

# On CUE Call for papers

**Aims:** To provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of research, ideas and curriculum activities of broad interest to College and University Language Educators.

## Types of Articles Sought:

### Features

APA referenced articles with a focus on language education and related issues at tertiary level of up to 2,000 words

Criteria for feature articles

- ✱ consideration of issues likely to be perceived by college and university educators as relevant to language teaching in Japan
- ✱ well designed and well reported empirical research
- ✱ writing that situates issues within the context of relevant previous work, while refraining from quoting for the sake of quoting
- ✱ thought-provoking theoretical papers, provided clear practical implications are fore-grounded

### From the Chalkface

classroom applications, techniques and lesson plans, usually up to 1000 words.

Contact section editor: Tim Micklas, elhefe@suite.plala.or.jp

### Research Digest

summaries of research published in university in-house publications, of broad interest to college and university educators

All other queries to the editor, Michael Carroll, carroll@andrew.ac.jp

### Professional Development

1-2000 words on further education and gaining employment

### Opinion and Perspective

**(including Readers Respond and Right to Reply)** short opinion pieces, and longer, coordinated, point-counterpoint articles

Contact section editor Keith Ford, fordkeith@hotmail.com

### Reviews

reviews of books, textbooks, videos, presentations/workshops, films, etc. 600 words, 1500 words for scholarly review essays

Contact section editor: Steven Snyder, snyder@phoenix.ac.jp

## Approximate Publication Dates:

**Spring and Autumn  
(Deadlines: Feb 1, September 1)**

### Cyberpipeline

descriptions of websites that might prove useful for language teaching and professional development; length depends on how many sites are reviewed

Contact section editor: Steven Snyder, snyder@phoenix.ac.jp

### Focus on Language

a column in which the writer may ask/answer common questions about language that are of interest to teachers and learners.

Guest editors are sought for occasional special issues.

Contact the editor

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**Michael Carroll, Publications Chair/On CUE Editor:** St Andrews University, 1-1 Manabi-No, Izumi-shi, Osaka-fu, 594-1152 Tel/fax: (075) 781-3456; E-mail: <carroll@andrew.ac.jp>

**Publicity Officer: Tim Micklas,** Moriminami-Machi, Higashi-Nada-Ku, Kobe, Hyogo-Ken, 658-0011; E-mail: <elhefe@suite.plala.or.jp>

## From the Editor

This year has seen the departure of Alan Mackenzie as CUE co-ordinator, following on from several other changes in officers earlier in the year. Alan has gone on to manage the coming conference, and is currently standing for election as national program director. His time as CUE co-ordinator has seen an impressive list of achievements: a series of mini-conferences, each with published proceedings; a book publishing venture; collaborative projects with other groups within JALT; and a redesigned layout for On CUE. He leaves CUE with a strong identity as a professional forum for the discussion of issues facing university and college educators in Japan today. We'll miss his boundless energy, but wish him well in the future and look forward to the new team building on the foundations he has laid.

This issue of On CUE comes with an apology for the long delay since the last issue. A number of problems, (including the procrastination of the editor!) pushed back the publication date for the Spring issue to such an extent that the board have tentatively decided to move to two issues per year instead of three. In place of the third issue we propose to seek expressions of interest from individuals or groups interested in guest-editing an annual special themed issue of On CUE. Guest editors will be free to experiment with the content and format of special issues, which could follow the general framework of the current issue, but could also be quite different. If you have an idea for a special issue, and would like to be involved in editing it, please contact the editor (<carroll@andrew.ac.jp>). If you are new to editing, the On CUE editorial team will be happy to give every assistance.

The next issue of On CUE, volume 10 (2) is planned for the Spring break and should be in mailboxes before the start of the 2003 academic year. That issue will be the first to be peer-refereed. I believe this is a very positive step for On CUE and will benefit readers and contributors alike.

If you would like to discuss any of these issues, or if you have comments or suggestions about activities CUE might organise in the coming year, please feel free to contact any of the editors or the CUE executive board members listed on page 1. Call in at the CUE desk at Shizuoka, or send us an email. See the notice on page 6, listing the kinds of jobs for which we have vacancies at the moment. We look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Carroll

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# Turn-taking analysis of Japanese EFL learners' English

*Yang Tao*

*Kyoto University of Education*

## Introduction

Many of my Japanese students have told me about their experience, in conversation with native speakers, of not being able to get a word in. Language proficiency level may cause the problem, but more importantly, the problem also may be due to conventions in the English turn-taking system that are different from the Japanese system (White 1997, Riggensbach 1999, Iwasaki 2001). According to Iwata (1998), unlike in English, in Japanese turns are usually allocated, not taken. Her research is based on conversation between Japanese and foreigners, but what about the Japanese EFL learner's English conversation with their Japanese peers who share the same attitude toward taking turns in the conversation? By analyzing whether they are able to take turns with appropriate timing—whether they're able to realize the roles of speaker and listener, this research attempted to find some features

of Japanese EFL students' turn-taking system in English and to apply them to EFL education.

I asked 8 pairs of juniors at a Japanese university first to answer a questionnaire and then to have free conversations which I recorded on audio-tape and transcribed, using the notation by Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson (1996). With the transcribed conversations I asked the participants more detailed questions about their understanding of turn-taking.

## Features of Japanese EFL learners' turn-taking

My analysis of turn-taking focuses on three points: speaker's role, listener's role and attitude toward TRP (transition relevance places: pauses between speech) (Sacks and et al. 1974). From some detailed examples quoted from the recordings, four prominent features were observed:

1. Back channeling expressions were well used by the learners and especially by female students, but most of them were used in supporting utterances instead of taking turns to show their opinions.

In face-to-face communications, listeners don't listen to speakers' words passively; on the contrary, they have to digest those words within the context using their knowledge, and to think about what they have to answer next. During conversations, even when it is not our turn to talk, we may nod or make noises like "umhmm," "yeh" to encourage the speaker to continue.

Table 1 shows back channeling expressions and fillers used by participants in this research:

Table 1

Nasal sounds (Countless times)	Sounds and words (14 times)	Words (many times)
Ehhn (enn), ahh, ehen, hunhunhun, hunhun, yeah, yeahyeah, oh, uhun, sou(Japanese), hahaha, sousou(Japanese) wow, haha, heiheihei	Wow beautiful (1), Yeah I think so(2) Yeah ahh I think so too(1) Oh, really,(1) Yeah like kimono (1), Yeah like a seminar (1), No I don't think(1) Ohh I'd love to go there(1) Oh, Why(2) Oh yes(1) Uhun I see,(1) Okayokay I see(1) No I don't think so.(1)	okay, well, yes, soso, so, then, great, why, yees,

As we can see, the range is limited. There are only few actual words used, and most of the time they are used together with nasal sounds (oh, ah, wow and so on). However, the nasal sounds such as “uhnn,enn,hunhun” are typical Japanese back channeling expressions. So we can come to a conclusion that because of strong influence from learners’ native language-Japanese, they still use Japanese back channels unconsciously when they speak in English. Also, expressions like “what I means is, I don’t think I agree with you” are never used here, which indicates that these students tended to emphasize expressions that acknowledge others, to ignore expressions that take turns to show their opinion, and to avoid denying as much as possible.

2. The participants in the project didn’t feel compelled to avoid silences. This could be misunderstood by English speakers as a mark of unwillingness to be involved in the conversation. However, in the follow-up discussions, participants gave me the following ideas about silent time.

1) Silent time depends on the tempo of the conversation, whether turns follow each other rapidly or slowly. Therefore, if the conversation tempo is slow, the silent time between turns and topics could be longer.

2) Silent time depends on the familiarity of the topic: if both interlocutors are familiar with the topics, they don’t need time to think about it, so the silent time could be shorter.

3) Silent time depends on the leader’s personality. If the leader prefers a slow pace style, full of silence, other participants have to follow him or her.

4) Silent time can be used to find new topics: being silent at this time gives participants of the conversation a chance to think of new topics.

5) Silent time depends on the relation between the interlocutors: if they are friends it is okay to keep silence, but if they are not familiar with each other, they feel a certain pressure to continue the conversation. Otherwise, they worry about that the partner will think them unfriendly.

In this research, at TRP moments, in order to avoid the embarrassing feeling of silence, female students laughed or giggled between turns.

3. Interruption, overlapping and prediction of the speakers’ next words in a conversation rarely happens.

In some languages, overlaps are almost always considered inappropriate: speakers must wait until

another speaker is silent before beginning a turn (Riggenbach 1999). According to Uchida and Lala (1998), English speakers and listeners think it is important to make clear their own statement in the middle of the other’s utterance, while Japanese think it is important to support the other’s utterance and build a cooperative relation.

According to the responses to the questionnaires, most participants agreed that to interrupt the speaker is usually an impolite thing. They listed some situations: 1) in a situation which has more than two speakers (which is out of the range of this study); 2) when the speaker’s rank is higher than the listener (which is also not the setting of this paper); 3) if the speaker has shown that he hasn’t finished his words, for example, by raising the intonation, and the listener understands it but ignores him by interrupting (none of this occurs here); 4) if the speaker’s talk is meaningful and interesting; 5) if the topic is initiated by the speaker.

This view that interruption and overlaps are impolite was reflected in the tape recordings. In the eight pairs of conversations, there are only three places of overlapping. This contrasts with most dialects of American English, in which people want to use overlaps to avoid gaps, or silence, between turns (Reiggenbach 1999).

Perhaps one reason for this lack of overlaps is that in Japanese, the conclusion comes at the end of the sentence or utterance, so Japanese conversationalists have the custom to wait until the speaker finishes, since whether an idea is affirmative or negative is unclear until the end of the utterance.

In this research, prediction seldom happens except on two occasions in the utterances of a returnee student. Other participants never predict the speakers’ next words or hidden meaning behind the words, when they are listeners.

4. Turns were quite short and every participant preferred equal turn-taking.

Yamada’s (1992) work demonstrates that there are important differences in turn-distribution patterns between Japanese and English. The Japanese, using Japanese, take shorter turns which are distributed relatively evenly among participants regardless of who initiates a topic. By contrast, Americans, communicating in English, ‘take long monologue turns, distribute their turns unevenly, and the participant who initiates a topic characteristically takes the highest proportion of turns in that topic’.

Hiroko (1998) also suggests that speaker changes occur more frequently in Japanese data than in English data. In this research, even though the setting is two participants in each group, still it is obvious that every turn is very short and turn changes frequently occur as in example 1.

#### Example 1

S.M.

82S: so I am very looking forward to it  
because

83M: uhnn uhnn

84S: with my sister

85M: OHHH uhhh together?

86S: together

87M : uhnn

88S: I and my one older sister

89M: uhnn uhnn uhnnuhnn very good idea

90S: enn

91M: uhnn but you need to saving money

Many Japanese participants mentioned that they prefer an equal talking style, not being the leader of the discussion, not being the followers, but being able to share opinions with other members equally. This is maybe another reason to explain why turns are so short, and participants are willing to compete for turns, since there is such an unspoken rule among them. For these students, wa (harmony) is most important.

## Pedagogical Implications

### English as a Foreign Language

Most of the participants noted that it took a longer time for them to understand the partner's words in English than in Japanese. The level of English proficiency of the participants is not high enough to let them use English as freely as their native tongue, Japanese. This is another explanation of why they change turns so frequently and slowly and are not able to interrupt or predict. Therefore, turn-taking training can not be separated from foreign language learning.

### Lack of Knowledge of Compensatory Strategies

Some communication strategies are used to tackle and overcome linguistic problems encountered during interaction. One kind which are essential for

EFL learners are compensatory strategies, which allow them to repair breakdowns in conversation when difficulties arise, and keep the turns moving on to the desired end.

There are specific linguistic devices for getting a turn when one is unable to enter the normal flow of turn-taking or when the setting demands that specific conventions be followed. It is crucial to make learners recognize culture-specific situations and turn-taking strategies (such as strategies of being a good listener, modifying their attitudes toward silence and so on).

### Improvement of Textbook Design

Strategies used by English speakers for natural turn-taking have not been the focus of many teaching materials. In other words, there are few materials available at present which teach learners how to use communicative strategies when problems are encountered in the process of transmitting information. Some possible ways of doing this are found in authentic conversation in *Exploring Spoken English* (Carter and McCarthy 1997), various activities as in *Discourse Analysis in the Language Classroom* (Riggenbach 1999), and special linguistic usage listed in *Conversation Gambits* (Keller and Warner 1988).

When using authentic texts, we should note that because of the strong influence of the source language, it is also necessary to consider the students' own culture and language.

### Classroom Instruction and Curriculum Development

Turn-taking analysis is merely a small part of the activities that teachers should do in and outside of the classroom, but this analysis indicates that the communicative competence of the learners involved in this project was not high enough for them to communicate easily, even between peers. In addition to the lack of teaching material I discussed above, this may also be a result of conventional teaching and enforcement of traditional roles played by teachers and students in the classroom.

In Japan, oral communication lessons at the middle school level have been emphasized for more than 15 years, but still one can hardly say that the attempts to combine the acquisition of rules of interaction, with the acquisition of linguistic formulae have been satisfactory (Izumi 1995).

If the teachers' style is still a traditional way of teaching, no matter what kind of name is given to English lessons, the teaching result is the same. In fact, the traditional classroom has very ordered turn-taking under the control of the teacher, and pupils rarely speak out of turn (McCarthy 1991). Partly due to the dominance of teachers, students are accustomed to the question-answer way of speaking English. When they interact with native speakers or even with their peers, this results in the conversation being limited to simply answering questions and student turns are very short. Thus, as teachers, one thing we can do is to encourage students to give additional information beyond simple answers, and take longer turns in and outside the classroom. CFPs (conversation flow plans) proposed by Cullen and Morris (2002) are one way to help students become involved in conversations more easily and actively.

Japanese culture-based reluctance to interrupt and take a turn when a pause occurs in conversations especially with people of higher status means it is not necessary to consider filling silence to hold a turn. That's why English pause and silence treatment may need to be overtly identified in the classroom. Learners should be encouraged to use mechanisms that fill gaps in conversation when performing tasks in pair/group work or when talking directly to the teacher.

#### More Listening and Prosodic Training Needed

In this research, most of the participants were poor at using raised tones to show their partners that they hadn't finished their turns. This may be partly because Japanese is a quite flat language, without many up and down changes of intonation. Therefore, more classroom use of audio/video recordings of native English speakers engaging in conversation, concocted or authentic, may increase learners awareness of the differences in intonation and pitch usage between English and Japanese. By increased awareness learners may eventually incorporate English usage of intonation and pitch more effectively into their own speech in pair/group work inside the classroom and conversations outside the classroom.

Raising Students' Awareness of the Target Language

Some participants in this research told me in their interview that they realized something important for their oral English. Some of them even asked for suggestions on how to improve their turn-taking skill in English conversation, and others suggested they would like to have a list of gambits and routines as references for future self-study. So from this aspect, by being involved in this kind of academic research, learners can become aware of a more suitable way to study foreign languages autonomously.

Turn-taking is one of the most important parts of a conversation. To the degree to which our students are able to control turns well, they will be able to communicate with others more easily and fluently.

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*If you'd like to respond to this article, or to any other article in On CUE, address your comments to Keith Ford, Opinion and Perspectives section editor, at <fordkeith@hotmail.com*

## Research Bulletin

*Have you written for your in-house research bulletin?*

*Do you know of in-house research papers that might interest On CUE readers?*

*Please submit brief summaries of current in-house publications and abstracts of research reports to the editor: Michael Carroll <carroll@andrew.ac.jp>*

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Do you want to be more involved with CUE ?

CUE is the biggest SIG in JALT, with around 300 members. We produce the journal, On CUE, now refereed, twice a year, as well as occasional books, such as the recent 'Projects from the University Classroom', edited by Keith Ford and Eamon McCafferty. In addition CUE has hosted three mini-conferences in the last three years. These activities only happen because of the work of CUE members who volunteer their time and skills. The more people who volunteer, the more effective we can be in providing these services to members.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact any of the members of the executive board, listed on the front page of On CUE, or come to the CUEdesk at the JALT conference in Shizuoka.

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# Conversation strategies in a content-based classroom

*Sylvan Payne  
and Cindy J. Lahar  
Faculty of Comparative  
Culture, Miyazaki  
International College*

Miyazaki International College (MIC) is a four-year liberal arts college in southern Kyushu, Japan where all classroom instruction is in English using content-based instruction methods. Content Based Instruction (CBI), according to Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989, p. 2), is: "concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second-language skills." At MIC, first and second-year students spend eighteen hours a week in CBI classrooms, where each course is taught by a partnership between a language teacher and a content teacher. In a team-taught content-based classroom, the objective is to enhance all of the language skill areas while teaching the content of the course (see Stewart, 1996 for a more thorough discussion of content and language integration at MIC). Balance in all language skills is desired, but it often boils down to this: the students get to do a lot of *listening* practice while the teachers talk at them. They get to practice *reading* from classroom texts and they get ample *writing* practice in summaries or research papers or journals. *Speaking* tends to take a back seat. For example, in many classroom activities in our institution we break students into small groups and give them a problem. In our experience they usually solve the problem by first discussing it in Japanese, then work together to translate the solution into English. Speaking in English tends to be in very short utterances, or in prepared, rehearsed presentations. Teachers monitor groups and urge students to try to speak English more, but the default setting of small-group or pairwork seems to involve discussing

things mostly in Japanese. The conundrum is apparent—the students express a desire to be better English speakers, but lack the confidence or skills to put in the practice that will help them improve.

Second year students at MIC spend their fall semester abroad studying in an English-speaking country. In preparation, much of our second year spring semester curriculum is focused on preparing the students (both language and culture-wise) for the study-abroad experience. We know that in the past many students were going abroad with very weak speaking skills. They had the vocabulary and the grammar, but didn't seem to know how to have a real thirty-second conversation. We suggest that this was at least in part because they didn't have a basic repertoire of conversation strategies.

The whole notion of teaching conversation strategies springs out of the field of discourse analysis, the study of language in use. McCarthy (1991, p. 1) writes, "[Discourse Analysis] is now forming a backdrop to research in Applied Linguistics, and second language learning and teaching in particular." As we see the structure of conversation, we can begin to isolate and teach the common strategies used in natural speech to take part in a real conversation. In a CBI setting, it is perhaps even more necessary to learn the conversational gambits needed to discuss complex or abstract issues without sounding stilted and false. Burton (2000) suggests that as we begin to analyze the structure of classroom talk, the talk itself becomes classroom input. This idea was intriguing to us and we wanted our students to gain communicative competence prior to setting out abroad. Thus we aimed to further our students' spoken fluency and comprehension of English conversations by providing them with conversation strategies and the opportunity to practice them in our class.

One group of conversation strategies comprises common lexical chunks used for managing conversations. These include phrases useful for opening or closing a conversation, as well as phrases for changing the subject, requesting more information or clarification, asking for time to think, expressing agreement or understanding or concurrence, dismissing a fruitless conversational thread, and so on. "I know what you mean." "What's new?" "Hang on a sec—it's on the tip of my tongue..." "Oh, never mind." "Sounds great!" Other examples include reductions such as "Whaddayacallit?" and

maintenance strategies such as “Uh-huh” and “Hmmm.” Without these useful, automatic phrases in a person’s repertoire, conversation seems clunky and dull. With them, conversation takes on life.

The conversation classroom text, *Nice Talking With You* (Kenny & Woo, 2000) is designed for teaching large groups of Japanese college students in once-a-week, fifty-minute classes. It offers one way of conducting a conversation class with forty students in a classroom where all the desks are screwed down in rows. MIC’s classes are smaller and the desks move, but we decided to use the text as a supplement for our two team-taught sections of a class entitled *Issues in Personal Development* (20 students were in each section). *Nice Talking With You* contains a number of conversation strategies introduced in ten units. These were adaptable to our purpose of getting students accustomed to talking about themselves and about personal development, comfortably and in English.

We introduced the conversation strategies through Kenny and Woo’s text. The students practiced them using the text’s high-interest, low-threat topics—part-time jobs, sports, dating, family, and so on. The students learned to prepare for a conversation by jotting down the things they wanted to say, to consider conversation strategies they wanted to practice and to note questions they wanted to ask. Quickly the students learned the pattern for rehearsal and practice. In Kenny and Woo’s scheme, students are divided into groups of four. Each student talks once to every other student in the group about the same topic, in a series of three short, timed conversations. Teacher talk is minimal: “*Okay, everybody ready? Conversation one partner... Topic: sports... three minutes... Go!*” And the students would actually *bolt* into conversation like racehorses coming out of the gate. At three minutes the stopwatch beeper would go off. The students then would take one minute to reflect, make some notes and prepare for conversation number two. As they developed a repertoire of strategies, their fluency, confidence and motivation to speak all increased. Furthermore, our students gained awareness that this was *exactly* what they needed. One student noted the importance of developing her conversation skills for achieving her goals on study abroad. She wrote in her journal “I want to make friends on study abroad.

If I don’t practice conversation, I can’t make friends.”

Concurrent with the conversation work, our students were learning the content of the course through readings, lectures, videos, and various classroom activities. Thus we often used the day’s content as the topic for additional conversation practice. In one case, students had just completed an exercise in which they each wrote a list of ten groups they had membership in and which defined their identities. They had ranked them according to personal significance. In the timed conversations, we overheard a lot of, “*Oh, really? Me too!*” “*I know what you mean.*” “*I’m the same way.*” “*I didn’t know that about you.*” These were strategies they had just learned to express surprise or agreement.

Our infusion of conversation work aimed to create a class atmosphere where speaking was enjoyable instead of a required and unavoidable chore. Our students began to talk longer and longer in timed conversations. If we gave them, say, three minutes to discuss a topic and it was not enough time, many would all demand another minute or two for the next conversation. Sometimes, deep in conversation, they would simply ignore the stopwatch beeper when time was up; we found ourselves going around waving our arms to get them to stop speaking English so we could go on to the next thing. Other times we would simply turn off the stopwatch and let them go as long as they wanted. Sometimes ten or twelve minutes would go by and no one seemed to notice that the clock hadn’t beeped yet. They were too involved in conversation.

This behavior generalized to all aspects of classroom activities. Much to our delight, speaking English became the norm for pairwork and small group discussions in both sections of the course. Even when having discussions in larger groups, the students elected to do this in English. This was a new pattern for us to see -- we had successfully created an atmosphere where speaking in English was safe and comfortable, and most importantly, where English conversation was the norm. This is exactly the aim of MIC - and neither of the authors had seen this accomplished in any of the other classes they had taught here.

Student feedback was encouragingly positive. Towards the end of the semester we asked the

students to write comments in their journals. Comments such as “I couldn’t speak much as a first year student - I have more confidence now” and “I could get confidence for conversation” supported our observation that this work served to increase their confidence when speaking in English. Students also wrote about the benefits of increased conversation skills, and a belief that they could now speak more fluently. These results are evident in such comments as “Conversation helps me relate to people. It helps me speak English naturally and smoothly”, “now I became a person who...speaks...spontaneous[ly]” and “It is very useful for me because I didn’t know how to start and finish conversations. I also learned how to give compliments.” We were also pleased to read comments such as “sometimes I use [these strategies] not in class, but in daily life” demonstrating that the exercises from class generalized to situations outside of the classroom.

Now, one year has passed since we were in the classroom with these students. They have returned from their time abroad. We now have the opportunity to listen to them speak English and it is apparent that they have internalized these conversation strategies and have gained even more confidence in speaking. They say that knowing these phrases helped them to engage others in conversation while abroad, and they were aware of how prevalent these strategies are in everyday speech. Some even learned to listen for new conversation strategies, taking note of the special phrases native speakers used in conversation and adopted them into their own repertoire. In an attempt to quantify these observations, we emailed the 40 students from those two classes a short survey about the conversation strategies we practiced the year before. All of the respondents claimed that they used at least some of the speaking strategies during their study abroad. Comments clearly supported those we read in their journals last term. For example, one student said that the conversational strategies “made me more comfortable when I tried to speak with another student on study abroad” and another said “I used the words from *Nice Talking with You* when I met people on study abroad, so I think it’s useful to speak more English-like and to continue conversations”.

We are certainly not the first to extol the teaching of natural communicative strategies (see for example,

Burke, 1998; Kaye & Matson, 2000; Olsen, 2002) or the use of timed conversations (see for example, Deacon, 2001; Kenny & Woo, 2000) when teaching English to Japanese students. Speaking actually can, and should, create a second language learning environment that offers opportunities to use natural strategies. At the end of that term last year, one student wrote “I couldn’t respond to teachers when I met them in the corridor, but I can talk to teachers now and I can respond naturally.” This alone makes us feel that our efforts were worthwhile. We are further convinced of success when we think about the positive learning environment that developed independently in those two classes, and when we consider the appreciative feedback from students while learning the strategies as well as one year later. Given this, we have become advocates for teaching conversational strategies that allow for practice of natural speech to enhance confidence, comfort, and ease of communicating naturally in English.

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*As the number of 18-year-olds has been rapidly decreasing, there is some concern about the negative effects - particularly the lowering of standards - as universities are forced to accept a much greater percentage of applicants, and in some cases all applicants. In this issue's OP column, James Porcaro looks at the developing phenomenon of 'free pass' universities and suggests that it can be viewed in a positive light.*

## 'Free pass' universities: a new opportunity for achievement?

*James W. Porcaro  
Toyama University of  
International Studies*

### 'Free Pass' universities

In 2000, Kawai Juku, a prominent preparatory school, listed nearly 200 private universities in Japan - more than 40% of the total number - as 'free pass' institutions ("Ukereba ukaru F ranku shidai", 2000). These universities now accept virtually all students who apply, regardless of whether a formal test and/or interview must be taken for admission. As is well known, the population of 18-year-olds in Japan has

been on the decline. It peaked at 2.05 million in 1992 and by 2000 had dropped by 25% to 1.5 million. It will continue to drop further for at least several more years to about 1.2 million - a total drop of nearly 40% from its highest level (see "Wanted: College Students"; "New Schools For Japan"; *The Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac* 2002, p. 246). In such an environment, where nearly all incoming students enter university directly after graduation from high school, it is a matter of survival for these universities to enact a 'free pass' policy. This situation leads us to consider the question: What is to be done for the many students now entering these institutions who, even more so than those of previous years, lack the academic accomplishment, interest, and discipline required for academic achievement at university level?

### Responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities

First, it needs emphasizing that 'free pass' universities should not abandon their responsibility to provide all students with the best possible education that they can. It is their moral and social obligation as educational institutions to assess, understand, and effectively meet the needs of their students. They must realize that now it is a matter of their very survival to fulfill this obligation. It is difficult enough for such universities to draw students from high schools where advisors are already very reluctant or unwilling to direct students to schools without any standards of admission. For any of these universities to get the reputation that there is not only a 'free pass' to entrance but also a 'free exit' to graduation - that is, every student graduates regardless of even lower academic performance than previously accepted - would lead to their certain demise. Universities must think of themselves as responsible business enterprises that are personally accountable to students and their families as paying customers. They may have to follow a 'free pass' policy of admission, but in a highly competitive education marketplace they must not get themselves a reputation as an institution that takes its students' money but gives little or no educational value for that expenditure. While this is a period of crisis in Japanese university education, at the same time it is a precious opportunity for 'free pass' universities to position themselves favorably within a market that,

in one sense, has actually expanded. By maintaining academic integrity with a high profile, not only will some more accomplished students still be attracted to the university and be able to thrive there, but also parents, high school teachers, and students themselves will come to recognize the institution as a place where students who have achieved less than they are capable of at secondary level can maximize their learning potential and get the best education available to them. The university would be seen to offer a kind of second chance to such students to prepare themselves for finding good employment and living full lives as productive members of society. There are, in fact, still some opportunities for universities to maintain their levels of enrollment from the market of graduating high school students. In 2000, only 31.5% of female students, compared with 47.5% of male students, advanced to four-year universities. At the same time, the percentage of secondary female graduates advancing to junior colleges dropped to 17.2% from a peak of 24.6% in 1995 (The Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac 2002, p. 248). The possibility of increasing enrollment from this market can be achieved, but only with a deliberate and determined effort by the entire faculty of the university, the administrative staff, and especially recruitment and job placement personnel.

## Changing instructional circumstances

Teachers must teach, not pretend to teach. They must ensure that students are learning, not pretending to learn. Syllabuses and styles of teaching need to be revised and renewed to appropriately fit the needs of the many new students now able to enter university on a 'free pass'. Some professors may need to develop innovative instructional approaches and develop different classroom practices. Indeed, more than ever we all need to be adept and masterful in our teaching and effect the kind of classroom environment and educational experience for our students that leads to optimum academic and personal accomplishment. Leadership at the highest levels among the university authorities is critical in all efforts to maintain academic integrity while coping with adjustments to meet the needs of the changing student body. This is the reality of survival at now hundreds of colleges and universities in Japan. The

education market has changed and so must the approach of enterprises operating in that market.

As for English language study, not only is the overall level of proficiency of many of the new students relatively low, but also many display little motivation to continue studying and learning English, even in an age when its value as the international language of communication becomes greater and greater. This is the consequence, I believe, of the stultifying manner of instruction received in their six years of junior high school and high school, even with the widespread presence of AETs. It seems that often the attitude of students stems from a fear of humiliation that is the result of inadequate performance in an environment which intrinsically affords little chance for success. On top of this is the continuing challenge of teaching students at university who are required to study English for no specific purpose. For almost all students the use of communicative English is limited to the classroom. Furthermore, in fact, students generally have very little chance of being employed after graduation in positions that involve the use of English, if indeed they can find any full-time employment at all.

## Student discipline

Another important consideration is the question of student discipline. Many of the students entering universities on a 'free pass' bring the baggage of poor and inappropriate academic and personal behavior. This includes: coming to classes late or not at all; not bringing required books and papers or even notebooks, pens and pencils; not doing homework; lazing about and having private conversations in class, usually in the rearmost of the room; and exhibiting manners that are less than expected of mature and courteous young people. Ironically, the much maligned university entrance examination system seems to have served to impart to students a respect for effort, self-discipline, and individual responsibility. Now, as more and more students do not have to go through this rigorous system to enter a university, there seems to be a widespread breakdown of this ethic. Once again, the point must be emphasized that to whatever extent this may be true among students at other universities, those schools that are already burdened with the negative label of 'free pass' absolutely cannot bear additional public recognition of such an environment on their campuses and expect to survive. I believe

that teachers and administrators particularly in the changing environment at 'free pass' universities must instill in students a positive self-discipline that directs both their academic and personal behavior. Some professors who have neither attempted to do this nor even given it any concern at all, and who are unable to manage their classrooms for effective instruction, now ignore this subject at the peril of the university and the very perpetuation of their positions. Though it may sometimes take a great effort to establish initially, with practice and skill it can be effected quite effortlessly and indeed with cooperation and appreciation from the students themselves.

### Leading role for English teachers

For all subjects, then, including English, fundamental instructional elements must be addressed to meet the needs of more and more students at 'free pass' universities and to facilitate academic and personal achievement. And English language teachers may often be well placed as leaders in these renewal efforts. They have always had to work with low proficiency students, those taking English for no obvious reason and those with negative attitudes toward learning English. In particular, their student-centered, interactive, and communicative ways of instruction require the conduct of classes in a well-managed, positive learning environment. In addition, English language teachers are accustomed to formulating assessment of students' work more broadly, and on many levels besides just test results. These include demonstrated proficiency and progress in classroom tasks, activities and homework, effort, attitude, ingenuity, taking risks, learning from mistakes, and working well with classmates. Teachers need to be available and visible on the campus in order to promote a caring, supportive, and active learning environment, especially for weaker students now able to enter the university on a 'free pass'. With the engagement with students in and out of class that is an inherent part of foreign language instruction, once again English language teachers may be well placed to serve as models at the university. It is imperative, then, that school administrations maintain or expand their full-time faculty, who are able to take on this responsibility whereas part-time teachers are not. Particularly in the environment of a 'free pass'

university, I believe that English language instruction needs to be based on a humanistic and communicative paradigm where students have meaningful opportunities to formulate and express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings about their own life experiences and about the society in which they live. The aim is first to enhance their self-awareness and their awareness of Japanese society and culture, and from there to widen and deepen their understanding of other peoples and cultures and issues on a global scale. Great care and thoroughness must be taken to make lessons and materials appropriate for the level of language proficiency and capabilities of students. The instrumental use of English is integral to the growth and development of especially the many new learners at 'free pass' universities as mature, thoughtful, responsible young men and women, well prepared to take their places in society, the workplace, and institutions of higher education in Japan or abroad.

### Conclusion

There should be no shame in the name 'free pass'. For universities that must operate with such a policy of admissions, there are opportunities open, challenges to be met, and achievements to be had by all students who enroll and all associated with the institution. I am truly confident that 'free pass' universities can not only survive but thrive, as long as their faculties and the administrative authorities boldly address these new circumstances, recognize their responsibilities, and indeed keep in mind their own future welfare.

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# Introducing haiku to EFL composers

*David McMurray*  
*Intercultural Studies Faculty*  
*The International University*  
*of Kagoshima*

There is a line that can be drawn somewhere between the structured language classroom where students chant “This is a pen” in chorus and the classroom of chaos where the teacher simply says, “Let’s speak English.” That line demarcates the edge of complexity where EFL language development lies. In this same vein, in the exacting structure of traditional Japanese haiku and the completely free-style form often favored by native speakers of English in North America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand there lies an opportunity for EFL composers to produce more creative forms of haiku in English. EFL Students have the cultural understanding and the vocabulary base, but they often lack the technique to compose haiku of quality. This technique encourages EFL students to produce creative works of poetry in English that are even of interest to readers well outside the language classroom.

## Students

First and second year university students majoring in intercultural studies, the humanities or English are very receptive to this technique, as are students in other majors in oral communication and writing classes.

## Materials

A whiteboard is sufficient, but the technique is enhanced with props that bring nature into the classroom such as seasonal foodstuffs, flowers, and sports equipment. Video and Internet connection to haiku web pages such as <<http://www.asahi.com/english/haiku>> enhances the activity tremendously.

## Time Required

This can be taught as a 30-minute “chunk” in a lesson, or extended to a full 90-minute class. I teach a 14-week course entitled International Haiku, and similar Haiku in English classes are offered by Tezukayama University.

## Rationale

The study of haiku begins by the grouping of seasonal word vocabulary. Research has shown that students are able to better reproduce vocabulary that has been learned by topic rather than alphabetically using dictionaries. University level students are still hard-pressed to properly pronounce and stress words and phrases or understand the use of syllables. Haiku emphasizes meaning through syllable count, rhythm and stress. When students realize that haiku, an important part of Japanese culture, is quite popular among students their own age in over 44 countries, their motivation increases.

## Procedure

I ask students to follow my instructions, which I demonstrate on a white board and ask them to reproduce on a blank page. First, draw two lines creating four quadrants. Ask for the names of the four seasons and write one in each quadrant. Elicit words that go with each season by having students look out the classroom window. They can gather weather words or if a sports field is nearby the teacher can ask in what season the following sports are played: basketball, tennis, swimming, American football, skiing, etc. If the technique is to aid in the teaching of a chapter from a textbook the students are currently studying ask them to find seasonal references from the textbook (ie. a textbook chapter on “Going to a restaurant” or “Thanksgiving in America” could lead to students write words such as pumpkin, apple pie, duck, goose, turkey into the quadrant for autumn). Make sure the students have compiled a minimum of 10 words in their seasonal index. I ask my students to expand it to 1,000 organized words over a 14-week course.

Second, write three or four haiku on the white board. (Haiku in English written by EFL speakers and by university students in Japan and other countries can be found in every Friday issue of The International Herald Tribune - Asahi Shimbun, and

once a month in the Mainichi Shimbun. Those newspapers also have websites <http://www.asahi.com/english/haiku> and <http://www.mainichi.com>.)

Third, use the haiku examples as a cloze exercise, erase key words and read the haiku to the students, asking them to fill in the blanks.

Fourth, start to analyse the haiku written in English. They are very short, but rich in underlying meaning as well as form. Point out the use of ellipsis, juxtaposition and alliteration. Ask students to count the number of syllables. They will soon find themselves repeating the words several times as they dig deeper and deeper into the haiku. The students have all been introduced to haiku written in Japanese and can draw upon their own cultural knowledge.

Fifth, the technique can be expanded to a full 90-minute class by asking the students to select their favorite season and write a haiku about it using one of the season words they wrote in step one. Don't have the students sign their work immediately. Collect the haiku after about 10 minutes of reflection. Write some of them on the whiteboard for immediate discussion. There is a certain magic that occurs in a classroom when one sees what they have written put up on the whiteboard, then sees what other students think of the words. If the technique is to be expanded to two or more classes, I advise typing one haiku from every student (I have taught up to 60 students in this fashion) for the next class, where that handout can be given, and start off from the following step 6 using the handout instead of the white board.

Sixth, ask students to choose one haiku from among those on the white board that they like and to draw a picture of it on a page at their desk. Have a few students reproduce the image they drew on paper onto the whiteboard. Ask them to explain the picture and relate it to the words an anonymous student had written. Every poet wants to know what others interpret from their words. Students in Japan, however, tend to shy away from taking the risk of being identified with a poorly written haiku and also don't enjoy critiquing peers. Therefore it is more effective to not write names beside the haiku on the whiteboard. Students need not fear their names will be associated to any mistakes that might be revealed. Instead, in this class only the top one or two haikuists whose compositions are favored by the class are

revealed. After a few rounds of asking students to select, draw and explain their favorite haiku it quickly becomes apparent which haiku the class favors. The more popular haiku will be selected two, three or more times, but the drawing and commentary may differ. The creative person can then be asked to stand or take a bow.

Seventh, ask the students to submit their reworked haiku and send it on a postcard to the newspaper for possible publishing and further critique by readers all around the world. The Asahi Shimbun accepts haiku at the following address:

Asahi Haikuist Network  
5-3-2 Tsukiji, Chuo-ku  
Tokyo, 104-8011.

## Reflections

It is surprising to see just how motivated students become when they see how a few nouns and verbs can be assembled into a poem of great meaning. Haiku has been composed for over 300 years in Japanese. It was first translated into French and Portuguese over 100 years ago. For only the past 50 years or so, haiku have been translated and composed in English. During the last decade the number of haiku written in English has bloomed. There are haiku societies in 44 countries and an estimated 1.5 million writers. Interestingly, one million are EFL composers of haiku. It is an area where our EFL students can really find an opportunity to reveal their feelings through writing about the senses to peoples of other countries who are truly interested in this form of poetry.

## Variations

The writing of haiku is often employed as a brainstorming session for the writing of paragraphs or longer essays. Popular haiku originally composed in Japanese can be translated into English. If you and your class become very interested in composing haiku you could try introducing this technique to other teachers and hosting an inter-class competition. Teachers at Sapporo International University host an annual haiku competition during their cultural festival that involves students from universities in 3 countries.

## Further References

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## Exhibits

Translated 17 syllable haiku from Japanese Master Masaoka Shiki into 11 syllables of English.

*Mihotoke ni shiri mukeoreba  
tsuki suzushi  
From Buddha  
I'  
ve turned my back  
the cool moon*

Example of a haiku composed by a first year student (with permission of author Fukumoto Taishi)

*Evening wind  
driving past beach wind*

御仏に尻向けおれば月涼し。

*If you have a classroom idea that's worked, or one that didn't work but from which you learned something about teaching, why not write it up for 'From the Chalkface'?*

*Send submissions to the new 'From the Chalkface' section editor, Tim Micklas at <elhefe@suite.plala.or.jp>*

# Combining versions

*Ian Munby*  
*British Club English School*

This activity was described by Penny Urr in her book "Discussions that work". Students sit opposite each other in pairs or groups of three and try to find discrepancies between their different versions of the same text without actually seeing any but their own. The task is to choose which parts of which version are correct or most appropriate in terms of meaning, style, and internal consistency and to write out the best version.

## Materials

Any short text or dialogue can be chosen to suit the interests and level of English of the students and can be topic-based or selected to review grammatical or lexical items for example.

## Time Required

The teacher can control this through text length but 30-40 minutes is ideal.

## Rationale

Apart from the advantages allowed by the teacher's freedom to select type, length and level of text, this task requires students to work independently towards a clear goal. This is ideal in a large class situation and leaves the teacher free to monitor the activity and provide individual help where necessary. Not only must the task be completed by word of mouth but it also involves practice of all the four skills.

## Procedure

1. Find a suitable text on the internet, type one out from another source, or create one of your own.
2. Produce two or three similar texts with one or two variations per line and make class copies
3. In class, write up the first lines of each different text on the board for demonstration (see exhibit)

and invite comment on which part of each version is correct.

4. Preteach difficult lexical items.
5. Invite students to sit in pairs or groups of three and distribute copies of A and B (C) versions of the text and ask them not to look at each others text until the end of the activity.
6. Ask them to identify the remaining discrepancies, discuss and write out the correct, combined version, and call the teacher when they feel they have finished.
7. Read out the correct version to the class and/or distribute copies of the correct version.

## Assessment

In stage 7 above it is best for the teacher to read out the text slowly stopping before each difference and to ask the students to shout out the correct version. In this way problems can be identified and discussed.

## Reflections

In college classes in Japan, students tend to revert to L1 (Japanese) when discussing which is the correct version. I tolerate this and even feel it is a good thing because this activity tests not only their English but also tests, and respects, their powers of logic and knowledge of the world. At least they have to communicate their versions of the text by speaking and listening in English, an event which often fails to occur at all in standard "discuss with your partner or group" type activities.

## Variations

Dialogues from movies can also be used in the same way. A scene from a movie can be shown first without sound and then shown with sound later to check the combined versions. The following is an example from the Titanic in a scene where Jack first meets Rose, who is contemplating throwing herself into the Atlantic.

### VERSION A

JACK Don't do it!

ROSE Stay back! Don't go any closer!

JACK Just take my hand! I'll push you back over

ROSE Yes! Stay where you are. I mean it. I won't let go.

## VERSION B

JACK Let's do it!

ROSE Come back! Don't come any closer!

JACK Just take my finger! I'll pull you back over

ROSE No! Stay where I am. I don't mean it. I'll let go.

## Reference

Urr, P. 1981. *Discussions that Work*. Cambridge University Press.

## Exhibits

## CORRECT VERSION

Utada Hikaru

Young singer/songwriter Utada Hikaru is the biggest new name in Japanese music. Born in New York in 1983, her mother is the famous enka singer Fuji Keiko. Hikaru spent a lot of her childhood in recording studios and started writing song lyrics in English when she was only 10. At that time, she liked rock bands such as Bon Jovi and Queen but she later became a fan of R&B music. By the time she was 12 she had already released 3 singles in the US, where she uses the name 'Cubic U'. She released her first English album in Japan, *Precious*, under this name in January 1998. The record was quite popular but to re-enter the Japanese pop music market, it was decided that she would use her real name.

The first single 'Automatic' was a No.1 hit, as was the second 'Movin' On Without You', which was also used in a Nissan TV commercial. As expected, her debut Japanese album 'First Love' went straight to No.1 in the charts. But more than that, it became the most popular debut album ever in Japan, selling more than 8 million copies.

This success was quickly followed up when her next single was used as the theme song for a popular TV drama series and she made a TV commercial for Sony. She said: "I want to continue to make my own music. And I want to continue to surprise people with my music."

## STUDENT A

Utada Hikaru

Young singer/songwriter Utada Hikaru is the biggest new name in Japanese music. Born in Tokyo in 1983, her mother is the famous jazz singer Fuji Keiko. Hikaru spent a lot of her childhood in film studios and started writing song lyrics in English when she was only 7. At that time, she liked rock bands such as Bon Jovi and Queen but she later became a fan of R&B music. By the time she was 9 she had already released 23 singles in the US, where she uses the name 'Cubic U'. She released her first English album in Japan, *Precious*, under this name in January 1998. The record was quite popular but to re-enter the Japanese pop music market, it was decided that she would use her first name.

The first single 'Automatic' was a No.1 hit, as was the second 'Movin' On Without You', which was also used in a Nissan TV commercial. Surprisingly, her debut Japanese album 'First Love' went straight to No.1 in the charts. But more than that, it became the most popular debut album ever in the world, selling more than 8 million copies.

This success was quickly followed up when her next single was used as the theme song for a popular TV drama series and she made a TV commercial for Sony. She said: "I want to continue to copy other people's music. And I want to continue to surprise people with my music."

## STUDENT B

Utada Hikaru

Young singer/songwriter Utada Hikaru is the biggest new name in Japanese music. Born in New York in 1973, her mother is the famous enka singer Fuji Keiko. Hikaru spent a lot of her childhood in recording studios and started writing song lyrics in English when she was only 10. At that time, she liked punk bands such as Bon Jovi and Queen but she later became a fan of hard rock music. By the time she was 12 she had already released 3 singles in the US, where she uses her mother's name. She released her first English album in Europe, *Precious*, under this name in January 1988. The record was quite popular but to re-enter the Japanese pop music market, it was decided that she would use her real name.

The first single 'Automatic' was a No.1 hit, as was the second 'Movin' On Without You', which was also used in a Nissan radio commercial. As expected, her debut Japanese film 'First Love' went straight to No.13 in the charts. But more than that, it became the most popular debut album ever in Japan, selling more than 28 million copies.

This success was quickly followed up when her next single was used as the theme song for a popular TV drama series and she made a movie for Sony. She said: "I want to continue to make my own music. And I want to continue to make people cry with my music."

*It's one of those perennial issues in L2 educational circles: should the L1 be used in the classroom, and if so, when and how much?*

*In Vol 9(3) of On Cue, using Peter Burden's (2000) questionnaire, Brian Cullen and John Morris ('A Case for the Use of Japanese in College English Classes') offered student support for limited use of Japanese in the classroom by instructors. They concluded that:*

- 1) Teachers should have some knowledge of Japanese language and culture.
- 2) Classes should...be divided by level to take account of the different preferences between low-level and high-level learners.
- 3) The teacher should use Japanese more in lower-level classes than higher-level ones.
- 4) Japanese should be spoken only after English has been used, and primarily to instill confidence in students that they have understood what the teacher said.
- 5) Japanese should be usually only used in the five areas of explaining new words, talking about tests, explaining differences between English and Japanese grammar, and relaxing the students. Even this usage should be kept as short as possible. (p.9)

*In this issue, there are three varied responses to Cullen and Morris: Alec McAulay explains why he welcomes any move toward greater awareness and use of the Japanese language by English language instructors, both in the classroom and in and around the institutions where they work; Stephen Ryan underlines the importance of taking every opportunity to engage students in meaningful L2 communication; Dexter da Silva questions the validity of the authors' method of research and the conclusions that they draw. Finally, Brian Cullen replies to some of these points.*

## The paradox of enforced monolingualism for incipient bilinguals

Alec McAulay  
Yokohama National  
University

Reading Cullen and Morris's contribution to the debate on Japanese use in the classroom, I was reminded of an incident I witnessed five years ago on the campus of a women's university in Chugoku. A student nervously approached her North American English teacher in the corridor and asked, "Nihongo de ii desu ka?" The teacher cheerfully but forcefully replied, "No, come on, try to speak English." Clearly flustered, the student began, "I absent your class." The teacher immediately corrected her, "I was absent from your class." After a little to and fro, and much confusion, the student finally managed to come back with, "I was absent your class. Mother dead." Thankfully, the error correction ended there.

This scene dispelled any lingering doubts I may have had about the value of using Japanese with my students. It has always seemed strange to me that the training of incipient bilinguals should be carried out through enforced monolingualism. We know that bilinguals employ code-switching for a number of reasons, including easing tension, emphasis, maintaining and shifting social identity and manipulating social distance. These are skills that the incipient bilinguals in our classrooms need to acquire and practice.

As Cullen and Morris indicate, the thinking on the use of Japanese in the classroom has progressed in a satisfying manner. The question is no longer "Should we use Japanese?", but "How should we use Japanese?" Cullen and Morris focus mainly on the classroom, but more consideration needs to be

given to language choice issues in the institution as a whole. The vast majority of people would agree that a Japanese professor going to teach in Edinburgh for a year should know English, so why is it valid to debate whether foreign teachers in Japan should know Japanese? During thirteen years in Japan I have taught in seven different universities. In the early days of my career, the hiring policy of Japanese employers favoured English teachers who knew no Japanese (in the belief that students would be forced to communicate in English). These days, the trend is towards hiring English teachers who can function day-to-day in Japanese. I suspect that this change has been brought about by frustrated office staff fed up with having to try and explain every kanji-thick memo to the monoglot *sensei*.

The suggestions Cullen and Morris provide in their conclusion for Japanese classroom use are sensible guidelines. However, at a time when we are concerned with fostering learner autonomy and trying to remove the wall between classroom practice and real-world experience, we need to sensitise learners to the opportunities and responsibilities involved in language choice. For the foreign instructor here in Japan, one step in that direction would be displaying bilingual competence in the classroom, on campus and in the community at large.

## Maximising L2 communication: the case for caution in the use of L1 in the classroom

*Stephen Ryan  
Seitoku University*

As I read the article by Cullen and Morris arguing the case for more use of Japanese in college classes,

I found my neck beginning to ache through constant nodding in agreement. However, a few days later I then realised that I actually disagreed with almost everything I had previously agreed with. I can think of only two possible explanations for this: either I am entering the early stages of schizophrenic dementia, or we are dealing with an issue of fundamental concern to language teachers in Japan; an issue that forces us to reflect not merely on what we do in the classroom, but on who we are within our own institutions and in society as a whole. Though I highly suspect the former, I would like readers to humour me by considering the latter possibility.

There are two general areas where I would like to take issue with Cullen and Morris. The first is in their suggestion that language teachers should also be language learners. The second is the much more serious question of how we communicate with our students, and how we maximise the opportunities for students to engage meaningfully in the L2.

Why do so many people make the connection between teaching one language and learning another? Cullen and Morris go as far as to claim that there is a 'paradox' in a teacher of English not having ability in other foreign languages. I have never been wholly convinced by this argument. I do not expect a police officer to be a regular victim of crime, nor would I wish my doctor to suffer frequent bouts of serious illness. In an ideal world of classrooms teeming with highly motivated, eager language learners there may indeed be a great deal of truth in the claim that teachers who have also experienced L2 language learning have a greater empathy with their students and an awareness of affective barriers. However, this is far from the reality of many college educators in Japan. In any walk of life there is a natural tendency for those with a keen interest or passion to overestimate the extent to which that interest is shared by others. The danger for language teachers, who have spent a great deal of time and effort either studying or teaching language, is that they *presume* similar levels of dedication from their students rather than take active steps to encourage it.

Cullen and Morris are most confident, and convincing, in their assertion that a knowledge of Japanese is desirable for teachers in Japanese colleges. To a certain extent this is a moot point. For most of us to function in this society, some

awareness of Japanese language and culture is unavoidable. The question is *how* do we best employ this knowledge in our professional lives? This strikes at the heart of the nature of the language teacher in Japan. What is the value of the experience gained while teaching here? As many of us remain in this country longer, we would like to believe that the greater appreciation of Japanese language and culture acquired over the years is of some professional value. I am not sure if this is necessarily the case, as the following example shows.

Students at my own institution have the option of joining a programme of classes taught by teachers who are invariably in Japan for a very short time and thus have a minimal knowledge of Japanese language or culture. I strongly suspect that these classes were initially introduced for reasons more economic than pedagogic; younger, less-qualified personnel on short-term contracts can represent considerable savings to any organization. However, I have to confess to a sneaking envy when observing my students in communication with these teachers. I am forced to question the value of my own knowledge of Japanese language and culture as I watch learners prepared to take more responsibility and initiative when in conversation with someone with little experience of Japan and its ways. I would argue that the familiarity with Japanese learning that Cullen and Morris find desirable could also, at times, be a handicap. This familiarity can lead to the adoption of a variety of English peculiar to Japanese classrooms. Language teachers need to be clear in their goals: are we merely concerned with the achievement of immediate classroom ‘learning tasks’, or are we trying to nurture language skills which can be transferred beyond the classroom?

Cullen and Morris argue that beyond a general knowledge of the Japanese language there are specific cases when greater use of Japanese in the classroom is desirable. One such case is when the brief use of Japanese “can save minutes of awkward explanation which disturb the flow of the lesson.” The theories of cognitive psychology that distinguish between explicit and implicit learning are too complex to go into in this short piece, nevertheless it would be possible to argue that the “minutes of awkward explanation” represent a valuable form of communicative engagement between teacher and learner. I have never taught a lesson that would not have benefited from my flow being disturbed by a

little more engagement with students. Surely those “awkward minutes” are of more long-term value to learners than the actual ‘learning activity’ that is to follow. The same can be said about explaining tests and homework; the act of comprehending and negotiating instructions is perhaps of more significance than the event itself.

I am not suggesting that we should all be monoglots, creating confusion and delay in our English-only wakes. For the teacher spending an extended period of time in this country, a knowledge of its language and culture is inevitable to all but the most ignorant and insensitive. However, one of the biggest obstacles facing most of our students is a lack of opportunity to engage in meaningful English communication. Teachers must take care to ensure that their own knowledge of Japanese does not deny students such an opportunity.

## Researching the Use of L1 in the Classroom

*Dexter Da Silva*  
*Keisen University*

In attempting to replicate Burden’s study, Cullen and Morris provide empirical data on student preferences for teachers’ use of Japanese in the classroom. For this they are to be lauded. However, I have various points of concern with their paper, particularly regarding the validity of the questionnaire and the conclusions that they draw.

Before addressing these points, I’d like to comment about the stance implied by the title of their paper. I would suggest that it reveals a rather defensive perspective on the use of Japanese in English classes. Furthermore, their study seems to be driven by a need to find some middle ground between the ‘English-only’ camp and the ‘Translation’ camp, that is teachers who use a lot of Japanese in the classroom. I suggest that the first group derives their belief from a weak version of

the Communicative Approach (CA), which originated in ESL contexts, and which maintains English-only in the classroom as a strong principle. In applying this to language classrooms around the world, EFL teachers have adopted ESL techniques and classroom practices which were designed for multilingual, heterogeneous small-size classes. This weak version of the CA remains dominant in Japan, and as such the role of the L1 in the classroom is often undervalued.

My first main concern with Cullen and Morris' paper is their blanket term "college English classes." Whilst Burden refers to English "conversation" classes, Cullen and Morris either attempt to generalize their study to all English classes, or assume that all university English classes taught by non-Japanese teachers are "conversation" classes. Either way, they should have been explicit about their intention or assumption. If they intended the former, then perhaps the questionnaire should have been adapted or supplemented. While it may be true that "conversation" classes are the standard type of college English class, there are other quite different classes – for example, academic writing, or integrated-skills 'content-based' language classes – which may fall under the category of general English classes. I suggest that students in either of these situations may respond quite differently to questionnaires on L1 use in the classroom.

My second and greatest concern is with their fourth and fifth rather prescriptive conclusions (see above) that are based solely on their survey of students. This seems to me to be taking student wants to an extreme. Though they based their research on Burden's questionnaire, Burden interpreted students' responses and drew general implications, refraining from making such prescriptions. However, Cullen and Morris' conclusions are strict limitations on the use of Japanese to functions included in the questionnaire. Whilst Burden's intention seems to be to shatter assumptions about the 'English-only' rule in the classroom, Cullen and Morris seem intent on reestablishing certain restrictions, based solely on student responses to their questionnaire.

My previous argument would not be as strong if the questionnaire had been more rigorous, and based on comprehensive, explicit theory. For example, the questionnaire did not include items regarding amplification, clarification or explanation of concepts

(not merely vocabulary), which are central to the idea of 'scaffolding' new input, and which are observed in many bilingual classes. In their introduction Cullen and Morris recognize the bilingual nature of language classrooms, but their understanding of the use of Japanese in the classroom is limited to 'translation' as opposed to the more complex 'code-switching.' Another issue which the questionnaire fails to address is the idea that students may expect or want different things from native English-speaking teachers than from non-native English-speaking teachers.

My final concern is the important issue of translating questionnaires into the L1 in order to increase understanding, encourage student comments in the L1 and further validate findings. The questionnaire used by Cullen and Morris appears to have been only in English, and though students were "encouraged to ask questions (in Japanese or English) about any item they did not understand", it is possible that there were some questions that they misunderstood, or of which they only had a vague understanding. If the questionnaire had also been in Japanese, it may well have yielded different results, in that they would have got some invaluable qualitative as well as quantitative feedback. Teachers may often use English questionnaires in classes as teaching materials, but for the purposes of research the case for using the L1 is very strong. In addition, allowing only 10 minutes for such a questionnaire seriously limits time for reflection and additional comments.

My focus in this response to Cullen and Morris has been primarily on their methodology and on the conclusions that they draw. I would like to underline that I commend them for attempting to replicate Burden's findings. In Japan, the role of L1 in the classroom has been undervalued and any research that addresses this issue should be welcomed.

*If you'd like to respond to any of the articles in this issue of On CUE address your comments to Keith Ford, Opinion and Perspectives editor, at <fordkeith@hotmail.com>*

# Brian Cullen

## Replies

I would like to thank McAulay, Ryan, and DaSilva for their thought-provoking comments, several of which I have attempted to address below.

First, McAulay and Ryan both raise the important issue of language and identity. On this matter, my own experience has influenced many of the ideas in the paper. While Ryan notes that he may be in the “early stages of schizophrenic dementia”, in terms of my own use of Japanese and English, I feel that I have taken on two very distinct identities. If our learners are to become truly proficient in English, they will also need to take on new identities. Is Japanese knowledge, then, as Ryan suggests, a handicap in helping them acquire this identity? I think not and strongly believe that a teacher’s knowledge of Japanese culture and language is an aid in helping students to move through the difficult linguistic and social process of identity formation. A teacher with knowledge of Japanese can always play the “I’m sorry, I don’t speak Japanese” game, but those teachers without it will not have that choice. And, I would argue that having more choices is generally a good thing. As McAulay points out, this need to increase choices extends beyond the classroom out into campus, and - I would add - into the rest of society. In an ESL situation in an English-speaking country, a student may have many interlocutors to help develop their new language and identity. In such a context, the teacher’s knowledge of the students’ culture is less important. However, in an EFL situation, the teacher is usually the sole mediator between the two identities, and having knowledge of more than one culture is highly beneficial.

Second, Da Silva points out some methodological concerns about the study. Although I accept these reservations, we did state that “there was no attempt made to ascertain the reliability or validity of the survey.” In addition, the purpose was to make “practical administrative and teaching recommendations.” In a sense, the paper is an attempt to justify many of my own intuitions, and the rather prescriptive conclusions reflect the role of this paper as a practical policy statement rather

than a report on a rigorous study. To investigate this issue thoroughly would require interviews with teachers and students, as well as a better-designed questionnaire. I would certainly enjoy reading such a paper, but doubt if the practical implications would differ greatly.

Finally, one point that I would like to dispute is Da Silva’s remark that we “assume that all university classes taught by non-Japanese teachers are ‘conversation’ classes”. My current class load consists of several integrated English classes, two Technical English classes, one culture class taught in English and one culture class taught in Japanese. My remarks in the paper certainly were not meant to apply solely to conversation classes. Da Silva rightly points out that students in different classes might respond differently to a questionnaire. In general, I believe that the practical advice given in this paper will stand up in other types of classes, but obviously the teacher in the classroom is best able to judge the particular learning needs of any particular group of students.

In conclusion, I would like to thank McAulay, Ryan, and Da Silva, and I would be happy to discuss these issues in more detail in an online forum. I would maintain that knowledge of students’ language and culture is a powerful asset, but along with Ryan I would agree that “teachers must take care to ensure that their own knowledge of Japanese does not deny students” the “opportunity to engage in meaningful English communication.”

(If any readers would like to continue this discussion by email, Brian Cullen can be contacted at: [brian@celtic-otter.com](mailto:brian@celtic-otter.com) )

*Have you been to any good conferences lately?*

*Why not write up a report for On CUE? (See Brent Poole’s conference report on pge 27 of this issue.)*

*Contact the editor, Michael Carroll*

*<carroll@andrew.ac.jp>*

# Ten Books I can't do without

*John Burrell*  
*Tokai University*

Many English teachers have their favorite collection of books they cannot do without. Not textbooks, but resource books that have activities and materials that are used to supplement a course book or even build an entire course. In collection there is a minimum of overlap in the activities and they contain almost every type of activity possible for language classes. Not every book in the list will provide material for every class. However, these books have consistently provided me with useful material in a variety of teaching situations.

For some instructors printed resource books may seem like a thing of the past due to the availability of such resources on the internet. However, I still prefer handling books. I often have difficulty finding materials on the web because of the sheer volume of materials out there. I often become sidetracked or just waste huge amounts of time waiting for pages to load on a slow connection. I do use the internet as a resource, but thumbing through the pages of my books for old (and new) activities is easier and more comfortable for me.

Number one on my list is **Grammar Practice Activities** by Penny Ur. I picked it up by chance over ten years ago and I still find myself looking at it first when I need something for a class or course. Using the book is very easy. If your class is working on prepositions you go to the chapter on prepositions and see if any of the activities fit your needs. When you have found a suitable activity, you'll see that the instructions are very clear and concise. If pictures or diagrams are required for the activity they are provided. In addition, Urs' book has almost two hundred activities, making it a very good value indeed.

The next book is Penny Ur and Andrew Wright's, **Five-minute Activities**. While the activities are supposedly only five minutes in length and are best suited for warm-ups, icebreakers and transitions, almost all of them can be extended, some to almost

30 minutes. Unfortunately they are laid out in alphabetical order according to the name of the activity. However, the index has them listed under grammatical structures and functions, and I'd therefore suggest going straight to the index when searching for an activity.

Carolyn Graham's **Small Talk** is another one of my indispensable books. Jazz Chants are widely known but more teachers should realize that they are not confined to younger students or casual classes. In fact, they can be effective in more "serious" classes also. I have used the chants in this book with students ranging from elementary school to adult classes ranging in size from four to forty. I usually use the jazz chants as an introduction to a new structure or function. I find that starting a class with a jazz chant relaxes students and often puts them in an upbeat mood. While Graham has a number of other books on jazz chants, I personally have found *Small Talk* to be the best. It is organized by functions, making it easy to find a chant that is suitable for a particular lesson. After using the chants for a while, more adventurous teachers may start to make their own.

**Games Language People Play** by Jerry Steinberg and **101 Word Games** by George P McCallum are two very similar books. Between them they have over two hundred different games suitable for all levels of language learners. Of the two, *Games Language People Play* is a little easier to use because the games are listed under grammatical structure in the index. Although both books are compact and inexpensive, together they provide a comprehensive overview of possible language games available.

I own both **The Oxford Picture Dictionary** and **The New Oxford Picture Dictionary** and they are great resources for providing supplementary or essential vocabulary. One or the other would do but I use both. The *New Oxford Picture Dictionary*'s pictures are a bit simpler and the book itself is smaller. The *Oxford Picture Dictionary* has some unique content as well as covering all the same ground. For example, it has a brilliant page on the blended family. I have had great success with this as a supplemental material when teaching the family. I also chose monolingual editions because having the definitions in the students' first language seems to defeat the purpose of a picture dictionary. I have also found the teacher's guides for both of them to be useful.

**ESL Teacher's Activity Kit** and **ESL Teacher's Holiday Activity Kit** by Elizabeth Claire would at first seem to be useful only for those who teach children, but this is not the case. If you do teach children, these are the first two books I would recommend. With just *ESL Teacher's Activity Kit* it is possible to set up an entire children's program. It is an amazing book with an enormous amount of information and material in it. However, there is a surprising amount of material that can be used with beginning level college students in both books. I use the TPR lists with my university students as both instruction and as a diagnostic activity on the first day of class.

The last book is **Teaching Pronunciation** by Marianne Celce-Murcia, Donna M. Brinton, and Janet M. Goodwin. It is a book used for teacher training and so does not have as many ready to go activities as the others. However, it does have very useful appendices with assessment and diagnostic materials. It is a book that requires time to study and is more demanding on the teacher but is the best text I have found to provide supplementary material for pronunciation.

These are the books I would not want to be without. They take up very little space and their total cost, while not insignificant, is not too onerous. Most

teachers have more than a few books that are kept because they "know" that someday they will be useful. The above books have proven very useful to me and I am confident that they will continue to be useful for as long as I am teaching.

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# Projects from the University Classroom



A collection of seven input-driven projects for  
sale through CUE.

*Edited by*  
**Keith Ford and Eamon McCafferty**  
**Y 2,500**

# Cyberpipeline: Linguistics and neuroscience

*Steve Snyder*  
*Kyushu University of Health  
and Welfare*

## Forty-four Reasons Why the Chomskians Are Mistaken.

<http://language.home.sprynet.com/chomdex/rea44.htm#p>

It is not particularly surprising that some debates never subside. To be sure, how the questions come to be framed over time helps to keep the fires of indignation burning; Personally, I've always thought that the real reason some debates go on and on is that there simply is not enough information to resolve them. A classic example of this is the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis— which actually refers to string of statements that neither Edward Sapir nor Benjamin Whorf ever stated. If you hate transformational grammar (TG or TGG) and universal grammar (UG), or if you love it and have a sense of humor, you may wish to visit a web site entitled Forty-four Reasons Why the Chomskians Are Mistaken.

The name alone should tell you that these folks don't like the Chomskian views on language in a big way. It is pretty hard to talk about language learning, language in general, cognitive science, or a number of other topics, without having to deal with positions that Noam Chomsky has presented. You will only find a very negative rejection of Chomskian theory in this site... in fact, it borders on reactionary. Nevertheless, some of the points raised are useful when thinking about the many topics that Chomskian views have touched, and that we inevitably encounter in our work and research. The site is just contrary enough to be stimulating, and for that reason alone it can be helpful when wrestling with such fundamental ideas. In my case, I found myself deconstructing arguments on both sides as I read.

I must confess that I found this site during a search on what one would think to be a radically

different topic: mirror neurons. You may or may not have heard about mirror neurons, but in either case you are probably wondering what they have to do with Chomskian theory. Basic to a number of ideas attributed to Chomsky is the modularity hypothesis, which asserts that language function in the human brain is the result of a modular component. Indeed, modularity is a bit of a sacred cow among some neuro-cognitive psychologists, because there is a fairly long history of evidence to support this view. Mirror neurons have reopened this debate in a fundamental way. Reasons 31-33 on this rather contentious web site put forward some of the evidence favoring the opposite of modularity— self-organization of the brain— and puts us immediately into what some in the field consider the hottest topic of the century. If you can't stomach the rest of the site, please be sure to at least read reasons 31-33.

## Social Cognitive Neuroscience Goes Hollywood

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/1001/hollywood.html>

This site is a fairly light and easy to read introduction to some current topics in neuroscience related to language, such as generalized physiological reactions, cognitive control and mirror neurons. Written with a sense of humor by a student of neuroscience this article helps to connect less obvious implications of this research, namely extensions to social life and human development. (The discussion of mirror neurons is a very good starting place.) It seems that the dividing lines between categories such as psychological and social, cognitive and affective, perception and action, motor function and cognition, human and nonhuman are blurring at an increasing rate.

The article is from the Observer, a periodical of the American Psychological Society and is available on their web site. In contrast to the first web site above, this article is very balanced, and gives a caution about rejecting evolutionary explanations too quickly. The many ideas are dizzying, and it raises not only your interests but also many questions as well. The article is a bit long, but a good read. It will be interesting to see what debates these new discoveries rekindle in the years to come.

# Conference Report: The Fourth Temple University - Japan Applied Linguistics Colloquium at the Osaka Branch

*Brent Poole  
Kansai Gaidai*

This colloquium was held on Sunday, February 17, 2002 and was open to the public. There were 34 presenters and most were reporting on research that was conducted at universities here in Japan. The format was rather refreshing in that presenters gave their talk in 20 minutes and 10 minutes was allocated for questions and answers. As a result, the presenters had to get to the heart of the matter and the audience had the opportunity to hear a wide variety of subjects throughout the day. This being a college and university educator's journal, this article will highlight three presentations for the like-minded.

## Motivation to Teach English: A Study of EFL instructors in Japan

Walter Kozloski, who teaches at Kobe College, gave a presentation on teacher motivation in Japan. According to Mr. Kozloski and individuals in the audience, the most profound aspect to this study was that it was the first of its kind in that its focus was on EFL teaching in Japan. The sample size from the study was 27 and the majority were faculty at universities in the Kansai area. The native language of those surveyed was broken down as follows 59% were natives speakers of English, 37%

were native speakers of Japanese, and 4% was categorized as other.

The instrument itself was based upon 6 scenarios, which were dichotomized into two scenario groups. The first one was designed to investigate the feasibility that the subjects would spend their time teaching a group of students who had the desire to learn but were unable to pay tuition fees. The general finding with this scenario group parallels research on teacher motivation by Dornyei and Gardner. First, there is intrinsic motivation for teaching English as a foreign language in Japan. Second, contextual factors such as demands from administrators contribute to fragility of the profession. Third, the extrinsic factor of compensation was significant vis-a-vis the time and stress constraints which the instructors already experience in their profession.

While the first scenario group was designated to tap into the activity of the instruction, the second related more toward the subject matter. The specific focus was on the external variables that serve to undermine or contribute to the motivation of language instructors in Japan. In regard to this, there was a stronger desire for this population to participate in faculty meetings (without compensation) than to teach more classes for compensation. When the extrinsically motivating factor of loss of pay for not attending faculty meetings was taken into consideration, the vast majority of those surveyed would comply with the demand. Overall, the study shed some light on some different aspects of our profession.

## Requests in Medical Discourse: A Japanese Doctor's Use of Politeness Strategies

In relation to the field of language pragmatics, Ms. Takako Nishino presented her research on medical discourse. She examined how one Japanese doctor who is in his late forties used politeness strategies when he made requests to his patients. The data was based upon 180-minute audio recordings in the consulting room of an orthopedic clinic which is located in one of the suburbs of Tokyo. The researcher used dialogue excerpts from 15 of

the 28 patients consulting sessions. From that, 59 out of 85 doctor's requests to patients were examined.

The basic script of medical discourse is as follows. First, an exchange of greetings takes place when the patient enters the consultation room and after that the doctor will pose questions to the patient about his/her condition. Next, the doctor examines the patient. After that, the diagnosis is announced by the doctor and the medical treatment plan is given. Then the doctor advises the patient and answers any questions. The patient shows gratitude and leaves the room. Requests are usually found during the examination (Bend your elbow.) and during the advising period (Take two pills three times a day.).

In the context of this study, there is status differential between the speaker and interlocutor. However, the patient is in a position where there is a degree of anxiety and one method to reduce that level is to address the person as a status equal. During the first consultation with a new patient, the doctor used polite expressions such as "doo shi mashi ta?" or "doo sare mashi ta?" and then contingent upon the context he uses non-polite forms. From the cases that were examined, the polite form was only used 12% of the time. Those requests were direct such as "kudasai" (Please) → "-te kudasai" (Please do). The non-polite form was used 80% of the time and they took the form of: direct requests (different from the polite form "te ne (ne)" → "te (-te ne)" (Do), interrogatives, desire statements, suggesting, and incomplete statements. Imperatives such as "dame da yo" (Don't...) were found 8% of the time. In sum, the doctor utilized both negative and positive politeness under the constraints of the honorific system.

## Native and Non-Native Teachers of English at Japanese Universities

Ayako Shibuya, who teaches at Soka University, examined the different roles that Native and Non-Native teachers of English play at Japanese universities. First, the presenter gave us the historical underpinnings of the Japanese adoption of foreign cultures. Then she explained her study. The subjects were 3 Native Speakers (NS) teachers and 3 Non-Native Speakers (NNS) teachers and the data was based upon interviews. Three

discussion points came out of the interviews and they were language and culture, students' reaction the issues in the workplace.

In relation to language and culture, the NNS indicated concern about lack of intuition of the Target Language (TL) and inadequate knowledge about the L2 culture. The NS were concerned about their lack of knowledge of Japanese. When it came to students' reaction, the NNS indicated that they were empathetic with their students' struggle to acquire a second language. On the other hand, some students when given questionnaires at the end of the semester were critical of this group for their non-native pronunciation. The NS group indicated that students were curious about their "foreign" teacher and that they took on a celebrity status on their campus. In relation to workplace issues, NNS were concerned with their work assignments while the NS group indicated that they had a lot of free time but were powerless in the decision making process within the institution.

Being a member of either group is not an indication of being a good or bad teacher. Factors such as teacher training, linguistic knowledge and competence, and love for students seem to be more important. Since both groups are dissimilar in some respects, they play different roles in the university setting. One NNS indicated that she was good at explaining the structure of the second language and preparing students to take standardized tests. However, she confided that it was impossible to generate the kind of excitement that an NS teacher can. Be that as it may, the data indicated that both groups are necessary to better facilitate second language acquisition of their students. Hence, the weaknesses and strengths of both groups serve to complement each other. Overall, this research was very interesting, but it was limited in the sample size and the interviews were translated only by the researcher.

In sum, the one day colloquium had a lot to offer those who are teaching at a university or college in Japan. There was a great deal of synergy in that the presenters generally received a lot of constructive feedback from those in the audience. If you are interested in participating in it next year's, please contact Temple University - Japan.

Could anyone tell me how party cue is translated into Spanish? This is for my Political Science class. Thanks in advance.Â Could anyone tell me how party cue is translated into Spanish? This is for my Political Science class. Thanks in advance. Yet, message cues, source cues, and party cues has, to our knowledge, never been pitted against one another in such a way that we can study the relative importance of these selection cues when studied simultaneously. Thus, the main contribution of this study is to conjoin these three understandings of selective exposure and compare them, leading us to formulate the following research question A party leaderâ€™s endorsement of a policy can be persuasive, inducing co-partisans to take the same position. In contrast, a party leaderâ€™s endorsement may polarize opinion, inducing out-party identifiers to take a contrary position.Â The results indicate that in-party leader cues do not persuade but that out-party leader cues polarize. This finding holds in an experiment featuring President Bush in which his endorsement did not persuade Republicans but it polarized Democrats. See a recent post on Tumblr from @%1\$s about /CUE-PARTY. Discover more posts about /CUE-PARTY.