

# Forty-three Years of English Teaching and Research

## — Retrospect and Acknowledgments —

Akio ABE

In April, 1969, I was offered the teaching position at Tokai University, Sapporo. The next year I applied for the 4th (1970) JACET Summer Seminar held at Seminar House in Hachioji for three weeks as one of 30 college teachers from all over Japan, with whom we made close friends each other through various activities by the end of the seminar. Mr. Takehiko Kurihara, present chairman of JACET Hokkaido Chapter was one of them. We worked very hard day and night. The seminar was highly rewarding thanks to Fulbright instructors, and dedicated administrative members such as Mr. Koike, Mr. Matsuyama, et al. This was my first substantial commitment to JACET and I think I have been a serious member since then, as most of other participants of the subsequent Seminars must have.

In November, 1972, the first workshop of JACET Hokkaido District was held at Clark Hall of Hokkaido University, and 14 members gathered to discuss such topics as validity of English as an elective course and problems of grammar translation methods proposed by two speakers. This type of workshops were held regularly until JACET Hokkaido Chapter was formally inaugurated in August, 1986. I attended most of the workshops, occasionally as a speaker. Activities of Hokkaido Chapter have become more active since then mainly through workshops and annual meetings. It was my pleasure to have been able to organize CALL SIG in 1992, had regular workshops at my university, reported our researches at Chapter meetings, published articles for the university bulletins. Ms. Yukie Ueno, my successor, led the group even more successfully, gave presentations at National JACET Conventions, and even at AILA99 Tokyo. Also it was a great privilege for me to have hosted as a steering committee member the 30th and 40th National Conventions of JACET in Sapporo, both of which turned out to be highly successful.

In August, 1984, JACET was officially admitted as an affiliate of AILA, and we could obtain membership of this International Association.

Accordingly I had privilege to attend AILA87 Sydney, AILA93 Amsterdam, AILA96 Jyvaskyla, and of course AILA99 TOKYO, this time as a steering committee member. I met many distinguished scholars and could personally discuss topics of my interests with some of them.

The language teaching theories and related disciplines I depended upon were varied. One of the most powerful impacts in my fledgling days was the TESL Seminar at English Language Institute, University of Michigan, which I could fortunately participate as all-expense Fulbright grantee (1964-65). Major courses offered are: American Tradition in Literature, Structure, Phonology, Methods, and Colloquia by professors C. C. Fries, Robert Lado, Kenneth Pike, et. al. The 32 participants were all English teaching professionals, covering 18 nationalities. Each course was highly stimulating and I was greatly enlightened.

After ten years in 1974 - 75, I was granted scholarship from Foundation of Private Institutions, granted one year of study leave from my University, and entered English Department of Portland State University as a graduate student. I could widen my scope of research through courses in Structure of English Language, Anthropological Linguistics, Urban Linguistics, Language and Culture, TESL Seminar 1 & 2, Problems and Methods of Literary Study, Shakespeare, Contemporary American Comedies, and so on.

In 1984 - 85, again ten years later, I was granted a kind of sabbatical leave for one year from my university. This time, I was invited as a visiting scholar by Prof. A. C. Gimson of Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, University College London (April -June), where I was permitted access to a number of valuable papers and works in the Department to do my survey in sociolinguistic environments in British Isles, which I published in my university bulletin afterwards; from July to August, invited by Prof. Gary D. Prideaux of Department of Linguistics, University of Alberta, I concentrated in the studies of Canadian English and its regional characteristics, and problems of multilingual/multicultural Canada, picking up critically important materials from vast amount of Canadiana; from September to Christmas, invited by Prof. John Moyne, I visited Ph.D Program in Linguistics, Graduate Center, City University of New York, where I attended two seminars: Prof. William Stewart's "Gullah/Black English", and Prof. C. Yorio's "Bilingualism" which turned out to be the most enlightening and stimulating course particularly for language teaching professionals; and

from January to March, 1985, invited by Prof. M. A. K. Halliday to Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney, I attended his seminar "socio-cultural aspects of language" in which he handed us large amount of printed papers of his own. It was highly valuable opportunity for me to be acquainted with his linguistic theories.

As a part of my cultural experiences as an English language teacher, I have had rare opportunities to enjoy considerable number of performing arts whenever I could manage my time: Shakespearean plays, Ben Jonson, and contemporary plays by Tennessee Williams, George Bernard Shaw, Neil Simon, Arthur Miller, et al; furthermore, I enjoyed operas, musicals, major symphony orchestras of the world, ballet and dances, in London, Stratford-upon Avon, New York, Sydney, and Aukland. I was extremely fortunate that I could appreciate the world's first rate performing arts to my heart's content. At the same time, I admired the people in those countries for their creativity, innovations, energy, and respect in order to enjoy, cherish, preserve, support and develop their abundant cultural heritages.

On February 12, 2000, prior to my retirement from Hokkaido Tokai University in March, Prof. Keiko Hayasaka, Chapter chairman of CAJ (Communication Association of Japan), kindly offered me a chance to give a kind of farewell lecture at Chapter meeting. So I took advantage of that opportunity and talked on somewhat similar topic to this essay for 90 minutes at a multimedia hall of my university, though on that occasion, I showed a number of color pictures on the two big screens by means of IT media, and the talk was followed by friendly and memorable party by CAJ members and CALL SIG colleagues.

I compiled and edited my papers so far written and published, bound up into one volume of about 420 pages, made 15 copies, and distributed to my colleagues of CALL and to other close friends, and to my wife who had supported me for these years. I am now free to fully enjoy my retirement life.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those concerned who have assisted me to make my teaching and research career such a fruitful and rewarding one.

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