

Alison Stewart

Biography

Teaching

I began teaching English as an undergraduate in the UK when I spent a summer teaching an unruly mob of Italian high school students. I continued to teach for a language school on and off while between jobs in banking and political risk consultancy and, later, while pursuing a master's degree in Russian Studies. Teaching became my career only once I moved to Japan 20 years ago.

I have been teaching in universities in and around Tokyo as a part-time and full-time teacher, and for the past three years as a tenured faculty member. Currently, my teaching is divided between English language classes for first- and second-year English major students, and courses on Applied Linguistics consisting of a lecture (Introduction to Applied Linguistics) and seminar (English Education and Autonomy) for undergraduates, and a class for graduate students. In the past five years the focus of my department has shifted as more students are opting to specialize in Linguistics or Applied Linguistics rather than Literature or Cultural Studies. With a new colleague from the field of Applied Linguistics joining from next year, I am looking forward to further developing a graduate course for our students. So far, most of my experience of teaching at the graduate level has been through my work as an external supervisor of TESOL MA dissertations for the University of Birmingham.

My most rewarding teaching experiences have involved collaboration with other teachers: in my previous job, I worked with the Spanish, German and French teachers to organize joint classes and subsequently a student conference on European culture. Currently, I am working with a teacher in Malaysia to facilitate a cultural exchange project on Facebook for our students. Although these projects were created for the benefit of students, I also regard them as instances of teacher collaborative self-development. Collaboration--among students, between teachers, and between teachers and students--is something I believe in strongly and try to facilitate wherever possible.

Service

I am fortunate to have had time and energy to devote to voluntary work in our field since 2005, the year I completed my PhD in Applied Linguistics. My most active commitment has been to the JALT Learner Development Special Interest Group, first as a co-editor of the SIG newsletter, *Learning Learning*, then as organizer of the Forum at the JALT annual conference, and finally since last year as joint coordinator. During the past nine years, I have worked with some truly brilliant and dynamic people on various SIG projects. The highlights have been two

anthologies: *Realizing Autonomy: Practice and Reflection in Language Education Contexts* (2012), co-edited with Kay Irie and published by Palgrave Macmillan, and *Collaborative Learning in Learner Development*, co-edited with Tim Ashwell, Steve Paydon and Masuko Miyahara, which we are aiming to self-publish as an e-book and limited edition paperback by the end of this year. In addition, I have been on the organizing committee of two conferences, “Realizing Autonomy” held in Nagoya in November 2011 and “LD20”, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Learner Development SIG in Tokyo in November 2013.

In addition to my service in LD SIG, I have been involved over the past five years in JALT Publications as an editor and reviewer of its conference proceedings. As editor-in-chief (2011, 2012), I saw my role as that of both raising the quality of the publication, and at the same time, opening doors to new authors and new editors by encouraging experienced editors to be more supportive and constructive, and by providing mentors to new editors.

My concept of “service” is influenced to a great extent by my readings of critical education theorists, such as Freire, Lankshear, Allwright, Smyth and many others, and by their emphasis on questioning the fairness of the society in which we live. Japan is a rich country and I am privileged to work at a good university. But not everyone in Japan is so lucky. For the past five years or so, I have been involved with the Filipino Teachers of Japan, attending their workshops in and around Tokyo as an “advisor”. I’m not sure how much advice I am able to give them, but I am very happy to support their efforts to raise the status of Filipina women in Japan and supply highly suitable teachers to Japanese public schools. Similarly, in the LD SIG, we now have an Outreach team, whose aim is specifically to identify areas where our members and their students can be of service in places of need. We have created a program of student ambassadors of NGOs for which they do internships, and are currently creating a website for a translation by many of our members and their students of a large collection of essays written by children from Rikuzentakata, a town that was destroyed in the 3.11 tsunami. While these are the initiatives of other members of the SIG, I am proud to be involved and to support them in any way I can.

Publications

Below is a selection of works that are representative of my experience and research interests as described above:

- (with Brenda Wright) Positioning and stance in intercultural communication: Cultural identity in a Japanese-Malaysian student Facebook exchange. *The Linguistics Journal*. (forthcoming)

- (with Robert Croker and Judith Hanks) Exploring the principles of Exploratory Practice: Quality of Life or Quality of Learning? In A. Barfield & A. Minematsu (Eds.), *Learner development: Different cases, different interests* (forthcoming)
- Peer adviser and peer advisee roles: Function, positioning, and moral imperative. In C. Ludwig & J. Mynard (Eds.), *Autonomy in language learning: Advising in action* (pp. 115-131) Canterbury: IATEFL (2012)
- (with Kay Irie) Realizing Autonomy: Contradictions in practice and context. In K. Irie, & A. Stewart (Eds.), *Realizing Autonomy: Practice and reflection in language education contexts* (pp. 1-17). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2012)
- (with Masuko Miyahara) Parallel universes: Globalization and identity in English Language teaching at a Japanese university. In Seargeant, P. (Ed.), *English in Japan in the era of globalization* (pp. 60-80). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2011)
- (with Francois Roussel, Raquel Rubio & Vincenzo Spagnolo) Multicultural practice: joint *hyougen enshuu* classes on European relations. *Area and Culture Studies*, 76. Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (2008)
- (with Marimar Jorge) Dilemmas over L1 use in communicative language classes: The European Union project. In K. Bradford Watts, T. Muller & M. Swanson (Eds.), *JALT2007 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: Japan Association for Language Teaching (2008)
- Teacher development and ad hoc communities. *Learning Learning* 14(1), 5-15 (2006)
- An inquiry into the social aspects of language teacher expertise. In A. Yoshitomi, T. Umino & M. Negishi (Eds.), *Readings in Second Language Pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition: In Japanese Context. Usage-Based Linguistic Informatics (UBLI) Series 4*. (pp.101-118). Amsterdam: Benjamins (2005)
- *Teaching positions: A study of identity in English language teachers in Japanese higher education*. Unpublished PhD. University of London (2005)

Mission Statement

If elected, I will support and promote the following:

1. Openness to new methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and practices that help further our understanding of autonomy and language learning
2. Expanding membership, with an emphasis on bringing in members from developing

countries

3. Encouraging and supporting first-time presenters in RenLA forums
4. Encouraging cross-cultural, multinational research
5. Encouraging inclusive practitioner research