

A Purveyor of the Apple (of Knowledge)

Peter Luff

Before arriving in Minami Kashiwa more than a decade ago, the only associations that the word ‘provo’ sparked in my cerebral cortex were with extreme Irish republicanism, and it is one of the many gifts bestowed on me by Reitaku that, over the course of time, these synaptic connections were first supplemented and then largely replaced by altogether more positive, indeed genial alternatives. For it transpired that the existence of a ‘Provo’ among the residents of the same block in *hokubujutaku* where my family had come to live, and on the 5th floor of Building B where I was later to have an office, was in no way cause for alarm — indeed, it turned out to be a wholly unexpected bonus in the process of acclimatization to a new life in Japan.

One of my earliest encounters with John would prove to be completely typical of the man. Learning that we had arrived in our new apartment without counting the luxury of computer games for our children amongst our possessions, he dug out from his storage area some of the equipment and software we would need and made us a gift of them — nor was this by any means the last occasion on which we were to be the beneficiaries of his generosity. But in a way he did exact a price for this largesse, since the handing over of it was accompanied by what might, in another context, have been classified as a sermon. For John took immediate and serious pains to impress on me, as one of the as-yet-unconverted, the manifest superiority of all products bearing the Apple logo and the duty of all right thinking people to acquire some of said products at the earliest opportunity — and this evangelism, too, was something to which I was to become accustomed with the passing of the years. I had, it is true, already encountered other earnest prophets of the sect of ‘ibelievers’, but John’s faith was amongst the firmest and most ardent, and he never shirked the task of bringing the message of the (Mac) Book of Jobs to the benighted in

the highways and byways of the campus. The fact that he practiced what he preached did not always endear him to those more orthodox souls charged with maintaining the university's computer system, but even when the path of righteousness was not smooth underfoot, John took the anathemas in his stride and continued on his way.

Another computer-related benefit I derived from our relationship was the result of a commission to produce a pamphlet advertising the benefits for overseas students of choosing to come to study at Reitaku. Given that I knew as much about the art and science of desktop publishing as I did about the topography of the dark side of the moon, it was John's expertise alone in matters of graphic design that led to the creation of a rather persuasive and stylish (if we do say so ourselves) finished product. Throughout our labors on this joint task John proved characteristically unselfish in giving of his time and energies both to the work itself and, along the way, to educating me in the basics of how to lay out text and illustrations.

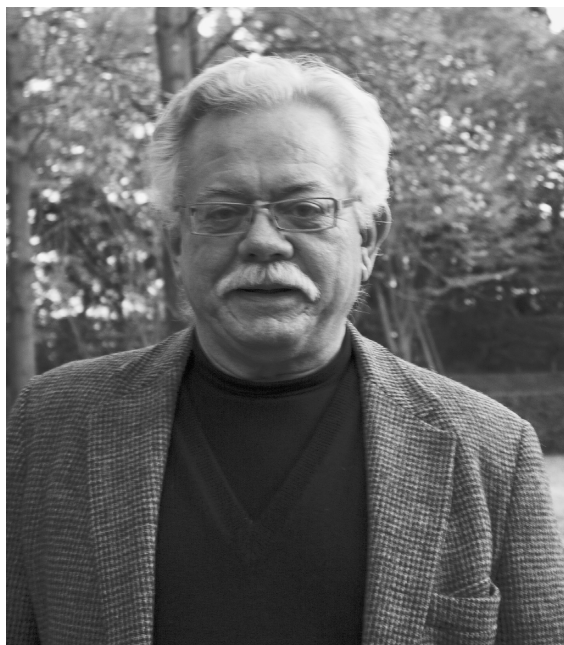
As a teacher John imported this enthusiasm for technology into the classroom — and outside it on occasion, as those who remember the day that the corridor on the 5th floor of B Building was turned into a movie set will testify. This preoccupation dovetailed neatly with the emphasis that he placed on the need for student autonomy in the mastering of the English language, for in both fields he was a believer in the philosophy of learning by doing. While he was careful to argue that autonomy should never be allowed to descend into anarchy, his preference always lay with ensuring that students did not succeed in their attempts to pass the burden of learning back to the teacher. He shared his insights on this subject in articles and commercial publications, and took it as a compliment if copies of the latter somehow found their way into student hands by paths that did not bring him pecuniary advantage.

One of his abiding research interests was in folklore, with particular reference to South East Asia. Personal experience and extensive travel had given him insight into a region that obviously fascinated him, and the troubled role of his own country in that most contentious of conflicts, the Vietnam War, clearly left a deep imprint on him. He turned this to advantage by studying the folklore of U.S. troops who

had participated in the fighting there, and this case study in the cultural consequences of the interaction between people and unfamiliar places illustrated a theme which meant much to him.

This explains why, in another of our early conversations, John impressed on me the urgent need to set down on paper my first impressions of life in Japan, on the grounds that things here were so different from anywhere else in the world that the strangeness of it all needed to be captured in words before the sharply etched contours confronting the newcomer became blurred and obscured by the haze of 'normal' existence. By this time he himself had been at Reitaku for nearly a decade, and in Japan for much longer, so that chance was no longer available to him — though this loss was something as necessary as it was inevitable, since it meant that he had become very familiar with the ways of Chiba drivers, a necessity for survival for those like him who rode a racing bike at top speed everywhere.

Perhaps in retirement he may decide to relocate once more to surroundings unknown and so have the opportunity to record all the uncommon things that accompany a new beginning. If this be the case, he will profit as a taker as well as a giver of (among other things) his own good advice. In any event, it is what he gave to others during his years at Reitaku which explains why his retirement leaves us impoverished in terms not merely of numbers.



Professor John E. Provo's Profile

Nationality: U.S.A.

Date of Birth: Feb. 27, 1948

Education

MA TESOL, Columbia University Teachers College: August 28, 1990

Graduate study in TESOL, University of Hawaii, 1986

BA Psychology, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina:
Nov. 24, 1976

EFL Teaching Experience

Sept. 2007-present	Tokyo University, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo: Department of Environmental Science
April 1992-present	Reitaku University, Kashiwa, Chiba: Associate professor since 1995
April 1989-April 1994	Rikkyo University, Tokyo: Part-time instructor in Department of General Education
April 1983-April 1992	Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo: Part-time instructor in School of International Politics, Economics and Business
April 1983-April 1990	Dokkyo University, Saitama: Part-time instructor in Department of English
Sept. 1978-June 1979	Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand: Part-time instructor in Department of Science
June 1979-Oct. 1983	Sony Language Laboratory, Tokyo: English instructor

Sept. 1978-May 1979 American University Alumni Language Center,
Bangkok, Thailand: English instructor

Professor John E. Provo's Publications

Books

BrainBubbles: Photocopiable ESL/EFL Activities for Enhanced Autonomy, Lulu. com, 2008

Eikaiwa Suguni Tsukaeru Chotto Shita Iikata Hyoogen Jiten, Tokyo Do, 2002

Saishin Eikaiwa Word Power, Sanshusha, 1999

Journal Articles

Moving the Locus of Control: Two Activities that Provide Content and Enhanced Autonomy for Language Classes, *The Reitaku Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*: September, 2007

A Man of Good Heart, *The Reitaku Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*: March, 2006

Folklore of the American Soldiers in the Vietnam War appeared in *Fabula B.D.* 36 Heft 3/4: April 26 1995. Co-authored with Thomas Barden. (refereed, international journal)

Getting Connected: An introduction to the Internet and its implications for academic research appeared in the *Reitaku Journal (Kiyoo)*: July, 1994

Sex Differences in Second Language Interaction Among 120 Japanese College Students appeared in the *Reitaku University Forum (Ronso)*: December, 1992

Another Look at Sex Differences in Nonnative Speaker Interaction appeared in *The Language Teacher*: July, 1991

The Role of the Teacher in the Language Classroom appeared in *The Language Teacher*: April, 1990

Conference Papers

Folklore of the American Soldiers in Vietnam was read at *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, The Twelfth International Conference in Paris, July 19-22, 1994. Co-authored with Thomas Barden

Professional Presentations

A three-hour presentation titled *New Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* was given as part of the teacher-training course at McKendree College, Tokyo on Feb. 7, 1993.

Two three-hour lectures titled *Critical Review of TESOL Readings* were given at McKendree College, Tokyo on October 24 and November 14, 1993.