Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG Newsletter

Conference 2010 Volume 18, Issue 2

Contents

Editor: Simon Lees <simich(at)gol.com>

TED at JALT2010

Three Major Events at the JALT conference this year; check jalt.org for the full conference schedule.

1. TED FORUM: Saturday, November 20, 5:15-6:45pm Room 1206

Sustainable Creative Professional Development

Featured presenters:

Greg Rouault, Konan University, Hirao School of Management

Tim Murphey, Kanda University of International Studies

Chris Stillwell, Sojo University

Professional development (PD) often involves a great deal of emotional outlay from teachers willing to be exposed to new chances for learning. This energy drain can derail attempts at or commitment to PD. Offering a more sustainable approach to PD, this forum presents an alternative framework. A Sustainable Development model can create outside-the-box opportunities for PD--opportunities that are less linear, more multidimensional, and more flexible, thereby reflecting the realities many teachers face.
 (In the JALT schedule, this is listed as Presentation #1963)

2. TED SIG Annual General Meeting (AGM): Saturday, November 20, 7:00-7:25pm (directly following the TED FORUM) Room 1206

Current officers (since JALT2009):

Steve Cornwell, Co-Coordinator

Deryn Verity, Co-Coordinator

Tim Knowles, Treasurer

Michael Crawford, Programs

Wilma Luth, Member at Large

Simon Lees, Newsletter Editor

Jan Visscher, Membership

This meeting is our once-a-year opportunity to get together in person, discuss projects for

the upcoming year, elect new officers and confirm current ones, ask for volunteers, get feedback from members, and set TED on its yearly course.

 (In the JALT schedule, this is listed as Presentation #1919)

      3. New TED Special Event

Not Rocket Science: A Teacher Ed Networking Fair

 Sunday, November 21, 6:15 – 8:00pm, Room 1002

Please spread the word among your colleagues! TED is hosting this new event, a networking fair for everyone who is interested in learning more about post-graduate and professional development opportunities in TEFL. Featuring wine, cheese, and a chance to meet informally with graduates and representatives from a wide variety of Certificate and MA programs based in Japan and overseas, this innovative fair is open to all. Brochures and formal program information will be available, too.

And Now a Word from...The Editor

Hello and welcome to the Conference edition of Explorations in Teacher Education (Volume 18, Issue 2), the newsletter of the Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

This newsletter has been timed to coincide with the JALT National Conference 2010 (November 19-22) in Nagoya. As you have probably already noticed, information about the Teacher Education SIG events at the conference is detailed on pages 2 and 3. In addition, on page 27 you will find a schedule for all the presentations which are associated with Teacher Education.

This issue of the newsletter has three articles. Two are from regular contributors James Porcaro and Anthony Robins, while the other is a debut piece from Patrice Pendell. Porcaro's article is, "Task-Based Language Teaching: How it Works in the Classroom." It is something of a follow-on piece to Paul Wicking's article about Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in 2009 and to Porcaro's own article which referred to TBLT in the last issue. Patrice's article is, "Japanese Traditional Storytelling, *Kamishibai*, for Cross-Cultural and EFL Learning." I must confess to having known very little about Kamishibai before reading this article, so thank you for the enlightenment, Patrice. The last article, by Anthony Robins is called, "Visiting Variety," and is about having visitors from outside come to the classroom in order to improve "both the depth and variety of opportunites available to students." A commendable goal, I am sure you will agree and one which Anthony has been providing for his students for many years. Let's hope he keeps it up for many more. As interesting and excellent as ever!

In SIG news, why not come to the SIG AGM on Saturday, November 22nd in room 1206, starting at 7pm? It's immediately after the SIG Forum which begins at 5.15pm (in the same room).

Hope you enjoy the issue,

Simon Lees,
Editor,
Explorations in Teacher Education

Task-Based Language Teaching: How it Works in the Classroom

James W. Porcaro, Toyama University of International Studies <porcaro@tuins.ac.jp>

1. Introduction

In a recent issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*, Paul Wicking (2009) presented historical background information related to the development of task-based language teaching (TBLT) along with a description of the foundation elements of this methodology and a useful working definition of a "task" itself. In my own article in the previous issue of this newsletter (Porcaro, 2010) on the topic of classroom management, I alluded to TBLT in the context of the instructional circumstances at universities in Japan with students having low levels of English language proficiency, as well as deficits in academic preparedness for tertiary education. The aim of this article is to extend the discussion of TBLT first by describing its advantages for the students referred to and then by taking the reader into my classroom to show specifically how this instructional approach can address the needs of those students and achieve positive outcomes.

2. Advantages of TBLT

Frost (2004) relates some of the advantages of employing TBLT, which are particularly germane for classes of university students with low levels of English language proficiency and academic preparation, as previously described (Porcaro, 2010). The fact that "students are free of language controls" and must utilize all their language resources in assigned tasks is an advantage precisely because of their linguistic limitations. Focus on the accurate use of selected forms would be particularly frustrating and unproductive, not to mention pointless. Tasks that provide a context that is meaningful and relevant for the students will have a far greater chance of eliciting their interest and effort, and positive outcomes. At the same time, students will encounter a more varied use of language forms, as needed to fit the requirements of the assigned tasks throughout the course. The performance of tasks in pairs or small groups is a strong communicative framework for students that can be genuinely enjoyable and motivating.

Yet, Burrows (2008) proffers several legitimate barriers to effective implementation of TBLT which merit responses. It seems generally true that often there is an "apparent randomness" to TBLT. However, this is not a problem at all as the variety of lesson content, in fact, helps to sustain the interest of students, as long as that content remains appealing and relevant; and the teacher certainly should be able to weave a cohesive thread through these lessons. Indeed, presentation of

consistently well-constructed, well-implemented task-based lessons with a variety of themes and content creates a certain momentum that draws from students a sense of positive expectation, if not motivation, for the lesson at hand rather than a dull, dismal dread of the same old, same old routine. It is also fair to note that, "some students have difficulty completing activities that call for their own creative input." Yet, it is precisely such creativity that students need to exercise. With appropriately devised, stimulating lesson materials and the teacher's guidance, students should benefit from doing such assigned tasks. Teachers must have well-placed faith in their students' capabilities.

It is surely the case in my experience with the low proficiency, academically underprepared students in my classes that TBLT "activities can often result in the prominent use of L1," as Burrows (2008) further notes. There may be few other teachers who manage their classrooms with the discipline that I exercise. In most of my other classes, English is strictly the only language used by the students and me, though I say a very limited number of words in Japanese when students do not know certain English words in use. However, in the classes of students considered in this paper, for many of them nearly any productive effort is an accomplishment. I feel that my task-based lessons maximize the output of English that these students are capable of generating, given their limited academic and affective resources. In simple fact, most will not communicate in spoken English except in very highly structured formats because they can barely do so at all. However, while the members of pairs may mostly negotiate with each other in L1 (Japanese), the completion of the tasks themselves (often in written form) is always in English only. Moreover, in these classes, too, certainly I speak nearly entirely in English. These outcomes are far better than those of teacher-centered instruction itself in L1 (Japanese). As the Willises (2009) observe, when criticisms are directed at innovative TBLT, they need to be applied as well to failing traditional practices.

Finally, Burrows (2008) also states that TBLT, "can overemphasize the importance of just getting the job done." Yet, again, for low proficiency, academically underprepared students, "getting the job done" is itself a major accomplishment which then provides motivation to reach higher levels of performance that they themselves may not have known they had the capacity and the will to achieve. The interaction among pair or group members, indeed, sometimes may seem underwhelming, but the effort and skills required for such activities are precisely those that these students need to exercise and develop through the opportunities afforded by TBLT. This instructional approach must not be avoided simply because these students initially may not approach assigned tasks with the ardor of some with higher levels of proficiency or because their

interpersonal social skills needed to undertake the tasks are initially underdeveloped or atrophied since elementary school days (Porcaro, 2001).

With TBLT, teachers provide opportunities in carefully structured lessons for students to relate their experiences and knowledge drawn from their personal lives and the society in which they live, and to formulate and express their thoughts, opinions, feelings, and imagination on topics within, or just a little beyond, their cognitive and linguistic domain. Employing such lesson content in well-suited activities facilitates, encourages, and motivates students' meaningful use of the language and self-expression, and thus promotes language acquisition and proficiency. Moreover, such instruction has integrity and intrinsic value in itself, even when the use of English by students surely will not carry beyond the classroom.

For lesson content and tasks to fit students' interests, cognitive capacity, and ability to work in English, very careful, selective choices must be made. Any textbook is likely to be inappropriate, inadequate, and simply deadly. Thus, teachers have to rely on an established repertoire of individual instructional means and stretch themselves to devise and develop worthy new materials and procedures. Constructing their own creative and effective lesson materials and employing methodologies they determine most suitable not only enables teachers to control the instructional process but also, knowing precisely the thinking behind their own prepared lessons, to deliver them with the passion they feel for their work. Students readily pick up on that and are likely, then, to respond more genuinely and positively (Bress, 2009). For university students with low English proficiency and limited academic strengths, their engagement with the language through TBLT genuinely and importantly contributes to their sense of ownership of English. When they have performed an assigned task well, it is a teacher's delight to notice that they realize and appreciate what they have just done and the fact that they own it, and to know that, at least, they can carry it out outside of the classroom.

3. TBLT in the classroom

The English language classroom is as authentic an environment, as much a part of the real world, as any other venue in society. There is nothing artificial or contrived in the human relations that are the essence of the culture of the classroom, and the communication that takes place in the context of the classroom, with its own legitimate norms and conventions (Cullen, 1998), is as real as any other outside its walls. Indeed, the relations between teacher and students and among students themselves are often more intimate and genuine than those many people experience outside the

classroom. The content of task-based language teaching centers on students' own lives and the instructional process involves students interacting closely with one another. As Azar (2007) remarks about communicative language practice, it takes account of the reality that students are in a classroom trying to learn English and it "means that real people are communicating in real time about real things in a real place for a real purpose."

Task-based language lessons require impeccable preparation in order to be appropriate for the students and delivered successfully with positive outcomes. Indeed, three inescapably fundamental factors required for good teaching in any circumstances, and particularly those addressed in this paper, are: skills, skills, skills.

3.1 Teaching English in English

One critical skill is the teachers' effective use of English in the classroom (Porcaro, 2009). Teaching English in English is a highly developed skill that is acquired from training, practice, and experience. It does not manifest itself simply because a teacher may be a native speaker or have a high level of English language fluency. Merely speaking English in the classroom does not equate with the adept use of English to teach the language with successful results. Especially with low proficiency students, teachers need to speak with exceptional clarity, appropriate volume, simple and limited vocabulary and syntax, and in a careful linear manner, without diversions or interruptions in their delivery. They must speak in carefully measured phrases, followed by pauses, with a suitable pace and rhythm, and a judicious amount of repetition. Points need to be expressed concisely and precisely. The content must be cognitively simple in order to fit students' levels of comprehension. Finally, teachers must have tolerance that they will still not be understood fully by all students, though everyone should be able to follow at least the main points of the presentation and the instructions for the assigned task. I speak in class nearly entirely in English and my students function well in this environment. Reliance on Japanese is a pretext that reveals to all the deficiencies of the teacher.

3.2 Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the first and regular components of the syllabus for my English course for first-year students in the university setting described in this paper. This type of activity, along with all forms of listening in the class, exposes students to lots of comprehensible input, an aspect of TBLT which has its theoretical foundation in the work of Krashen (1981). At the same time, Hoey

has stated that storytelling is one of the most effective ways to promote "lexical priming" as learners in this way, "are exposed to natural language in a natural context" (Spyropoulou, 2009).

I employ a repertoire of very carefully selected and edited short stories, each about 400 - 500 words in length, that are suitable for the students in these classes in terms of sparking their interest and a positive response, allowing them to handle both the language and content along with the associated assigned tasks. The stories are dramatic episodes that readily impress students' imaginations. They include easily recognizable characters, a combination of narrative and dialog text, and a pivotal dramatic element that students can appreciate. The stories are used effectively for listening, reading, recitation, and writing tasks.

I use one simple story in the first class meeting of the school year and by the end of the 90-minute period several groups of three students, in turn, stand in front of the class and give reading recitations of the story in three parts. One of the particular purposes of doing this in the initial class meeting is to establish my moral authority and to earn the trust of the students. They do as I direct them to do and in so doing they witness and experience that, in fact, they can do what I ask them to do, I will help them as necessary to succeed in the assigned tasks, and they will not be frustrated, embarrassed, or demoralized in the English classroom. (As students practice oral reading of the story in pairs before I select those to recite in the front of the room, I very carefully note those who have limited capacity to read in English and do not call them to the front of the room in this first class meeting.) This lesson also establishes students' confidence in themselves and the respect they will show for one another in the classroom.

I use four or five stories over the length of the two-semester course. The tasks for some stories personalize the themes, as in the O. Henry classic, "The Gift of the Magi", students write information points on a worksheet about a treasured possession of their own and special gifts they have given and received. For the Lafcadio Hearn story of "Mujina", they write a brief sketch about a frightening experience they have had. These writing tasks are introduced with an active listening task in which students hear some of my own stories about these themes while answering comprehension questions on a worksheet I have prepared and given to them. Creative writing is another task that I assign for some stories. Students working in pairs construct their own dialogs for characters in the story or individually write their own imagined ending for a given story. Note that there are ample opportunities to focus on English language forms within the texts of these stories themselves, in the items given on the worksheets and students' responses, and in follow-up writing

tasks of the kind that have been suggested.

3.3 Writing tasks

For many of the assigned tasks throughout the course, students write, sometimes individually and sometimes as pairs completing a jointly constructed piece of work. This mode of production is not only a necessity, given that most of the students have an extremely limited capacity for oral communication in English and simply will not engage in it freely, but it also has several benefits. The writing tasks focus students' attention on language usage, both lexical forms and to some extent grammatical forms. Students, in fact, use dictionaries, usually electronic, much more than needed or desired for these tasks, but this is a trade-off which allows them to move on with the task independently and with a sense of confidence and satisfaction with the language they are using. Furthermore, when I give feedback on their work, usually in the following lesson, after having collected the worksheets and polished at least some of their work, I read, for example, some of their frightening experience stories or their story character dialogs and story endings while they listen and complete a comprehension worksheet. I believe that doing this gives students a genuine sense of the worth and meaning of their effort and expression. Moreover, their own written work provides further instructional material for listening and reading tasks.

3.4 Other listening tasks

Other explicit listening tasks employed in the course include short dictations on topical subjects, related to the season of the year at hand, for example, and lectures on subjects such Japan's aging society and an introduction to Africa. The lectures in particular illustrate well the extent to which sophisticated topics can be included in the instructional content of an English language course for low-proficiency learners with limited academic attributes. My 30-minute talk on Japan's aging society highlights relevant data which are shown to students in colorful graphic formats. The topical vocabulary is actually quite limited and visible numerical data are readily understood through the medium of any language. My two-hour lecture on Africa – delivered over two class meetings – is astonishingly successful. (African Studies was my first area of advanced academic work and, a long time ago, I lived and taught in Uganda for several years.) All students listen with rapt attention and interest, and some take notes even though I make no mention at all that they can do so. I use a variety of maps, posters, pictures, and other graphic materials in my presentation. The lectures, in fact, are organized around the list of "images of Africa" that students have written on a worksheet in a previous lesson. This procedure of basing some lesson content on material generated by the students themselves validates for students the integrity of their work and provides a sense of self-

esteem they may not have experienced much in their past school lives.

One other highly successful lecture lesson involves my brief presentation of pro and con sides of ten topical social issues facing Japan. They include, for example, whether or not the use of lay judges in Japan's court system is a good procedure, whether or not married couples should be allowed to retain separate surnames, and whether or not more "baby hatches" for unwanted babies should be set up in hospitals. After my comments of about five minutes on each of the topics, one by one, students "vote" by checking a box next to a statement of support or rejection of each issue. After collecting the papers from the three classes that I teach, I tally the results and present them to the classes the following week. Students' interest in the presentation of the topics is very clear from everyone's sustained attention for more than one hour, even though they certainly do not fully comprehend each and every point I make on the topics, and their interest in the results of the poll of all the classes is palpably high. Once again it is noteworthy that while the students are not capable of discussing these issues in English, they can engage with them in an active listening and participatory way. Such a lesson as well lends further academic integrity to the course itself as a part of the university curriculum.

3.5 Listing

Listing, in fact, is one of the simplest tasks that can be assigned with topics that immediately relate to students, such as common activities in their lives and likes and dislikes of various sorts. A degree of critical thinking applies with listings of good points and bad points concerning particular subjects. For example, as part of my lesson on Japan's aging society, students in pairs list advantages and disadvantages of living together for each of the generations in a three-generation family. It is a modest exercise in reasoning and sorting ideas, and points can be expressed in English briefly with vocabulary within the students' domain or available from ready reference to a dictionary. After collecting the students' worksheets, assembling their collective points, and polishing the English, in the next lesson I distribute an impressive looking compilation of their work in a well-laid out paper which is used to review the content, vocabulary, and language forms contained therein. This kind of post-task activity provides students a non-threatening opportunity to focus on form as they may compare their original output with a polished version and notice the elements of grammar employed to give greater clarity and precision to the meaning of lexical items in their content points (Cullen, 2008).

3.6 Things Japanese

Another important recurring theme in my syllabus is "things Japanese". With well-prepared, very colorful and appealing lesson papers, students are instructed to explain, describe, and tell basic information about Japanese events, activities, foods, games, artefacts, and other items that are representative of certain periods of the year in Japan, for example, summertime and the end of the year and the New Year. As with many other assigned tasks, students work in pairs, negotiate their responses to the given items, and jointly write on the worksheets. Of course, as always, I initially present models of the task to be completed and monitor, guide, and support the students as they proceed with their work. An especially significant aspect of these "things Japanese" tasks is the fact that there are always three or four Chinese students in the class who usually have limited knowledge, and sometimes none at all, about certain Japanese customs. Thus, I pair them with Japanese partners. The activity gives both nationalities of students a genuine intercultural experience which they seem to appreciate quite a lot.

3.7 Structured speaking tasks

Lastly, as for speaking tasks for classes of university students with low English language proficiency and weak academic orientation, certainly it is possible to include them in the course work, but necessarily in highly structured formats. I have found success with grids of questions (usually 15) on a wide variety of topics from simple conversational questions, such as "What will you do after school today?" and "What is your part-time job?" to easily understood and simply answerable broader questions such as "Do you think the voting age in Japan should be lowered to 18?" and "What do you think was the biggest news story in [the past year]?" (answered from a given choice of five newspaper headlines). Written on the grid paper are the full answer formats, such as "After school today I will …" and "I think the voting age in Japan [should] [should not] be lowered to 18." After a round of teacher-directed practice of each question on the grid, students interact with other members of the class by asking one question and responding to one question with different classmates. Within this highly structured format students are able to speak totally in English. Moreover, the questions and the answer formats are embedded with grammatical forms and thus give students exposure and practice with them while listening to the teacher and classmates, in the oral information exchange with classmates, and in completing the answers of those other students in writing on their worksheets. Later, follow-up activities and tasks are employed with a number of the topics. My impression is that this highly successful instructional device is one of the students' favored lessons.

4. Conclusion

Teachers make all the difference in the quality of education for our students. Moreover, the results of our work should be assessed more by the accomplishments of the least capable of our students than by the success of students with stronger backgrounds, preparation, and motivation. Task-based language teaching is an effective means of instruction for the increasing number of students who enter Japanese universities with low English language proficiency along with a weak academic orientation for studies at this level. As Skehan (2002) notes, however, task-based language teaching, "requires a skillful, responsive, knowledgeable teacher". The exercise of these skills and efforts by teachers can ensure that students experience notable success in the English language classroom.

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The content of this article is drawn from a longer paper titled "Task-Based Language Teaching for Low-Proficiency Students at University" which will appear in the *Journal of the Faculty of Contemporary Society, Toyama University of International Studies,* Volume 3, in March 2011.

Japanese Traditional Storytelling, *Kamishibai,* for Cross-Cultural and EFL Learning

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The soul…never thinks without a picture.

Aristotle

As technology drives communications around the world instantaneously, we are increasingly more removed and oddly isolated. This paradox serves the application of a personal and very old communication strategy: a good story. It is a good story from which leaders inspire (Denning, 2005; Spears, 1998; Tichy, 1990). And as a teaching tool, a good story has been used to motivate learning for eons. This paper will discuss the merits of a story genre, Japanese traditional folktales told as *kamishibai*, for learning and describe applications used for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and international culture classes at a Japanese university.

There are thousands of stories about learning with tales of triumph and tribulations. Due to the variety of methods, measurements, results and accounting for individual differences, it is difficult, if not impossible to predict how an individual learner will succeed. But one thing seems clear: it is the job of the teacher, "to create a learning environment in which more learners can be successful…" (Lightbrown & Spada, 2005, p. 75). In answering this challenge, storytelling is one way to provide a successful situation for learning.

Storytelling is an ancient art and is fundamental to all nations, societies, and cultures. As Canilo Jose Cela said in his 1989 Nobel lecture, "storytelling has been a decisive tool in every era and in all circumstances" (p. 17). Stories can lead learners to knowledge, values, and understandings which are explicit or implicit: as it is the nature of narratives to allow the listener to internalize information. However meanings are derived, the journey is grounded in a medium fun and familiar to all. From the parable tool used by religious teachers to the Aborigines of Australia whose entire culture was preserved through oral traditions, storytelling is a powerful form of communication.

It is fitting that there is a story behind this pedagogic path of Japanese traditional *kamishibai* in the

EFL and international culture classrooms. The story of how I became fascinated by *kamishibai* began with a two woman team: a small Japanese lady and a tall redhead American who taught about Japanese culture in the U.S. at the Japanese Cultural Center and Museum, Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute. Central to my teaching tenure was storytelling (Pendell, 1999). Thousands of children and adults learned about Japanese culture framed by traditional *kamishibai* stories. An interactive dialogue prompted the audience to think about themselves as much as what they were watching. The audiences were so engaged that during call and response directed to children, answers were often blurted out by adults. Although a compliment to my storytelling, what is far more relevant is the power of telling stories as *kamishibai*.

Japanese storytelling has a long history. As early as the tenth century, Buddhist priests used picture scrolls and narration to teach their lessons. From this tradition, storytelling in the form of story-card theatre or *kamishibai*, developed in the late 1920s. Especially during World War II, driven by economic hardships, *kamishibai* offered a means by which the unemployed could earn a small income. *Kamishibai* was one of the most popular forms of entertainment for young and old. The tradition was largely replaced by television in the late 1950s but has recently enjoyed a revival in Japan as well as countries worldwide (Clouet, 2009; Geier, 2006; Ko, Schallert & Walters, 2003; Lee, 2003, McGowan, 2009, Paatela-Nieminen, 2008; Tamaki, 2009).

Japanese *kamishibai* are fun, provocative, and in an educational setting, provide a tool to transport learners into an application of language acquisition or into another culture. This approach launches learners into a world of humor, irony and entertainment, which allows risks including call and response to the stories, discussions, comparisons, creating their own stories, or just using a foreign language to convey a familiar story. Learners are motivated and actively contribute to their understandings.

Interestingly, the primary goal of the class, EFL or culture, remains secondary to storytelling. Imaginations on fire, students use what they have learned to communicate in English or convey cross-cultural comparisons. Storytelling as a means-to-an-end permits the primary goals of the class to become a skill-set put to use. Perhaps best of all, the exercise can transform learners into leaders who are able to share a new language and/or cultural perspectives.

What makes *kamishibai* particularly useful is the unique format. Large cards with colorful illustrations and the text written on the back allow the storyteller to present the visual component

clearly to the audience. Additionally, how the cards are revealed, i.e., half a card at a time and the speed of the reveal adds to the drama. Although not required, the story is usually told in a wooden frame that resembles a theater. This further focuses the audience. There are numerous sources listed in the references of this paper for *kamishibai* making, teaching, and purchasing. In summary, *kamishibai* offers simple English, sound effects, humor and irony capable of transporting the viewer into another world and culture which can illuminate meanings whether familiar or foreign.

Kamishibai in the College EFL Classroom

Let's Learn English Through Kamishibai was the title of two EFL classes in which first a brief overview of *kamishibai* history and its application to Japanese educational contexts was explained. Students were then told the Japanese folktale, the *Marriage of the Mouse, Nezumi no Yomeiri,* as a *kamishibai.* The *kamishibai* was performed using the storyteller's voice to affect the audience's imagination as well as to convey meaning. Students were encouraged to participate in the story and were asked questions about content and meanings. Then they participated in discussions about the language, vocabulary and the story. Student responses were positive with comments like, "I could understand English. I could really enjoy the story. I wish we had time to do more kamishibai".

In another EFL class students created their own *kamishibai* in groups of three. Students were asked to present and teach simple English, have a title page; employ storytelling voices and *kamishibai* techniques in narration; be able to discuss the story's meaning; and have a question ready to ask the audience. These activities gave students the opportunity to produce original written work, practice simple English sentence structure, and practice presentation skills. Because of the familiar format students were also able to experiment with word combinations and expand their vocabulary (Kistler, 2008).

The original *kamishibai* made by the students were remarkable and provide a variety of learning opportunities. Speaking and writing for expression, students produced imaginative content that was inventive and layered with plot, ideas, vocabulary and text structure. Students employed irony, moral lessons, moving parts, sliding cards, voice inflection and English in ways which had the audience shouting out answers and participating in discussions. Each group had questions to further engage the audience. In preparing *kamishibai,* students communicated through the visual medium and organized elements and forms into a creative work which was refined after

presentations and feedback. The transformation of learner into teacher was palpable as the students commented: "I thought it was great to study English while having fun. I would like to perform kamishibai in English to children."

The benefits of the workshops were multiple. First, by focusing on the stories, it was possible to reach students in a personal way which was not confusing or offensive. *Kamishibai* also helped build relationships and motivated students in such a way as to reduce the number of reluctant learners. Students were relaxed and happy. The connection to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen and Terrell, 1983) is obvious. Second, students felt the workshop was good for their English studies. Because students could handle narrative both as a teller and listener, they became more proficient in English. Third, since the students were studying to become teachers, presentation skills and the interactive dialogue of the lessons were useful. The use of *kamishibai* has seen a revival in Japanese schools as teachers often perform a *kamishibai* on topics such as seasonal events, moral lessons and Japanese folktales (Mizuide, 2003). Finally, the experience gave students a renewed interest in their major. Since the study of English will be mandatory at some elementary levels in all Japanese schools in 2011, there is greater interest even at the pre-school level to teach English.

Kamishibai in the College International Culture Classroom

Most international students, for whatever reasons they chose to study in Japan, tend to have an interest in cross-cultural learning. Arriving in Japan, one of the richest and most modern countries in the world, the international visitor soon recognizes the intimate links to seasons and traditions which mould Japanese culture into layers, both archaic and ultramodern. Rather than approach the topic head-on, the use of Japanese traditional folktales, *kamishibai*, provide a medium for cross-cultural comparisons as students view a foreign story while examining their own narratives. "*Kamishibai* is a creative way to integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and art*"* (Paatela-Nieminen, 2008, p. 42).

Storytelling across cultures shares the functions of providing entertainment, explanation for natural phenomena, and moral lessons. All of these elements are applicable to cross-cultural learning. Additionally, a good old-fashioned story creates a comfortable environment. Again, *kamishibai* establishes trust such that students are ready to look deeper into their own culture as well as the foreign one they find themselves in. From this common ground, they share traditional stories from their countries, then examine Japanese traditional stories and some cultural elements.

Students were asked to first think about and share a traditional story from their culture. From this personal narrative the class departed into traditional Japanese stories told as *kamishibai*. Since the class was in December we began with *Sedge Hats for Jizo*, *Kasajizou* and a discussion of New Year traditions, including preparing a special meal, *osechi ryori. Urashima Taro* continued a discussion of the seasons as well as the concept of gratitude and obligations. In *Why the Sea is Salty, Umi no Mizu wa Naze Karai*, we discussed themes of kindness rewarded and the mysterious stranger or the powerful disguised as weak and dirty (Blacker, 1990). In the *Marriage of Mouse*, *Nezemi no Yomeiri* we discussed the theme of size and the power of the weak.

Culture, celebrations and related traditions were discussed after each story. Students were asked to write a one-to-two page comparison paper about a Japanese tradition and/or story contrasted with a tradition and/or story from their own culture. The student papers were a joy to read. Students based their discussions on their personal narratives. Meaning, relevance and the universal themes of folklore were elements in confident discussions, but moderated by an appreciation of the differences and similarities.

An Australian student compared the Aboriginal story *How the Water got to the Plains* which explains the origin of billabongs, waterholes in the desert, to the Japanese story *Why the Sea is Salty* from Japan, saying,

> It's natural for the people who regard something as so important, to question its existence and how it came to be. Through these stories, it is easy to see how human nature is ultimately the same, no matter what culture you come from. Our most simple ethics and values tend to be similar even though our ways of thinking and living may be different. These stories also show that the curious human mind had answers for things long before we had a scientific way of proving them.

Conclusion

Japanese folktales told as *kamishibai* provide a number of benefits to EFL and international learners. First the format and subject are attractive. The colorful pictures augment the narrative such that all can understand. The large, illustrated cards (15 x 11) can be manipulated to produce a variety of dramatic effects. Second, *kamishibai* use simple linguistic structures so that learners can *learn how to articulate characters and incidents* (Tirrell, 1990, p. 124) which provides EFL students with the opportunity to develop proficiency as language learners. The lively dialogue adds to the

drama and further engages students both emotionally and intellectually. Additionally because the Japanese students are familiar with the form and stories, they have confidence to create, practice and perform stories as a process in EFL learning. Third, the inherent cultural component of Japanese folktales provides an introduction for cross-cultural discussions which illuminate Japanese culture as well as the cultures represented in an international classroom. Additionally, Japanese folktales convey wisdom through humor and irony, as Ziv (1976) comments, "laughter, accepted and shared in the classroom can free less conventional forms of expression on the part of the students" (p. 321). Another feature is simple and obvious: a fun story builds trust so that students are confident in their learning environment and will venture into the unfamiliar. Transformations are possible as students make sense of the story and add the narrative to their world and beyond. Finally, *kamishibai* is meant for groups and makes it possible for an entire class to enjoy the story rather than individuals (Tamaki, 2009). Additionally, group assignments are easy to do whether they are presentations and/ or creating original stories.

Overall, the application of Japanese traditional storytelling seemed successful. Students said they enjoyed the classes, learned English and learned about culture. A Japanese folktale may have been especially suitable for the students who were pre-service infant and kindergarten educators as well as the international exchange students, but I believe that students of all disciplines and children of all ages enjoy storytelling. Very affordable, versatile, easy to carry, and effective, *kamishibai* seems to have great potential in college level EFL and culture classes.

A good story allows listeners to fill in the blanks, connect the dots: be it the familiar or the mysterious. *Kamishibai* fires up the imagination to motivate students and their learning. In a *kamishibai* environment it is possible to simultaneously have students conceptualize purpose; develop ideas and techniques; organize forms and content into a creative work; reflect for self-evaluation and elaboration; refine their work based on feedback; and present it to others (Bassett, 2008; Nakatani, 2006; Tarvin, 1991).

The power of *kamishibai* is clear. *Kamishibai* applied to the EFL or culture classrooms can be transformational: in the moment as a revelation revealed, or in a classroom assignment, or as skills acquired and applied in new narratives.

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Visiting Variety

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Providing rich input in language courses at the tertiary level, or elsewhere, in Japan can be a challenge. Financial restrictions and timidity in using English as the medium of instruction across the curriculum can reduce both the depth and variety of opportunities available to students. One means I have used to try to somewhat improve this situation has been to assertively invite visitors over the time that I have been at my present teaching location. In fact, I have invited more than 80 visitors to my classes in the last decade. Taking into account that the period for classes is actually seven to eight months a year, that means an average of around one visitor a month. It is a potentially wonderful resource, but only rarely explored in the literature and often just in passing (e.g. Haynes & Deacon (2003), Kasai (2003), and Edwards (2004).

As Furmanovsky (2005) has written, albeit in connection with study abroad, "It is not uncommon for students in Japanese universities to hear only one or two English accents during the 1-2 years in which English is typically a compulsory subject." (p.5) What is more, even if they are exposed to a reasonable range which encompasses both native and non-native teachers, they are 'teachers', rather than any representation of a wider sphere of society. Therefore, inviting visitors can increase both the quantity and variety of target language which students experience, and more frequently or economically than study abroad.

Problems may be raising themselves in readers' minds, particularly concerning how to find visitors and how to finance them. Regarding the first point, it is really an issue of never missing an opportunity and of three catchwords – 'badger', 'cajole', and 'reciprocity'. The first two, similar in meaning, indicate the need to try to keep persuading people you know to visit your classes whenever possible. The third indicates that there is the potential for benefits on both sides, as will be explained in the next section on types of visitors. Regarding the second point, finance, Japan's low spending on education, at around half the level of comparable OECD countries is well-known, and, as I write, swingeing cuts are potentially on the horizon. Nowhere is this more severe than in the public-sector, at both grade and university level. In my own situation, we (meaning the whole department) generally have funds to pay an honorarium to a visitor once a year at best.

Therefore, financial restrictions govern the kinds of visitors who can be invited, as payment is

basically limited to a free lunch in the university canteen, because 'Yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch!' Visitors who have joined my classes can be categorized into these groups, with percentages (of all visitors):

1: Family, friends, and friends and relatives of friends. 41%

2: Students past and present, and their friends. 20%

3: Publishers' reps (representatives) and other reps. 19%

4: Students and teachers from sister universities. 16%

5: Teachers of other subjects at the same university. 4%

Focussing on the top three categories and taking the first category first, only one person has actually been a member of my own family. However, from my experience, once friends come, they will put you in contact with their own friends and relatives, boosting numbers. As to the second category, two main points are suggested. The first is that your own former students can be a valuable visitor resource, especially if they use English in their jobs. The second is that they bring with them a theme, their jobs, which is of unmatched interest for students (especially second-year and above) dealing with the challenge of jobhunting. The third category encompasses a neglected visitor resource. When you are at a conference or other situation where publishers are showing their wares and where representatives suggest visiting your workplace to promote books to your colleagues and yourself, why not ask them to talk to your students? I have found reps, both native- and non-native speakers, to be very ready to do this and it encapsulates the idea of reciprocity, as referred to above. For me, this category of visitors has steadily increased and represents a greater percentage than indicated above if just the last three or four years are considered.

How about content covered when visitors join classes? While the idea of an invited visiting speaker at a university might conjure up images of very specialized content and expertise, in the case of these visitors, areas can be summarized as chiefly these three:

1: the visitor's life – jobs, interests, and family

2: the visitor's country (or part of a country)

3: the visitor's opinions on and experience of coursebook topics past and present

Thus it can be seen that what is appealing is the variety of people rather than the variety of topics. If visitors were joining weekly, greater topic variety would become more important, but with the likely level of frequency not being that high, the variety will be provided by the range of visitor in terms of nationality, age, and occupation. My visitors have ranged from teenagers to people in their

eighties, while occupations have included an importer, an international journalist, a landscape architect, and a social worker, and there have been about 25 nationalities.

Next, it is necessary to consider the organization of the visit, in particular in relation to timing and student organization. While university classes generally last ninety minutes, it is not always necessary or beneficial to use all the time for the visitor(s). Returning to reciprocity, visitors such as publishers' reps may be much more ready to visit for thirty of forty minutes than for the whole ninety. On the other hand, especially for visitors from abroad, they may be dependent on you for transport and the full ninety minutes can be effectively used, particularly if organized as below.

When a visitor or visitors come, there are basically three patterns of interaction with students which can be used:

1: The visitor speaks to the whole group in the classroom from the front in a semi
   lecture style.
2: The visitor speaks consecutively to small groups (4-6 students) in the classroom
   while other groups of students continue with different activities.
3: The visitor speaks consecutively to small groups in another nearby room while
   other groups continue with different activities in the main classroom.

While type 1 may be traditionally favoured, particularly in situations such as one-off visits by ALTs to schools, I believe that types 2 and 3 work more effectively. In those situations, individual student involvement is enhanced and shyness reduced, more informal two- or multi-way interaction is increased, and the stage is set for communication-gap activities to follow up a visit. While a short visit of thirty to forty minutes, as indicated above, may not allow all students to take part with types 2 or 3, fairness can be retained by keeping a careful record of which students have had a chance and which should have the next chance.

What degree of preparation should take place when visitors join classes? To achieve a higher degree of spontaneity, I recommend that students are not told particularly early. While a degree of anticipation is positive, there is always the risk that the visitor is suddenly not able to come, or that preparation will actually lead to 'over-rehearsal'. Thus, in the case of a visitor coming for the second half of a class, students can be informed as late as earlier in that same class.

Visitors who join classes may be memorable at the time, but it should not stop there. Follow-up

activities such as the following four types should be encouraged:

1: Activities to bridge the information-gap situations created when the visitor meets students in groups (type 2 and type 3 as described above). These can be as early as later in the same class when a visitor joins the first half of a class.

2: Follow-up quizzes.

3: Written feedback which obviously indicates how effective and stimulating a visit has been, as well as giving indications of possible changes for the future. It can directly show benefits, such as students being complimented by the visitor on their English levels, which can be a great morale boost both for the students and you.

4: Homepage/blog updates on visitors. Even long after they have visited, it can be positive to keep students 'in touch' with them.

In preparing this article, I realized that I should have put more student feedback on the homepage. However, examples can be seen at:

http://www.kokusai.aichi-edu.ac.jp/iv/iv.html (from 2004)

and http://www.kokusai.aichi-edu.ac.jp/78/mry.html (from 2007)

Although also available on the homepage, comments from a student in 2007 perhaps best indicate when learning 'comes alive' through a visitor, as well as the contrast between meeting a visitor and interacting with regular teachers: "I talked about living places to Tessa. I was tensed up because I was talking to a foreigner who could understand little Japanese for the first time….. When we asked her about famous places, she mentioned 'Lake District'. William Wordsworth wrote his poem 'Daffodils' there. We said the beginning of that poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud, and she continued, "that floats on high o'er vales and hills." I was surprised. We learned it in class. While it may be natural that she knows it, I was still surprised. ….Why was I surprised when Tessa said the passage from the poem? Because I felt our classes, which usually only belong to themselves, connect to real life. We can confirm our learning or effort that we have made by talking. It connects with our drive to learn."   longer version at http://www.kokusai.aichi-edu.ac.jp/78/tr.html

I hope that this article has raised your interest in getting visitors involved in your classes on a regular basis. If you are interested in further information or even in exchanging visits, I can be contacted at the e-mail address given at the beginning of this article. Details of visitors who have joined my classes can be seen at:

http://www.kokusai.aichi-edu.ac.jp/1011/visitors3.html

This page is concerned with more recent visitors and links to pages about earlier visitors.

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JALT2010: Schedule for presentations covering *Teacher Education*

Note

- All details are provisional and subject to change.

- All entries are listed as submitted by the presenters or their representatives. While we try to ensure that all information is as accurate as possible, JALT accepts no responsibilities for errors in the conference database.

Date	Time	Room No.	Presenter	Pres. No.
Sat, Nov 20	11:20 AM - 12:50 PM	1007	Barker, David - BTB Press	1184
Sat, Nov 20	11:20 AM - 12:50 PM	1102	Bales, Richard - DAC Croft, Sam - AJET Hansford, Valerie - JII Steggall, Charlotte - AJET Sumida, Darryl - Tokorozawa BOE Yearly, Terry - ETJ	2040
Sat, Nov 20	12:40 PM - 1:05 PM	1205	Fogal, Gary - Kansai Gaidai University	1347
Sat, Nov 20	1:20 PM - 2:20 PM	903	Swan, Michael - Oxford University Press	1177
Sat, Nov 20	2:35 PM - 3:35 PM	1205	Haynes, Louise - Nagoya City University; Backwell, Ben - Nagoya City University	1642
Sat, Nov 20	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	901	Lee, Yi-Chien - National Taiwan Normal University	1732
Sat, Nov 20	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1004	Humphries, Simon - Kinki University Technical College	1350
Sat, Nov 20	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1006	Monoi, Naoko - Chiba University	1433
Sat, Nov 20	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1208	Arnold, Sean - Akita International University	1583
Sat, Nov 20	4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	1004	Muller, Theron - Noah Learning Center	1661
Sat, Nov 20	5:15 PM - 6:45 PM	1105	Tebbe, Christopher - Shizuoka Prefectural Board of Education	2014
Sat, Nov 20	5:15 PM - 6:45 PM	1202	Gunning, John - Gifu Pharmaceutical University; Da Silva, Dexter - Keisen University; Fellner, Terry - Saga University; Falout, Joseph - Nihon University; Apple, Matthew - Nara National College of Technology	1950
Sat, Nov 20	5:15 PM - 6:45 PM	1206	Rouault, Greg - Konan University, Hirao School of Management; Murphey, Tim - Kanda University of International Studies; Stillwell, Chris - Sojo University	1963
Sat, Nov 20	5:45 PM - 6:45 PM	1004	Meyer, Douglas - JALT JIC	2123
Sat, Nov 20	7:00 PM - 7:25 PM	1204	Hiratsuka, Takaaki - Futatsui High School; Malcolm, Wayne - Meitokukan Language School	1357
Sun, Nov 21	9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	907	Cornwell, Steve - Osaka Jogakuin College; Wilton, Stephanie – Kobe College High School	1967
Sun, Nov 21	9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	1004	Barker, David - BTB Press	1183
Sun, Nov 21	9:15 AM - 9:40 AM	1101	Kano, Akiko - Sophia Junior College; Gould, Timothy - Sophia Junior College	1839
Sun, Nov 21	9:15 AM - 9:40 AM	1105	Murakami, Charlotte - Okinawa Christian University; Higaonna, Michelle - Okinawa Christian University	1900
Sun, Nov 21	12:20 PM - 12:45 PM	901	Baber, William - Kyoto University; Ito, Satoko - Ritsumeikan University; Silver, Richard - Ritsumeikan University	1704
Sun, Nov 21	12:20 PM - 12:45 PM	905	Oga-Baldwin, Quint - Fukuoka University of Education	1693
Sun, Nov 21	12:20 PM - 1:50 PM	1007	Swan, Michael - Oxford University Press	1176
Sun, Nov 21	12:20 PM - 12:45 PM	1104	Kurtoglu-Hooton, Nur - Aston University; Boon, Andrew - Aston University	1930
Sun, Nov 21	12:30 PM - 2:30 PM	1001	Croker, Robert - Nanzan University	1512
Sun, Nov 21	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	902	Om, Soryong - Royal University of Phnom Penh	2021
Sun, Nov 21	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	903	Littlemore, Jeannette - The University of Birmingham	1151

Sun, Nov 21	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	1204	Barker, David - BTB Press	1169
Sun, Nov 21	2:30 PM - 3:15 PM	Main Hall	Maley, Alan - Leeds Metropolitan University	2122
Sun, Nov 21	3:50 PM - 4:50 PM	1005	Reynolds, Matthew - Cambridge ESOL Japan	2113
Sun, Nov 21	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1102	Deacon, Brad - Toyohashi	1734
Sun, Nov 21	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1109	Ogawa, Chie - Aichi University of Education	1222
Sun, Nov 21	3:50 PM - 4:15 PM	1206	Iyobe, Bethany - University of Niigata Prefecture; Brown, Howard - University of Niigata Prefecture; Coulson, David - University of Niigata Prefecture	1317
Sun, Nov 21	4:30 PM - 4:55 PM	1208	Chi, Feng-ming - National Chung Cheng University	1394
Sun, Nov 21	5:05 PM - 6:05 PM	901	Mehring, Jeff - Ohkagakuen University; Edwards, Jennifer - Ohkagakuen University	1179
Sun, Nov 21	5:05 PM - 6:05 PM	1104	Jugovic, Steve - Biwako Seikei Sport College	1767
Sun, Nov 21	5:10 PM - 5:35 PM	903	Moser, Jason - Osaka Shoin Women's University; Harris, Justin - Osaka Shoin Women's University	1232
Sun, Nov 21	5:10 PM - 5:35 PM	1105	Hoare, Peter - Meijo University	1776
Sun, Nov 21	5:10 PM - 5:35 PM	1108	Iaquinto, Kaoru - Bihoku Senior High School	1297
Sun, Nov 21	5:10 PM - 5:35 PM	1202	Chin, Peter - Waseda University International	1663
Sun, Nov 21	5:50 PM - 6:15 PM	1102	Hall, David - Macquarie University	1687
Sun, Nov 21	7:10 PM - 7:35 PM	1103	Tanner, Paul - Aichi Bunkyo University	1409
Sun, Nov 21	7:10 PM - 7:35 PM	1207	Takagi, Akiko - Aoyama Gakuin University	1582
Mon, Nov 22	9:15 AM - 9:40 AM	1007	Wade, Liz - Ritsumeikan Univeristy	2008
Mon, Nov 22	9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	1101	Luth, Wilma - Hokkai Gakuen Daigaku; Stapleton, Paul - Hong Kong Institute of Education; Perry, Christian - Hokkaido University	1684
Mon, Nov 22	9:15 AM - 9:40 AM	1203	Tadaki, Toru - Meijo University; Kato, Haruko - Nagoya Gakuin University; Otatsu, Yoka - Tokai Gakuen University; Kawasaki, Tomoko - Nagoya City University	1806
Mon, Nov 22	9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	1204	Jones, Brent - Konan University, Hirao School of Management	1541

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Font: Arial 11 point, single spaced, one line between paragraphs, SINGLE space between sentences.

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Newsletter of the Japan Association of Language Teachers

Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG)

Submission Guidelines:

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