

Reviewing ELT (in the Japanese Context)

In an environment like university teaching where ‘continuous learning’ is a requirement (as evidenced through publication and/or presentation) teachers can often get so involved with their research (tunnel vision), however narrow or broad their scope, that they lose sight of overall area of language teaching. As this is the beginning of the new term, and many of us have just finished off-campus research, it would be a good time to offer resources to review some fundamentals of ELT, especially from within the Japanese context.

There are many recourses on the internet. Resources for general content teaching (teaching in the k-12 system) has a lot to offer language teachers who are prepared to make the connections for themselves. Here is an example:

***Teacher Autonomy in the Classroom* by Robert Pondiscio**

<https://edexcellence.net/articles/teacher-autonomy-in-the-classroom>

This article begins with some research into autonomy in public school classrooms.

To measure autonomy, researchers asked teachers how much “actual control” they have in their classrooms over six areas of planning and teaching: selecting textbooks and other classroom materials; content, topics, and skills to be taught; teaching techniques; evaluating and grading students; disciplining students; and determining the amount of homework to be assigned.

Teacher autonomy is vital in the classroom. One reason people choose the ELT profession at the tertiary level over teaching content in the k12 system is the perceived increase in autonomy. Although it is common to have textbooks in language classes in Japan, generally, university instructors in Japan work increasingly independently. Teams in the workplace are built and maintained in part by a feeling of equality (as opposed to egoism, egotism, competition, or, conversely, dependence on other instructors). Collaboration, whether in lesson planning or in preparing articles for publication, should not be one main teacher and others following (obviously, people in their first year here need guidance on the particular culture of this workplace), nor should it be headbutting.

Video: What does it mean to be a language teacher?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYuK18e8V08>

This is a video of a lecture by Jack Richards in IATEFL 2016, which he titles “What does it take to be a language teacher”, with a running time of 31 minutes.

He talks of disciplinary content knowledge (knowledge about language- sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, sentential structure, discourse analysis etc.) and pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of how to teach, which in the Japanese context, includes material development and course development)

He also says teachers need knowledge of language teaching in our geographical context as well as other disciplinary knowledge.

Bailey, K. (2006). *Language Teacher Supervision A Case-Based Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This is a great book for reviewing the types of things studied in master's degrees in language teaching while at the same time learning something a little bit different (educational leadership).

Bailey writes that “job ready” means holding DELTA or MA in language teaching qualifications. It refers to both disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge expected of professional language teachers in the inner circle English speaking countries. In the Japanese context, this may change slightly (in addition to three, sometimes up to five published research articles related to TESOL / Applied Linguistics areas) to an M.Ed in another area of education (leadership or curriculum development are common areas), or an MA (in liberal arts area) **plus** at least one-year of teacher training from a university (PGCE or 1 year postgraduate or concurrent B.Ed. Basically at least a year in education or applied linguistics (language teaching)). In Japan, with rapid “creeping credentialism”, it is (and will continue to be) increasingly difficult to obtain teaching positions (at universities or hired directly at private senior high schools or some positions at language institutes [i.e. DoS types of positions]) beyond entry level types of jobs without this minimum level [research types of positions in Japan almost always require a PhD in progress or in hand these days], but that does not mean that it is impossible to find employment in other countries.

Pérez-Llantada, C. (2004). Entrevista Con... / An Interview With... John M. Swales. *Ibérica*. 8 (Fall, 2004), 139-148

Some ELT professionals working in the genre field are interested in expanding the type of thing that can be considered disciplinary content knowledge after having completed the kind of training required to be job ready, and as a result, the pedagogical content knowledge available. For example, John Swales (of CARS [Create a Research Space] fame).

Books- Methodology

Some books on ELT methodology and material development are Jim Scrivener's “Learning Teaching The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching” published by MacMillan Books for Teachers, Jeremy Harmer's “The Practice of English Language Teaching” published by Pearson and “Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language” edited by Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Snow published by National Geographic Learning (the last of which is commonly known in graduate programs in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics as “The Apple Book”). The Harmer and Scrivener are very strong in classroom techniques and applications, while the apple book is a set of essays and great for research theory, and also has a section in each chapter on applications within the ELT classroom.

Books- Theory

Teachers who identify mostly as formalists (language primarily as a mental phenomenon) can review by reading a book on theoretical linguistics, or applied linguistics (they are similar) such as *An Introduction to Language* by Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman, Neil Hultin and Harry Logan.

Teachers who identify mostly as functionalists (language primarily as a societal phenomenon) can review by reading a book on sociolinguistics, such as *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* by Janet Holmes and/or a book on intercultural communication, such *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication* by Jane Jackson.