: These publications … seek to break down barriers between undergraduates, graduates, teachers and staff as all are invited to contribute short pieces. These "access publications" (Murphey et. al 2003) are accessible to all comers and encourage those on the periphery of the field to really identify with the activity in the field (Lave & Wenger 1991) to become part of our communities of practice (Wenger 1998).
~ **Tim Murphey**

Q: Who is responsible for publishing this bi-annual, exploratory, accessible, dialogue-inspiring good time called *Languaging!?*

A: **Volunteers!**

- Volunteer students and teachers **collaborate** in the important jobs of soliciting contributions, proofreading, editing, printing, folding, stapling, and website updating.
- Articles are written by **students and teachers,** graduate students, undergrads, faculty, part-time teachers, teachers of English and other languages. All groups are invited to participate! (See The Fun Facts.)

Q: Why start an access publication?
A: *Languaging!* was begun in order to …

- … create a place for students and teachers to share their **reflections and research** with the community without requiring a lot of data or a long review process.
- … introduce student-teachers to the **publishing process**.
- … give student-teachers access to and help them **identify with the profession.**
- … promote **collaboration and cohesion** within our professional community.
- … create **dialogue between groups** identified within our community, bridging teachers and learners, graduate and undergrad students, full-time faculty and part-time teachers, English and non-English departments, and all other groups with an interest in **learning, teaching, and sharing.**
- … challenge the idea that writing and publishing must be a serious and painful chore rather than a **fun and joyful** learning experience.

"Why"? Why not? ***Just do it!***
Start an access publication for your teaching/learning community today!

Q: What are your goals for the future?
A: In the future, *Languaging!* hopes to …

- publish more **articles by students**
- publish more **language learner histories**
- publish more **interviews** with our peers (students and teachers)
- publish more classroom-based **action research**
- continue publishing **practical classroom ideas**
- get more people **involved** in the publishing process
- encourage contributors to keep developing their ideas for **future publication** in other contexts

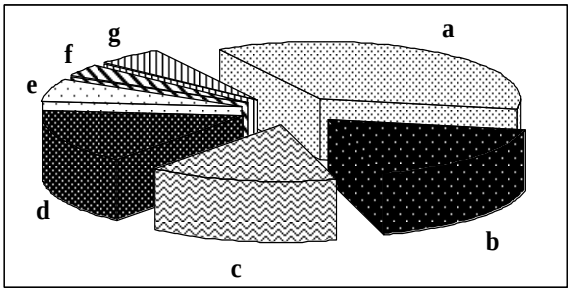
Q: What kind of institutional support does *Languaging!* get from your university?
A: We are authorized to claim official affiliation with Dokkyo University. The university allows us to utilize its facilities and printing costs are paid.
We take care of the rest.

The Fun Facts!
The first issue of *Languaging!* was published in the spring semester of 2003. Since then, there have been seven issues, one every semester, with more than 100 articles published so far.

Q: What kinds of articles are published?

A: *Languaging!* has published a wide range of writing, including …

a. practical teaching ideas (36%)
b. opinion and reflection (18%)
c. theorical research (15%)
d. public service announcements (15%)
e. book reviews (7%)
f. interviews (3%)
g. plus reader responses, poems, anecdotes and more! (5%)

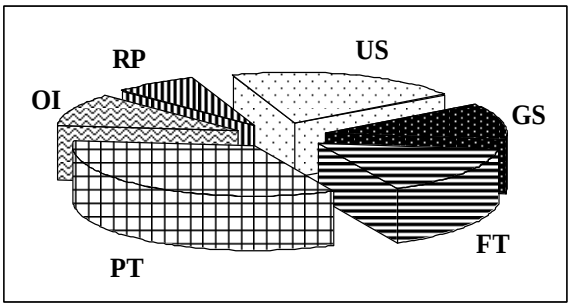


While all types of writing are considered, we prefer **short and sweet.** Students and teachers are busy people and often don't have time for long, laborious reading. We also encourage short, **personal narratives.** In general the writing style tends to be **thoughtful but informal.**

Q: Who contributes articles?

A: Many groups come together and collaborate in filling out each issue, including …

US = undergraduate students (21%)
GS = graduate students (12%)
FT = full-time faculty (16%)
PT = part-time teachers (33%)
OI = people from institutions besides Dokkyo, in Japan and abroad (11%)
RP = reprinted articles of interest from other sources (7%)



We hope that by supporting more dialogue between groups in our school we help to stimulate further learning and border crossing in this **dynamic teaching and learning community.** We are happy that many of the articles in *Languaging!* are collaborative creations (student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-teacher). We hope you will consider contributing your ideas to *Languaging!* and/or that you will encourage your students to contribute. For submissions, contact the editors at: languaging@yahoo.com

For more information about *Languaging!* and the complete archives visit

***Languaging!*Online**

http://www.geocities.com/languaging

Photocopiable Classroom Discussion Page

Charles Schultz Philosophy

Part I

The following is the philosophy of Charles Schultz, the creator of Charlie Brown and the "Peanuts" comic strip. Don't think about the questions too hard. Just read them and see if you can answer them quickly.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But still, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. The applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Part II

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Was that easier?

Discussion Questions:

- Why were these questions easier to answer?
- How were the people you thought of in Part II different from the people in Part I?
- What lesson do these questions teach?

Remember: The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care. Pass this on to those people who have made a difference in your life.

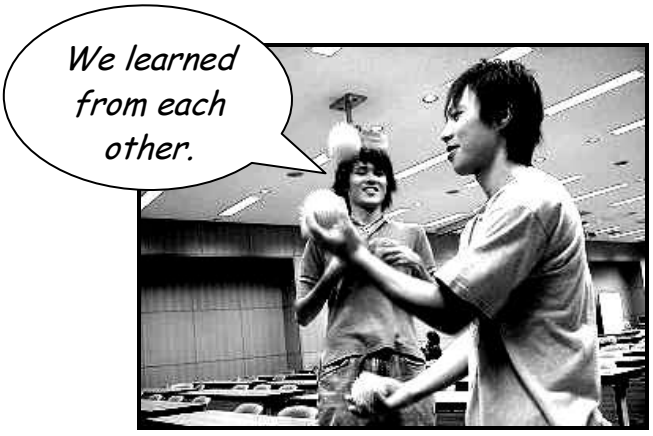
"Don't worry about the world coming to an end today.
It's already tomorrow in Australia."
(Charles Schultz)

Snapshots from the *Languaging!* Photo Album

The Symposium on
Professional & Organizational Development:
Dynamic Teacher Communities
held at Dokkyo University on November 6th, 2006:

Famous plenary speakers

Panel Discussion



Juggling

Poster Presentations

Stimulating Conversations

Good friends

If you couldn't make it this time, we hope to see you at one of the many professional events planned for Dokkyo University in the near future. Stay posted!