

Mr Kita's thesis examines the role of creativity in the teaching of foreign language writing at the tertiary level in Japan. The latter half of the thesis consists of a qualitative, longitudinal study of Mr Kita's own action research in writing classrooms at a university in Tokyo, but first he begins by tracing the discursive history of the use of the term 'creativity' in the *English Language Teaching Journal* (UK) and *TESOL Quarterly* (US), and of the term *sōzōsei* in *The English Teachers' Magazine* (Japan). He identifies four different discursive uses of these terms: 1) *generative linguistic creativity*, influenced by the ideas of Chomsky; 2) *humanistic creativity*, originating in humanistic psychology; 3) *hybrid creativity*, which is a mixture of these two types; and 4) *hybrid self-expressive creativity*. This last type appears specifically in the Japanese context and has a stronger conceptual inclination towards humanism and self-expression than the kind of hybrid creativity discussed in the Anglophone journals; the major role of this kind of creativity in Japanese pedagogical discourse is to underlie the arguments for self-expressive English writing instruction as an antidote to the traditional Japanese teaching method of examination-oriented Japanese-English translation (*wabun eiyaku*).

Mr Kita then goes on to examine the history of, the arguments for and against, and the educational effects of *wabun eiyaku*. He points out that, in spite of its much-discussed failings, the method produces learners who, when they enter the tertiary system, have a strong awareness both of sentential grammatical accuracy and of the linguistic differences between English and Japanese; he argues that these characteristics must be acknowledged in curriculum development at the tertiary level. He further argues that hybrid self-expressive creativity does not have much relevance at the tertiary level as it not only denies the value of these characteristics but also, through its emphasis on self-expression, fails to provide suitable compositional models for learners.

What Mr Kita proposes as a more contextually relevant concept than hybrid self-expressive creativity is 'ludic linguistic creativity', which he defines as 'the human capacity to manipulate the form of language and produce novel linguistic output which not only expresses one's thoughts but also entertains or engages an audience.' Mr Kita proposes that this approach, which falls within the recently extremely active area of 'language play' studies, can be effective in a post-'Examination English' (*juken-eigo*) context in Japan in that, through its emphasis on pleasure, it gives learners a new,

intrinsic motivation to write in English after the loss of the extrinsic motivation of the entrance examinations, and also because it heightens their awareness of linguistic accuracy in a personally and interpersonally meaningful context.

The remainder of the thesis is an extensive, ‘thick description’ of the results of putting this approach into practice in Mr Kita’s own classes over the course of two years. He collected extensive data from six different sources in order to achieve triangulation in a context where, of necessity, his main orientation had to be towards teaching his students rather than doing pure research. The outcome showed that the approach enhanced his learners’ motivation and had beneficial effects on their vocabulary but much weaker effects on their grammatical accuracy.

This is a strong thesis discussing a new and interesting aspect of English language teaching practice in a Japanese context, and is a very good example of language-educational research in the qualitative/action-research tradition. The more theoretical chapters in the first half of the thesis are wide-ranging, extremely well-researched and persuasively argued. In particular, the argument in Chapter 4, in which Mr Kita shows how the pleasurable manipulation of linguistic form for an audience may be expected to aid both motivation and the development of linguistic accuracy, is interesting and original.

The long Chapter 5, in which Mr Kita reports on two years of classroom work motivated by the theoretical concerns articulated in the previous chapters, is an accomplished piece of action research. Mr Kita analyses well the benefits and dangers of research in this tradition; he discusses responsibly the issues of ethics and classroom ecology which arise when a researcher takes such an approach; his research method takes account of those issues, and in addition displays good use of triangulation, thus addressing the issues of credibility, transferability and dependability which arise in research in the non-psychometric tradition; and he provides a sufficiently ‘thick’ and rich description of the behaviour both of himself and of his students for his readers to understand clearly the relevance of his work to their own pedagogic situations. The English in the thesis is impressive, and shows laudable advances over the level of English—already high—which he attained in his MA thesis; there are also a number of good jokes and witticisms, something which is hard to carry off in a foreign language, but which is entirely appropriate in a thesis devoted to ‘language play’ and the value of pleasure both in the motivation to learn, and in the acquisition of, foreign languages.

The thesis does display some weaknesses although these are all minor: there are a few mistakes in emphasis (claiming that learner-centred language teaching arose for humanist rather than cognitivist/communicative reasons, for example); very occasional mistakes in factual accuracy (claiming that Jakobson ignored the poetic function of language, for example); and one surprising omission (reference to the work of Ron Carter on language, creativity and the 'art of common talk' might have helped to strengthen the argument). A slightly larger worry is that Mr Kita's approach and findings seem to be quite context-specific, referring perhaps too exclusively to tertiary-level Japanese students at prestigious universities; his ideas may not transfer well to other, less privileged contexts. However, it is always good to have rich and detailed information about particular local contexts; this is one of the reasons for doing qualitative research in the first place, so this limitation is merely a small but inevitable price to be paid for the strengths of the study. Thus, none of the above provisos outweigh the considerable achievements of the thesis, and the committee has decided that Mr Kita clearly deserves to be awarded the degree of Ph.D. (Language and Information Sciences).