

Team Teachers in Japan: Beliefs, Identities, and Emotions. Routledge. Edited by Takaaki Hiratsuka. Routledge, 2024.

Reviewed by Daniel Podborochynski, Akita International University

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Team-teaching, where classes are taught in tandem by a licensed Japanese teacher (JTE) and an English-speaking assistant teacher (ALT), was introduced into Japanese junior and senior high schools in 1978 (MEXT, 1994, as cited in Martin, 2010). Since then, the creation of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme and the increase in private ALT dispatch companies has led to an increase in academic interest in team-teaching. Studies range widely in their topics, from teacher's roles in the classroom (Mahoney, 2004) and JTEs' and ALTs' language proficiencies (Sutherland, 2012), to teacher training (Arrogante & Rejano, 2025) and teachers' perceptions of MEXT curriculum (Yamada & Hristoskova, 2011). Hiratsuka's edited volume, *Team Teachers in Japan: Beliefs, Identities, and Emotions*, touches upon these aspects of team-teaching, and many more, through the personal experiences of JTEs and ALTs. This collection of research is a great foundation to understand how complex team-teaching is in regards to identity formation and teacher perceptions.

In the opening chapter of the volume, Hiratsuka explains that current research on identity or beliefs in team-teaching tends to focus on one singular element. On the other hand, the goal of this collection is to treat beliefs, identities, and emotions from a more holistic perspective, under the theme of exploring "who [JTEs and ALTs] are to themselves and who they are in relation to others" (p.4). The chapters in this book work individually as insightful research on specific and diverse topics, while also functioning as a whole to show how these topics interact and integrate in real people's lives.

The 14 research chapters in this book are divided into four sections: power balance and lived experiences; teacher perceptions, selfhood, and feelings; teacher learning and development; and team teachers in elementary schools. Each chapter is structured as a typical research paper. However, the chapters vary greatly in their methodologies and readability. Statistical-based research makes up a small number of chapters but most of this collection contains autoethnographic or narrative-based research. Not only does this increase readability, it helps develop the holistic and personal nature that Hiratsuka is aiming for.

Many of the stories told in the pages of this volume will be relatable to JETs and ALTs alike. In Chapter 3 "From JTE to team-teaching researcher: autoethnographic reflections" by Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson, the author speaks frankly about their initial confusion of what purpose an ALT served and how the author's

teaching developed thanks to the unique skills of an ALT. In Chapter 6 “ ‘JTEs can learn from ALTs’: JTEs’ beliefs about team teaching and how ALTs influence JTEs’ sense of teacher identity” by Natalie A. Donohue and Chapter 14 “Straight Talk about English from primary home school homeroom teachers” by Sean Mahoney, often cited issues of team-teaching such as confusion regarding duties in the classroom and a major lack of training are detailed in refreshingly personal perspectives. As a former ALT, I found numerous examples in this volume that helped me better understand what I and my previous JTE coworkers were likely experiencing in team-teaching situations.

A major strength of this collection is in the chapters’ range of perspectives. One chapter of note is Chapter 4 “An autoethnography of a long-term ALT, living with the enabling and disabling effects of native-speakerism” by Andrew R. Lankshear. In this chapter, the New Zealander author reflects on his career by exploring the advantages he received due to being a native speaker, as well as the difficulties he faced and caused in the workplace due to his initially poor Japanese language skills. Another chapter of note is Chapter 5 “From housewives to ALTs: the ‘reconfiguration’ of identity of Filipino women migrants in Japan” by Nelia G. Balgoa, a brief but moving narrative-based study that explores how English speakers from outside the Inner Circle reconfigure their identity in response to familial situations, societal expectations, and stereotypes. Studies on elementary homeroom teachers and specialized English teachers round out what is an impressively diverse set of voices and perspectives.

In the final chapter, Hiratsuka summarizes the chapters and does well to propose a way for JTEs and ALTs to ameliorate the difficulties discussed in the book. The concept of a growth mindset may at first seem superficial in regards to bettering team-teaching but Hiratsuka offers convincing reasons to adopt one. Topics in this book such as native-speakerism, lack of communication between JTEs and ALTs, a lack of training, and foreign language anxiety can all be positively affected by aspects of a growth mindset. In an education system that seems immutable, Hiratsuka’s concepts of taking action, of communication, of self-reflection, and of open-mindedness are practical.

Hiratsuka succeeds in editing a collection of works that will be relevant to numerous audiences. JTEs and ALTs can use the new perspectives in this book to find common ground and work towards improving their team-teaching. For administrators, the importance of identity and power-dynamics can help shape future training sessions for educators. This collection may be particularly useful for graduate students and researchers with an interest in team-teaching. It is an essential book for those interested in the current world of team-teaching and in what topics require more exploration and research in the future.

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Interaction, Language Use, and Second Language Teaching. Thorsten Huth. Routledge, 2021.

Reviewed by Farhana Sarmin, Akita International University

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Interaction, Language Use, and Second Language Teaching is an informative textbook on advanced second-language studies, designed for second-language teachers, researchers, and educators. The book aims to distinguish between written and spoken language and to examine how interaction happens in real-life conversation. It aims to analyze real-life conversations using an approach that makes their unfolding clearer. Highlighting the differences, the book proposes to use an interaction-based approach in the language classroom. This book contains 5 chapters, starting with introductory chapters and then proceeding to a coherent discussion of Conversational Analysis (CA) methods and their implications for second language teaching.

In the introduction chapter, the author describes what human language is, how it is used for interaction, and distinguishes between written and spoken language in detail. And by distinguishing between written and spoken language, it emphasizes the

importance of studying human interaction and human language beyond written forms. This book uses ideas from Conversational Analysis (CA) to introduce how real communication works and how it should be transcribed. “Conversation analysis is an approach to the study of social interaction embracing both verbal and non-verbal conduct in situations of everyday life” (Enekwe & Anyanwu, 2024, p. 137). It also shows differences between the prescriptive written format of a conversation and how it happens in real life, such as gazing, nodding, overlapping, and turn-taking. This chapter concludes by explaining why it is important to use real-world recorded data to analyze human language rather than the prescriptive written form (Huth, 2021).

The second chapter is named “Understanding Interaction,” and as the name suggests, it explains interaction from a social- interactionist perspective. Therefore, this chapter also briefly explains the CA method for analyzing language. Moerman (1987, as cited in Huth, 2021) was among the first to emphasize the significance of conversation analysis (CA) for understanding how language use works in interaction, particularly in terms of culture and communication within and across language communities (p. 55). The chapter uses examples from the CA transcribed data and analyses to provide an overview of how real-life sentences are used beyond grammatical sentences, yet still serve to communicate. Figure 1 is the example from the book that illustrates how turn-taking and overlapping occur in a natural conversation.

Figure 1

A conversation transcript that shows overlapping while taking turns.

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | Ken | My opinion of the school system, the Los Angeles school |
| 2 | | district, district, is the most fucked over, |
| 3 | Rog | Yeah well we [all got that opinion. |
| 4 | Ken | [school syst'm WAIT is the most fucked over |
| 5 | | school system in the world |

Note. Reproduced from chapter *Understanding Interaction* (p. 35), by T. Huth, 2021, Cambridge University Press. The transcript was originally published in Lerner (1989, p. 172), as cited in Huth (2021).

We can see in Figure 1 that the sentence has overlapping, turn-taking, and interruptions, unlike written dialogue. The chapter concludes by briefly discussing the importance of CA in second-language teaching and suggests a new way for the classroom to present a second language in terms of action and sequence (Huth, 2021).

Chapter 3 “Understanding Language Learning” describes and analyses how language is acquired. The main idea of this chapter is that language is acquired through active use with others. Therefore, language learning depends on the situation, culture, and social relationships. One notable study discussed in this chapter examines how children learn language through interaction. Tomasello and Barton (1994, as cited in Huth, 2021, p. 68) showed that a child was assigned to learn a new word, *toma* (a nonword invented for the study). Therefore, instead of showing an object with *toma*, the adult performs actions such as “let’s go and find *toma*,” and when the adult

finds the object, the adult shows excitement and joy. After completing the task several times, the child learned the word *toma* for that object. Hence, it proves that learning is a social and psychological process. The chapters also include that errors and repair play an important role in language acquisition. Therefore, the chapter suggests that teachers prioritize authentic communication, collaboration, and real-life language use.

Chapter 4: “Understanding Interaction in the Classroom” describes classroom talk from a social-interactional perspective. By describing classroom interactions, this chapter aims to review relevant research to shape classroom discussions and maximize opportunities for learning. This chapter exemplifies the differences between classroom and non-classroom talk to understand what happens in the classroom, including initiation-response-feedback (IRF), initiation-response-evaluation (IRE), and question-answer-comment (QAC). Hence, if we notice this kind of data (IRF, IRE, QAC) in a conversation, it is easy to infer that the conversation occurred in a classroom setting. This chapter also suggests that much teacher-learner interaction occurs in the classroom and that teachers are unaware of it, and that analyzing the data can provide insights to help improve teaching strategies.

Chapter 5, “Interaction, Language Use, and Second Language Teaching,” begins by summarizing the ideas presented in chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4. By summarizing those, the author wanted to show how the language mechanism is understood by this study. Huth (2021) states, “Overall, we gained an understanding of the language learning process that so tightly connects language, language use, social interaction, and language development so as to render them virtually inseparable” (p. 127). The author briefly describes how our views of how language works influence teachers when they design lessons, create materials, or deliver instruction. The author also explains why examining classroom data is important. In this chapter, Huth emphasizes that analyzing classroom data is an essential element of teacher education. Hence, the author suggests incorporating usage-based and social-interactional insights into the teaching materials.

This book is written in a way that makes the CA method easier to understand, even for someone who is a complete beginner in this field. By first describing the differences between written and spoken language, it activates schemata from our previous knowledge and allows us to critically think and reflect on the differences in spoken language by showing examples and analyzing them. Once the necessity is understood, this book introduces the CA approach in a way that beginners can easily understand. However, it was easier for me to understand the CA method because I had taken the second-language acquisition (SLA) course in my graduate program, where we were taught to analyze classroom data using CA. Having that background information about CA helped me to understand the concept quickly. Despite my prior background in CA, I found that the book's approach to making the CA approach understandable is also applicable to beginner learners.

The author also bridges theory and practice by clearly explaining, with examples, how interaction shapes language learning and offering ideas for how teachers can promote a classroom environment that fosters authentic interaction. The author also promotes why knowing and implementing CA is beneficial for teachers,

designers, and researchers. The way the book describes the CA method will interest someone in this field.

While readers without prior knowledge of CA may initially find this book a little challenging, referring to the CA transcription chart on page 29 may help to understand the transcriptions better. I suggest reading the transcription out loud and applying pitch, intonation, etc., to help you understand the gist of actual conversations. You can also try educating one of your teacher colleagues about the CA transcription and recreating the dialogue using it. This would be fun, and you will definitely understand why it is important to use CA to analyze the spoken data.

By the end of this book, Huth (2021) encourages teachers to design lessons based on authentic interaction, use naturally occurring language rather than scripted dialogue, encourage student collaboration and peer interaction, and focus on meaning-making alongside grammatical accuracy, and analyze classroom interactions to improve teaching practices. This book is insightful for students of applied linguistics and ELT, researchers interested in CA in second-language acquisition, language teachers seeking to maximize outcomes in the language classroom, and curriculum developers.

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***Generative Artificial Intelligence and Language Teaching*. Benjamin Luke Moorhouse and Kevin M. Wong. Cambridge University Press, 2025.**

Reviewed by Hisashi Harada, Akita International University

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With the powerful ability to create varieties of content instantaneously, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has been transforming the traditional assumption of education. Teachers are facing a challenging question: how can or should they integrate GenAI into language teaching and learning? As the authors argue, GenAI

has significant potential for teachers in enhancing teaching efficiency, but it entails various risks that may disrupt both teaching and learning per se.

In Generative Artificial Intelligence and Language Teaching, Benjamin Luke Moorhouse and Kevin M. Wong provide a comprehensive overview and a practical guide on the use of GenAI in the teaching profession. The book aims to develop five aspects of ‘professional-GenAI-competence’ (P-GenAI-C) that are essential for teachers to implement GenAI effectively and responsibly. Specifically, these include: (1) technological proficiency, including awareness of GenAI’s functions and affordances, (2) pedagogical compatibility, namely using GenAI to supplement and enhance students’ learning, (3) the use of GenAI in teachers’ professional work, including grading and giving feedback, (4) risk, well-being, and ethical use, and (5) preparation of students for critical and productive engagement with GenAI (p. 2). All of these are valuable for pre-service and in-service language teachers at all levels of experience.

The book is divided into eight chapters. Each chapter begins with a GenAI-generated summary in various styles such as a poem and dialogue, along with the authors’ prompt, and concludes with a summary section, helping readers understand GenAI capabilities and key concepts. Chapter 1 provides the answer to ‘What is GenAI?’, introducing a range of GenAI tools and their capabilities. Chapters 2 through 4 focus on how teachers can apply GenAI as a knowledge resource and development tool for lesson planning and materials preparation, as well as assessment and feedback. Then, Chapter 5 turns the focus to how students can use GenAI in their language learning. Chapter 6 addresses ethical and social issues related to GenAI use. Finally, Chapter 7 and 8 discuss essential knowledge and skills about prompting, and how teachers should update their knowledge and continue to enhance skills in the future.

Among the eight chapters, Chapter 5 “Students’ Use of GenAI in Language Learning,” is particularly important. The examples of prompts and responses indicate sufficient affordances of students’ use of GenAI. Specifically, GenAI may enable students’ personalized learning and self-directed learning (SDL) through approaches such as customized practice exercises and receiving instant feedback. However, autonomous self-learning is achieved only based on students’ self-regulation and AI literacy. Because of GenAI’s nature: strong power, high efficiency, and extreme easiness of use, students’ over-reliance on GenAI may easily lead to deterioration of their motivation and learning abilities. In this regard, this chapter offers a challenging question: how should teachers develop AI literacy of learners?

This concern leads to the most compelling chapter, Chapter 6, “Ethical and Social Consideration with GenAI in Language Teaching,” because it addresses the most essential challenge: how teachers should integrate GenAI into education in a responsible and equitable manner. In this section, the authors present multifaceted issues: language standardization, originality, bias, copyright, accuracy, and environmental impacts, to name a few. In addition to compliance issues that teachers must carefully consider, the most serious impact on teachers is that GenAI has the potential to disrupt traditional teacher roles and reshape the classroom dynamics. AI

allows teachers to enhance efficiency in teaching and preparations. However, the essential message from the authors is that over-reliance on AI could diminish creative and relational teacher roles, and AI may take over their traditional task of content provision. This chapter may remind teachers of the double-edged dilemma which they will increasingly face in the future.

According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024, 17% of teachers in Japanese lower secondary schools reported that they have already used AI in their work (OECD average: 36%) (OECD, 2025). Probably, more teachers currently use AI tools. Whether teachers like it or not, GenAI will be a part of education, and they need to use it in one way or another. While 88% of teachers in Japan (OECD average: 75%) reported their lack of skills and knowledge about how to use AI in teaching (OECD, 2025), Chapter 7 “Essential GenAI Skills and Knowledge,” provides fundamental perspectives teachers need to understand. For instance, interactional competence (how to prompt), finding suitable GenAI, corroboration and validation of content (such as use of common sense, double check, and source check). As the authors point out, it makes sense that if teachers want to be able to utilize GenAI tools in their professional practices, they need to learn how to interact with these tools. This suggests that teachers need to recognize that AI does not simply provide efficiency, but requires advanced skills and continuous updating of knowledge, as encouraged in Chapter 8 “Enhancing Professional GenAI Competence through Professional Development.”

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of this book is that it emphasizes evidence-informed approach. This implies that authors do not simply encourage use of GenAI, but encourage teachers to evaluate its potential opportunities and risks, and to consider possible applications in their teaching profession. As the authors note at the beginning, while GenAI is evolving rapidly, technological efficiency itself may not be a primary focus in this book. Instead, I presume that the authors’ message is that educational achievement relies not primarily on GenAI, but on teachers’ professional insights.

While GenAI is evolving rapidly and increasingly used without its efficiency and potential negative impacts being sufficiently examined, teachers are searching for appropriate ways of utilizing GenAI in education. As the authors refer to “evidence-informed and reflexive professional development” (pp. 75-76) at the end of the book, teachers need to learn it through their on-site experiences. I believe this book provides teachers with significant guideposts in finding personalized answers in their own educational context.

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***Second Language Learning Theories* (5th ed.) by Rosamond Mitchell, Florence Myles, Emma Marsden, and Laura Domínguez. Routledge, 2026.**

Reviewed by Kayoko Kaiho, Akita International University

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Introduction

Second Language Learning Theories (5th ed.) by Mitchell et al. (2026) introduces readers to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) through a comprehensive review of its major theories and research findings. This book explains the process of second language learning from linguistic, psychological, and social science perspectives, and considers how these insights can inform language teaching practices. This book should appeal to language teachers because it encourages them to understand second language learning from multiple perspectives.

Overall Structure of the Book

Chapter 1 explains that second language acquisition is a complex phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by a single theory and provides an overview of key concepts and summarizes key issues in second language acquisition (Mitchell et al., 2026). Chapter 2 reviews the history of SLA research and Chapters 3-9 and 11 explain different theoretical perspectives, including the Universal Grammar Approach, cognitive approaches, interaction, meaning-based perspectives, sociocultural perspectives and sociolinguistic perspectives and an integrating theoretical perspective. In the fifth edition, Chapter 10 was newly added to examine individual differences in second language acquisition. It highlights that these factors are dynamic, interact with one another, and shape the process of language learning. Chapter 12 summarizes the major findings, discusses future directions and explains the implications for language teaching (Mitchell et al., 2026). While the book provides a comprehensive overview of second language acquisition, this review focuses on Chapter 5, 6 and 10 because they offer valuable insights into cognitive processes, interaction and individual differences in language learning. These chapters were

particularly relevant to my own experiences as both a language learner and an English teacher.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 explains the process of second language learning. First, learners notice language features in the input. The new information is then stored in declarative memory as explicit knowledge. Through repeated practice, learners gradually develop this knowledge into a skill. As a result, the explicit knowledge becomes procedural knowledge, which can be used automatically. Finally, through automatization, language processing becomes faster and more efficient, reducing the burden on working memory and allowing learners to focus more on understanding and communication (Mitchell et al., 2026).

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 explains how interaction promotes second language acquisition. Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of language input, the chapter argues that interaction provides opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and notice gaps in their own language use (Mitchell et al., 2026).

The role of corrective feedback is one of the chapter's key discussions on interaction. During interaction learners often receive feedback from teachers or native speakers when they make mistakes. The chapter introduces several types of corrective feedback that encourages learners to recognize their own errors instead of simply being given the correct answer. As a result, learners become more aware of the differences between their language production and the target language (Mitchell et al., 2026).

Another important point is the relationship between noticing and working memory. The authors explain that receiving feedback alone does not guarantee learning. Learners must first notice the feedback and process it in their working memory. However, if they are concentrating on understanding meaning, remembering vocabulary, and preparing a response at the same time, they may not have enough cognitive resources to notice the feedback. This idea helped me understand why some learners benefit more from interaction than others (Mitchell et al., 2026).

The chapter also discusses individual differences among learners. Factors such as language proficiency, working memory, motivation, anxiety, and personality can influence how much learners benefit from interaction. Overall, this chapter suggests that successful language learning depends not only on interaction itself but also on how learners process feedback and use it to improve their language ability (Mitchell et al., 2026).

Chapter 10

This chapter explains that learners do not all make the same progress in second language acquisition, even though they receive the same instruction. It argues that these differences are influenced by individual differences, such as language aptitude, motivation, anxiety, willingness to communicate, personality, learning strategies, age, and gender. This chapter also points out an increasing number of studies' view that these individual differences are not fixed but dynamic and can change over time and across different contexts. It presents and discusses numerous research findings on individual differences, including rapidly developing areas such as positive psychology and learners' personalities, which have attracted increasing attention in recent years (Mitchell et al., 2026).

Connecting the Book to My Experience as a Language Learner and Teacher

Chapter 5 reminded me that language learning is not just about gaining knowledge. It is about transforming explicit knowledge into procedural knowledge through repeated use. When I was a high school teacher, I focused on explicit grammar instruction, helping students understand grammar points and having them practice enough to answer test questions correctly. This mostly involves noticing and building declarative memory or explicit knowledge with only limited skill acquisition. Since tests allow students to focus on grammar points, working memory demands are relatively low. Learners can perform well on written tests even without developing procedural memory or achieving automatization through repeated practice. That's why even students who can do well on tests still struggle to speak fluently. I also experience this difficulty as a learner during class discussions. I use most of my working memory to understand what other students are saying, while simultaneously thinking about grammar, vocabulary, word order and pronunciation, and how to respond.

Chapter 6 also refers to the role of working memory in language processing and interaction. It explains that noticing the feedback is an important step in language acquisition, however, when the task is too demanding, learners may focus on meaning only and fail to notice the feedback. This chapter helped me better understand not only the importance of interaction but also the relationship between working memory and the cognitive demands of classroom tasks. It made me realize more clearly what I had previously experienced only vaguely as a teacher.

Chapter 10 was particularly interesting because it discusses motivation and highlights the relationship between positive psychology, such as growth mindset, and second language acquisition. As a teacher, I found these insights highly valuable and hope to keep them in mind when supporting my students' language learning.

Overall Reflection

I consider this book to be an informative introduction to SLA because it encourages both language teachers and learners to reflect on their own experience while reading. Although some parts may be a little challenging for readers who are new to SLA, this book helps connect research with classroom practice. I would recommend it to graduate students, language teachers, and anyone who is interested in understanding second language acquisition from multiple perspectives.

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***Second Language Teacher Education: A Cognitive and Evidence-Based Perspective.* Alessandro G. Benati, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.**

Reviewed by Ken Guerrero, Akita International University

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Language teachers are exposed to many theories that explain how second languages are acquired, but applying those theories in actual classroom settings is not as simple as following a simple recipe. In *Second Language Teacher Education: A Cognitive and Evidence-Based Perspective*, Alessandro G. Benati presents SLA theories in a thorough yet accessible manner and explains how they can inform language teaching and teacher education. He recognizes that there is no universal teaching method that works in every context and pushes teachers toward informed decision-making, weighing SLA research against learner needs and the realities of a given classroom. Effective language learning, in his view, depends on teachers supplying, "good comprehensible meaningful input" and getting learners to engage in "a wide range of meaning-based activities" (Benati, 2024, p. 71). The book's real value lies in how consistently it ties SLA theories to classroom application, which makes it useful reading whether you're new to teaching or well into your career.

The book is aimed at pre-service teachers, graduate students, and teacher educators, and it's structured around ten guiding questions spread across eleven chapters, plus a FAQ chapter at the end. The first four chapters lay the theoretical groundwork: what language is, how it's acquired, and the cognitive frameworks behind learning it. Chapters 5 through 7 shift toward application, such as vocabulary

development, comprehensible input, interaction, and classroom discourse. Chapters 8 through 10 turn to grammar instruction, task design, and technology. Along the way, reflection questions, self-assessment activities, and recurring sections like "In a Nutshell" and "Try It Out" push readers to think about how the research applies to their own teaching. While complex theories and linguistic jargon may seem daunting at first, the book is broken down into digestible chunks that ensure high comprehension and engagement.

Benati pushes back on traditional teaching views, insisting that "language is not the rules and explanations that appear on the pages of textbooks" (Benati, 2024, p. 64). He believes that grammar builds up gradually, often through processes learners aren't even consciously aware of. He reminds readers how meaningful input, interaction, and context are the actual driving forces behind language development. Benati is blunt about this: "comprehensible input remains the foundation of all language learning" (Benati, 2024, p. 49), and learners need real opportunities to link form to meaning. His take on vocabulary is worth pausing on with the emphasis being on meeting words repeatedly in context rather than drilling isolated definitions. His discussion of interaction works the same way, showing how communication gives learners room to negotiate meaning and build out their internal language systems. As mentioned previously, no single method gets crowned as the answer; instead, Benati offers principles they can apply depending on what a classroom actually needs.

Chapter 8 takes on grammar instruction and corrective feedback; Benati doesn't dismiss explicit knowledge, but he's equally clear that learners need space to notice and process structures on their own. He points to "input-based interventions such as textual enhancement and input flood" as ways to keep input comprehensible while still steering attention toward specific forms (Benati, 2024, p. 155). From this perspective, grammar isn't a checklist to master but a tool that supports communication. Benati also stresses learner self-awareness, noting that teachers cannot fully be responsible for students' language learning but that "opportunities should be created for them to try to identify their own language learning needs" (Benati, 2024, p. 135).

Chapter 9 carries this further by looking at communicative tasks. Benati draws a clear line between meaning-focused tasks and conventional grammar drills, pointing out that "the nature of meaning-focused tasks also distinguishes them from traditional grammar practice" (Benati, 2024, p. 193). This distinction matters in settings where accuracy tends to get prioritized over actual communication. Chapter 10 rounds things out with a level-headed take on technology, arguing that digital tools such as AI should be chosen warily because they serve a specific instructional goal, not just because they're available.

Overall, the book offers a grounded and research-informed introduction to major concepts in second language acquisition. It encourages readers to evaluate research critically and make instructional decisions that respond to learners' needs. This proves to be useful for graduate students and both new and experienced language teachers. For educators seeking an accessible introduction to evidence-based language teaching, this book offers valuable guidance and practical insights while presenting

complex concepts in a clear way, even for readers without a strong background in linguistics or SLA theories. The way forward for educators is first through reflection upon practice, supported by appropriate research and an active willingness to adapt. As language education continues to evolve, educators must conform alongside these changes and make thoughtful choices that support learners in using language in meaningful ways.

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Reference: Qian, J. (2026). [Review of the book *Essentials for successful English language teaching* (2nd ed.) by Thomas S. C. Farrell and George M. Jacobs.] In C.C. Hale (Ed.), Graduate student explorations of SLA literature [Special issue]. *Accents Asia*, 21(3), 14-17.

Since its emergence in the early 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become one of the dominant approaches in English language teaching. Undoubtedly, CLT better addresses the communicative needs of language learners and is widely encouraged throughout the world. However, the movement of CLT remains a challenge as there are no agreed-upon principles to guide teachers in implementing CLT effectively (Farrell & Jacobs, 2020). In the book *Essentials for Successful English Language Teaching*, the authors propose eight essentials in CLT approach, attempting to help language teachers from diverse teaching contexts understand and implement CLT in a more systematic and holistic way.

Farrell and Jacobs devote the first chapter to clarifying the current state of CLT and the major issue associated with it. According to Farrell & Jacobs (2020), CLT can

be defined as a set of principles in language teaching. However, because there is no agreed-upon understanding of these principles, CLT has been interpreted in various ways and is often implemented only partially. For example, teachers may organize pair or group work during class while continuing to rely on traditional standardized tests for assessment.

To address this issue, the authors propose the eight essentials and argue that English language educators adopt them as an interconnected framework and implement them holistically rather than as separate components of language teaching (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010).

The authors present eight essentials in chapter 2 to chapter 9: Learner Autonomy, the Social Nature of Learning, Curricular Integration, Focus on Meaning, Diversity, Thinking Skills, Alternative Assessment, and Teachers as Co-learners. Additionally, it should be noted that comparing to the former edition, in the second edition of the book, the authors have added a new chapter on technology and cooperation, reflecting developments in this field. Figure 1 illustrates the interconnections of these eight essentials.

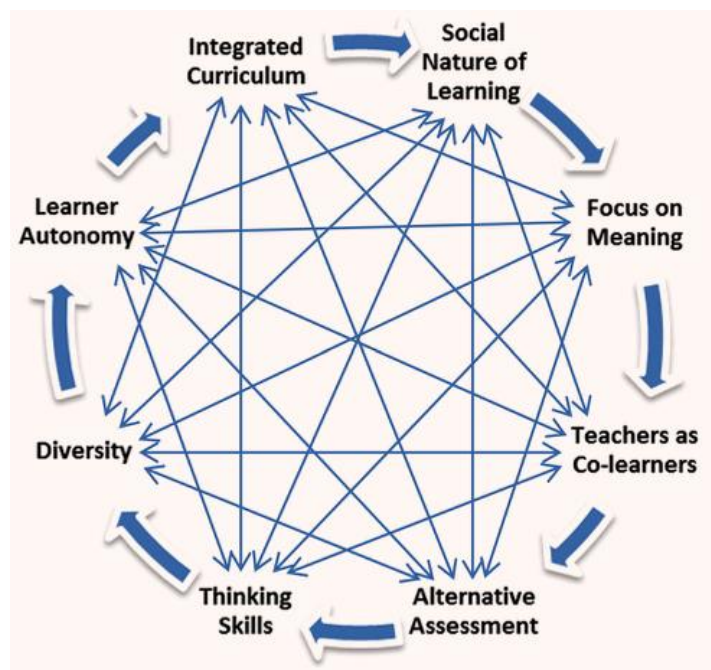


Figure 1. Note. Copy from Farrell, T. S. C., & Jacobs, G. M. (2020). *Essentials for successful English language teaching*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Copyright 2020 by Farrell, T. S. C., & Jacobs, G. M.

Each chapter focuses on one of the eight essentials and follows a consistent organizational structure. It begins with a classroom vignette illustrating a teaching situation related to the featured essential. This is followed by an elaboration of the theoretical foundations underlying the essential. Building on these theoretical foundations, the authors provide detailed classroom implications and practical teaching suggestions. Each chapter concludes with the roles of teachers and students, together with a series of reflective questions to encourage readers to form their own ideas in second language teaching.

The classroom implications is perhaps the most valuable part of each chapter for teaching practitioners, particularly pre-service and novice teachers who want to implement CLT in their classrooms. All suggested activities are backed up solidly with theoretical foundations and are introduced with detailed explanations and guidance for implementing. Many activities are accompanied by sample teaching materials, making them particularly accessible.

Another strength of the book is that its holistic framework provides language educators with a conceptual lens through which to understand CLT. In other words, by understanding each essential as part of an interconnected framework, language educators are better able to recognize the relationships among the essentials when reading studies that focus on individual aspects of CLT. For example, several recent studies have examined the effectiveness of cooperative learning in promoting learner autonomy (Shi & Han, 2019; Chowdhury, 2021). Their findings are consistent with the authors' argument that the Social Nature of Learning and Learner Autonomy are closely interconnected. Such studies provide empirical support for the classroom implications presented in the chapter, particularly the use of collaborative learning activities. At the same time, by keeping the holistic framework in mind, language educators can better understand why cooperative learning contributes to the development of learner autonomy.

Among the eight essential chapters, Chapter 8 is particularly critical. This chapter is devoted to alternative assessment within a CLT framework. While acknowledging the need for traditional assessment formats, the authors argue that alternative assessments can complement traditional instruments as it adopts real-life conditions and involves higher-order thinking skills (p.109). As the authors state, "the goal of Alternative Assessment is not just assessing; the goal is also to teach" (p. 109). This perspective remains highly relevant today, as subsequent studies have continued to investigate how advanced assessment practices, such as peer assessment, contribute to the development of learners' critical thinking, learner autonomy, and self-regulation (Shelton-Strong, 2018; Mansory, 2020; Ismail, Nikpoo, & Prasad, 2023).

One major limitation of the book is that the effectiveness of suggested activities is unclear since much of the evidence is illustrative rather than empirical. Consequently, readers may wonder which groups of learners are most likely to benefit from these activities and to what extent they contribute to learners' language development. In addition, although the classroom implications are grounded in theoretical foundations, the discussion of the implementation is relatively limited, as the authors do not specify the target learners, address potential classroom challenges, or propose possible solutions. For example, the authors argue that alternative assessment is often "less reliable in terms of consistency of scoring" (p. 120). However, subsequent research has shown that the reliability of self-assessment can be substantially improved when learners receive systematic training (Hale, 2015).

Overall, the book can be described as a pedagogical guide for English teachers who are ready to implement the CLT approach in their classrooms. Through its clear holistic framework and explicit explanation of practical classroom implications, the book helps pre-service and novice teachers develop a better understanding of what

CLT is and how it can be effectively implemented in classroom practice. As the authors state, it is intended to serve as a "handy, user-friendly resource" (p. 7). Nevertheless, despite its limitations, the book is strongly recommended for pre-service and novice teachers. It is encouraged to read the book alongside recent research on each of the eight essentials. By doing so, they can benefit both from the holistic framework provided by the book and from recent developments in each area.

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Conversation Analysis and Language Teacher Education: Intervention Studies

Sert, O., & Waring, H. Z. (Eds.). Springer Nature, 2025.

Reviewed by Lu Haozhe, Akita International University

Reference: Lu, H. (2026). [Review of the book *Conversation analysis and language teacher education: Intervention studies*. Olcay Sert & Hansun Waring (Eds).] In C.C. Hale (Ed.), Graduate student explorations of SLA literature [Special issue]. *Accents Asia*, 21(3), 18-19.

The book *Conversation Analysis and Language Teacher Education* discusses how Conversation Analysis (CA) can be used in teacher education to connect teaching theory with actual classroom practice. Through different case studies, the book demonstrates how CA helps both pre-service and in-service teachers become more aware of classroom interaction and improve their professional development. Overall, the book successfully presents CA as a practical tool that allows teachers and teacher educators to observe classroom interaction in a more detailed and reflective way.

One of the main strengths of the book is its detailed explanation of how CA can be implemented in teacher education programs. At the beginning of many chapters, the authors explain how they embedded CA into different educational frameworks and teaching contexts. Rather than only discussing theoretical concepts, the book provides concrete procedures and training systems that teacher educators can follow in practice. Although different chapters apply CA in different ways, many teacher training programs in the book share a similar process. First, student-teachers are introduced to the basic concepts of CA. Next, they analyze transcribed classroom interaction examples in order to recognize interactional patterns and teaching problems. After that, they record and transcribe their own lessons, share their data with experts or peers, and discuss possible improvements. Finally, the student-teachers reflect on their teaching and write feedback about their own performance. By repeatedly going through this process, teachers gradually become more aware of their classroom interaction and teaching practices. The use of recordings, transcription, and reflective feedback also allows readers to observe teachers' development more objectively. As a result, the book not only explains the theoretical value of CA, but also demonstrates practical ways to apply it in teacher education.

Another main strength of the book is its explanation of how CA can help pre-service teachers improve classroom interaction. In Chapter Two *Training "Task Preliminaries": A Case of Collaborative Interventions in an English Teacher Education Context in Japan*, authors Mika Ishino and Junko Takahashi examine how CA intervention helped pre-service teachers recognize problems in task instruction during task-based language teaching activities. By recording and analyzing classroom interaction, the teachers became aware of problems that they had not noticed during real-time teaching. For example, many teachers experienced difficulties when explaining task procedures and transitioning students into activities smoothly. Through CA analysis and discussion with experts, they realized the importance of using preliminaries before tasks in order to better prepare students for classroom activities. This chapter clearly shows how CA can turn abstract teaching theories into observable classroom practices.

Another important contribution of the book is its discussion of in-service teacher development. Different from previous chapters that mainly focus on pre-service teachers, Chapter Six *Conversation Analysis as "Critical Event" in Teacher Reflective Practice*, Chris Carl Hale examines how three in-service teachers reflected on their experiences using CA.

The chapter analyzes their reflections through Wilson and Parrish's model of transformative learning, including personal meaning, topic competence, and professional relationships. The chapter suggests that CA is not only a tool for improving classroom teaching, but also a framework that shapes teachers' professional identities. Through reflective analysis of classroom interaction, the teachers became more aware of interactional features that they had previously overlooked during teaching. In addition, some participants further developed their professional competence by combining CA with linguistic concepts and research terminology. The chapter also demonstrates how CA can encourage long-term professional development, as some teachers continued their academic careers by pursuing PhD research using CA as a methodology. What makes this chapter particularly valuable is that it presents teacher development as an ongoing reflective process rather than a simple improvement of teaching techniques. The teachers gradually began to see themselves not only as classroom instructors, but also as researchers and reflective practitioners within the field of language education.

Overall, Conversation Analysis and Language Teacher Education effectively demonstrates how CA can bridge the gap between teaching theory and classroom practice. By providing concrete classroom examples and reflective case studies, the book shows the value of CA for both teacher education and continuing professional development.

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***Narrative Inquiry into Language Teacher Identity: ALTs in the JET Program.*
Takaaki Hiratsuka. Routledge, 2022.**

Reviewed by Samantha Lucas, Akita International University

Reference: Lucas, S. (2026). [Review of the book *Narrative inquiry into language teacher identity: ALTs in the JET Program*. Takaaki Hiratsuka.] In C.C. Hale (Ed.), Graduate student explorations of SLA literature [Special issue]. *Accents Asia*, 21(3), 19-21.

Many people living in Japan or aspiring to live in Japan have heard of the profession of Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). In recent years, it is common for every school-aged child to have at least encountered an ALT in their English lessons and those ALTs' photos are likely to appear in various pamphlets distributed by the school that their parents can then inspect. Thus, many people are aware of ALTs but there is very little known about their professional roles and experiences. The book (Hiratsuka 2022) seeks to answer various questions about the lives and identities of ALTs in Japan. This book is structured as a narrative inquiry and is thus meant to represent a more personal story of what it means to be an ALT. As a former ALT myself, I will examine this book through the lens of my own experiences as well as trying to fill any gaps in my perception of other ALTs. I found while reading that while Hiratsuka's book offers a clearer picture of ALT identity, I feel there is a

major gap in regards to the perspectives of ethnically Asian ALTs and how their experiences differ from their non-Asian counterparts.

The book is formatted with the introduction explaining the history of the Japan Teaching and Exchange Program (JET), how ALTs operate within the program, an overview of the current literature and how there is a lack of focus on them as people. This section also explores how identity is defined. Then, Hiratsuka introduces the ALT Identity Model (p. 61) which will be explored in their own chapters. The following chapter contains the stories of ten former ALTs of various nationalities, ethnicities, genders and sexualities, all of which were collected via narrative inquiry. In the next two chapters, Hiratsuka clearly defines the identities that are to be explored in the book as being separated into two categories with three parts in each. The first category being the foreigner identity, which is further divided into the celebrity, sojourner, and English expert. Next is the dabbler identity which consists of the assistant, greenhorn, and Japanese novice (p. 61). The author uses quotes from the participants to support the creation of such identities that represent various ALTs. Finally, the remaining chapters look at both internal and external factors that add variance to the different parts of ALT identities. Topics such as race, gender, sexuality, motivations, location and experience were discussed here.

The choice to use narrative inquiry for this book gives a refreshing insight into the world of ALTs. I am currently in a graduate program at a Japanese university and have had the opportunity to participate in an interview with undergraduate students regarding my experience as an ALT. The students conducting the interviews were oftentimes shocked by my answers, especially regarding the lack of formal training or qualifications needed in order to be an ALT. Hiratsuka directly addresses this within the book, calling into question the privileges (high pay, reduced hours, free flight and accommodation, etc.) afforded to ALTs despite not requiring any experience that would realistically make them more deserving of such privileges. High salary, less working hours, celebrity status are all examples of the benefits many ALTs receive. Hiratsuka is unflinching in his criticism of this system, not specifically blaming the ALTs themselves, but rather the system that does not vet their participants properly. While blame is not placed on the ALTs, he does point out the fact that many of them will internalize this privileged position as a part of their identity and feel the need to defend it, despite their arguments sometimes resulting in contradictions or faulty logic. For example, one participant noting that their role is important for teaching a non-accented form of English to children, but later commenting on how English should be seen as a lingua franca and that Japanese people should stop worrying over mistakes. This frankness is something that is definitely valuable to the overall ALT community, as it points out the lack of clarity regarding the ALT position. If the focus is on English education, shouldn't those hired be qualified in some way?

Despite such criticisms, Hiratsuka's main goals of trying to spread awareness of ALT experiences can be clearly observed. The passion put into the writing of this book cannot be understated. Hiratsuka himself mentions in the first chapter that one of his goals from writing this book is that "Japanese students, their parents, and other community members whose lives often intersect with those of ALTs [can] obtain knowledge about ALTs' perceptions, practices, and emotions in their daily lives" (p. 3). This is a noble cause, however, I question how realistic of a goal this is. The book is written in an academic style of English that is

inaccessible to students and their parents, leaving the main target audience of this book to be native speakers or high level English learners. Thus, the people most likely to read this book and be able to understand it would be ALTs themselves, prospective ALTs, or scholars in the English Foreign Language field of study.

In the last section of the book, Hiratsuka talks of “factors that influenced their experiences” (p. 152) that he explains in detail. Nationality and ethnicity are explored amongst the participants and many of them explained how being a foreigner and looking different from standard Japanese citizens made them stand out. There was also discussion on the different perceptions Black people received compared to their White counterparts. All of which are valuable discussions related to ALT identity. However, from the two ethnically Asian participants, only Jordan was highlighted in this section as having a relatively similar experience in Japan to his life in Singapore and the main notable difference being that he was placed in a more rural area. Sam, the Asian-Canadian participant is not mentioned at all throughout this section. Perhaps it is because he had nothing to say on the topic, which is fair as it is in regards to his own identity. However, as I was reading this book, I kept waiting for some mention about the differing experiences ethnically Asian ALTs face compared to other more “obviously foreign” ALTs, but I was left feeling rather unfulfilled. This seems to be a lingering gap in the literature relating to ALTs that I had hoped this book might provide insight on, as a former ALT who is Asian American myself. For example, the “celebrity” identity did not examine how most ethnically Asian ALTs do not receive the same kind of attention as the “typical” ALT does. This would have been a potentially interesting topic to explore in this book, as the status of “non-celebrity” comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Overall, this book provides a good rough overview of the lives and experiences of various ALTs, despite the limitations of how much can be told within a single book. I believe that future ALTs will have the most to gain from this book as a way to reconcile with the dissatisfactory (but well-known) “every situation is different” line that is fed to them by the overall community when asking for advice. It is also a valuable resource for those wishing to improve the current system of how ALTs are chosen and trained, pushing for a more concrete definition of the role, and clearly outlined duties and responsibilities.

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***Investigating Foreign Language Anxiety: Lessons for Research into Individual Differences.* Katalin Piniel. Springer Nature, 2024.**

Reviewed by Izumi Suganuma, Akita International University

Reference: Suganuma, I. (2026). [Review of the book *Investigating foreign language anxiety: Lessons for research into individual differences* by Katalin Piniel.] In C.C. Hale (Ed.), Graduate student explorations of SLA literature [Special issue]. *Accents Asia*, 21(3), 22-23.

This book takes a fresh look at Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), its measurement methods, its emergence, and how learners navigate their psychological fluctuations during classroom interactions. In Hungary, where the author is from, although high school students must learn two foreign languages, about 20% of university students fail to receive the required graduation language certificate. While more than 370,000 students learn foreign languages in secondary school, the number falls to 48,000 at the tertiary level. Nagy (2009) points out that English education in Hungary continues to be dominated by grammar instruction and translation-based practices, and that exam preparation strongly governs classroom activities. As a result, English is treated as a subject that requires strict accuracy. Learners are constantly anxious about making mistakes in front of their classmates, carrying a heavy mental burden. I found that this circumstance is strikingly similar to English education in Japan. Against the background of these institutional challenges, Piniel deliberately focuses on individual differences. Although many kinds of personal factors hinder progress, she emphasizes that FLA is the most strongly related, and changing the educational system alone will not alter learners' behavior.

In Chapter 3, a meta-analysis examines the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which has played a pivotal role for four decades in measuring FLA, to reveal its structural issues. Piniel tries to visualize methodological confusion in FLA studies to raise questions about its transparency, replicability, and theoretical coherence. FLCAS consists of a 33-item questionnaire regarding classroom anxiety. Unless reliability and theoretical consistency are secured, such measurement will not uncover learners' psychological reality. Chapter 4 discusses FLA from the standpoint of which phase in the learning process it occurs. Piniel takes notice of MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) Input-Process-Output Anxiety Scale (IPOAS), gauging FLA at each stage. She argues that while FLCAS scales FLA at the general classroom level, IPOAS determines the specific points at which learners experience psychological hurdles more precisely.

In Chapter 6, Piniel reconsiders FLA as a psychological phenomenon changing dynamically on various timescales, rather than a fixed personality trait. Based on Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), Piniel empirically demonstrates that anxiety is instantaneously swayed by a teacher's comments, classroom events, or peers' reactions. FLA should be understood not as whether "it exists or not", but as "how it changes." To grasp these dynamics, conventional paper questionnaires are not enough. This is where Piniel introduces the idiodynamic method. Learners' oral performances are recorded, and subsequently, the learner and teacher watch the video for a retrospective analysis to evaluate moment-to-moment FLA and identify how anxiety climbed or plummeted. In this way, both can analyze emotional alterations quantitatively and qualitatively. This makes it possible to tailor educational dialogue to the student by mutually construing these mental dynamics.

Considering the intended audience, this book is valuable not only for language teachers from junior high schools to higher education, but also for graduate students in SLA or researchers studying learner psychology. It shifts FLA from something to “eliminate” to something to “understand and utilize,” fundamentally rethinking lesson design and assessment. Ultimately, it is recommended for anyone who does not want to demonize language anxiety.

What I came to understand through this book is that learning a foreign language is always accompanied by anxiety. Even though teachers often try to eliminate it, doing so completely is impossible. However, anxiety is a sign that learners have expectations for themselves and can serve as motivation for challenge. For example, if a student says, “I froze because I could not recall the word I wanted,” the teacher can advise, “It happens to anyone. You can explain it in another way, so there’s no need to panic.” Teachers can shift students’ cognition “before they move to an attractor state where language anxiety becomes dominant and inhibits the continuity of language learning” (Piniel, 2024, p. 151). Although learners may feel nervous, the sense of accomplishment when things go well becomes a powerful reward. Even if things do not go perfectly, as long as students can give themselves a passing mark, their anxiety will diminish.

Overall, Piniel’s work offers a theoretically rigorous and methodologically innovative contribution to FLA research. Its integration of CDST and idiodynamic analysis represents a significant advancement beyond traditional questionnaire-based approaches. Understanding and utilizing anxiety should be the teacher’s role, and it represents a deeply human way of supporting learners’ growth.

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