

# Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG Newsletter

**Spring 2003**

**Volume 11, Issue 1**

## ARTICLES

- 2 Multiple Intelligences Theory and the EFL Classroom**

Momoko Adachi

- 12 Resolved: Debate is an effective language classroom task!**

James Venena

## STIMULATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

- 18 A Secondary School Collaborative Professional Environment**

Charles Wu and Simon Kew

## ESSAY

- 25 Bringing Cooperation into the EFL Classroom**

Jane Lightburn

## NOTICES

- 27 Upcoming Workshops**

Online version: <http://jalt.org/main/publications/>

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**Explorations in Teacher Education**  
**Spring 2003: Volume 11, Issue 1, Page 1**

# Multiple Intelligences Theory and the English Classroom

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## Introduction

For a long time, educators have discussed the validity of paper examinations at school and the issue of a number of students feeling they are “failures” who do not fit into formal education’s criteria. The number of children in Japan who choose not to attend even their compulsory years of education is growing. Also, the educational system here is developing quite a number of high school dropouts, some of whom are turning into recluses (the so-called “hikikomori”). It seems that school surroundings for learning are not altogether desirable in present day Japan.

Howard Gardner published his well-known book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in 1983. I believe that the basic ideas of his theory hold true in any classroom environment. They have well-validated proposals for changing school curriculum. The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of applying this theory (henceforth M I Theory) to foreign language teaching and changing teachers’ perspective as well as that of students. In the sections to follow, I will illustrate how the learning activities I choose correspond to Gardner’s model, and how students’ reaction.

## The Eight Intelligences Model

Briefly speaking, the eight intelligences that Gardner proposes are Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Musical-Rhythmic, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Naturalist, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal. Kagan and Kagan, (1998 ) note that Gardner suggested a ninth, Existential Intelligence. He wants to wait, however, for more neurological research before he proclaims that it is the ninth. Existential Intelligence shows skills and preferences in philosophical issues such as meaning of life. Thinking about life, death, birth, pain, joy, compassion belongs to this Intelligence (ibid).

One thing that Gardner’s model fails to include is the cultural type of intelligence. My students often enjoy discussing cultural differences they observe in foreign movies. It seems that some are good at perceiving them, while others are not. I have no answer, as of now, where this intelligence belongs to, but it could possibly be a tenth.

## **Problems in Typical College English Classrooms**

One of Japan's biggest problems is that most high school education is oriented toward college entrance exams. Many students who do not fit into this kind of climate feel that they are failures and stop trying. Some or even most of those who survive lose interest in learning English because it was simply a tool for getting into college. Some feel negative about English and try to stay away from it. In order to "reframe" English (for "reframing", see O'Connor and Seymour, 1990), I started to use movies instead of a traditional textbook.

Another issue is that some of the students, especially the ones with low proficiency in English, strongly believe that they are not cut out for foreign-language learning. They constantly hear a negative inner voice that tells them, "I cannot do this" (refer to "submodalities" section in O'Connor and Seymour, 1990, pp.57-62). However, when they start to hear a confident voice, "Yes, I can do this", they develop a different self-image of themselves that leads to a higher self-esteem. This transformation can be accomplished through achieving a self-determined goal, such as being able to understand a movie scene.

The next section describes how I dealt with these problematical conditions by using movies as material on one hand, and applying M I Theory to the English classroom on the other.

## **The Effectiveness of M I Theory in My English Classroom**

We teachers intuitively know that people learn in a variety of ways. There is no one method or one textbook that suits the needs of all learners. Therefore, "when learners are given some freedom to choose their preferred way of learning, they will do better than those who find themselves forced to learn in environments where a learning style which does not suit them is imposed as the only way to learn" ( Lightbown and Spada, 1993). This seems to well describe the situation of Japanese high school English education. Using movies as class learning material provides the students with approaches that can stimulate all of the eight intelligences that Gardner theorizes. I will illustrate what teachers can do with movies applying M I Theory to the English classroom.

A number of movie activities stimulate Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence. A movie has spoken language in real-life situations and intrinsically motivates students to learn words, phrases and expressions in it. It is also a good idea to show a short section without sound. An example goes like this: students work in small groups. Each group devises their own dialogue. After having several rehearsals, they can add their own soundtrack in a live performance to the class. This project is the combination of Linguistic, Musical, Kinesthetic and Interpersonal Intelligences.

If the students are advanced, let them give a simultaneous description of what they see (for the details of “silent viewing” (p.4) and “projects” (p.12), see Carolyn Walker, at Penguin Readers web site). Teachers can provide higher-level students with such a challenging task as finding differences between the original script and the actual scene. Other activities that are related to Linguistic Intelligence include creating a dialogue similar to the one in the movie and practice in reading English subtitles without pausing. The latter activity is useful for turning students into faster readers of written material. My students and I agree that this is also useful for linking the linguistic knowledge and the context in which the language is actually being used. Movie classes are easily turned into writing classes simply by letting students describe what they have seen on the screen.

Using Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, students predict the end of the movie and make a film timeline. Writing can also be a prediction task. Each student writes a different ending for the film after watching half of it, for example. Discussing visual details including colors and images used in the movie engages the Visual-Spatial Intelligence. Listening to music and songs in the film or singing them stimulates Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence. Acting out the dialogue with one’s partner using gestures and body language engages both Bodily-Kinesthetic and Interpersonal Intelligences. In this activity, teachers can encourage students to feel the emotions of the characters in the movie. Naturalist Intelligence is useful for observing nature-related details of a film. Obviously, it depends on the film; certain movies are not particularly oriented toward nature.

Interpersonal Intelligence plays an indispensable part in pair-work or group-work, such as role-play, doing exercises or working on projects cooperatively, teaching vocabulary to each other and so on. Intrapersonal Intelligence is activated through setting a realistic goal for oneself and self-assessment of checking progress on achieving that goal. Goal-setting and self-assessment are significant activities that lead to better self-esteem. Forming opinions and describing how one feels about the movie require skills in clarifying values and beliefs and knowing one's feelings, other areas of Intrapersonal Intelligence. Some movies are suitable for giving students an opportunity to think about life, stimulating the yet unclaimed ninth, Existential Intelligence.

### **An Example Teaching Plan for Listening Practice**

This is one of the teaching plans I tried with a repeaters class where most were lower-level in proficiency. I chose listening as a task because it is something that most students feel that they are constantly making some progress in, at their own pace. At the beginning of each class, I give them a B6 size paper that I call a "task-sheet". Using both sides, they write new vocabulary, their self-determined goals, and self-assessment after the activity. The procedure for this practice goes as follows (Intelligences are in square brackets):

1. Choose a good short scene from a movie (suggested scenes below)
2. Give the script to the students (sources outlined below)
3. Show it once with Japanese subtitles [Visual]
4. Looking at the script, students write down the words and phrases that are new to them. Then they turn to their partner (usually the person next to him or her) to see if they have gotten the answers. In case neither of them knows the meaning, they ask for the teacher's help. [Interpersonal and Linguistic]
5. Students set their own goals and write them down. Lower-level learners choose some ten easy words, phrases and short expressions that they plan to listen for in the second showing. The advanced choose longer and challenging expressions of the same number or more, preferably with functions such as meeting people for the

first time, making apologies, asking someone out and so on. [Intrapersonal and Linguistic]

6. Students pair up and act out the dialogue with their partners. The reason I put role-play here is based on students' feedback. They need to read the lines out loud before they recognize the progress in listening comprehension. They are encouraged to read the lines, adding the emotions of the characters in the movie, using gestures and body language as much as possible. I usually let them do this four times, so each person acts one character twice. If the scene is somewhat long, I let them do it only twice. [ Bodily-kinesthetic and Interpersonal]
7. Students now see the same scene with English subtitles this time. I sometimes show the scene twice, if necessary. [Visual]
8. Students watch the same scene, this time without subtitles. [Visual]
9. Students write their self-assessment of their listening improvement. [Intrapersonal]

### **Notes for the Teaching Plan**

This sample plan does not include Logical-Mathematical, Musical and Naturalist Intelligences. Predicting the end of the movie after watching half of it and making an event timeline stimulate Logical-Mathematical Intelligence. If a movie has a good song, such as "She" (Sung by Elvis Costello) or "When You Say Nothing At All" (Sung by Ronan Keating) in *Notting Hill*, students get a chance to appreciate the lyrics and enjoy singing, activating Musical Intelligences. Some movies are suitable for understanding environmental issues, discovering patterns in nature, training animals, and so forth, engaging Naturalist Intelligence (Kagan and Kagan, 1998).

I tried this sample plan first on part of *Notting Hill*, one of the most popular movies with my students. I chose this movie for a few reasons. First, Hugh Grant, who speaks British English, is relatively easy to understand. Second, the whole movie is filled with a good sense of humor. It also leaves us with a warm feeling of friendship and caring about others. The movie has two good songs that gave us a good musical

opportunity to appreciate the lyrics and sing them. One of my favorite scenes is the one where William is pretending to be a reporter from a magazine (26:13 – 30:40). His total ignorance of the famous actress Anna Scott he is interviewing produces some comedy-like effect. The press conference toward the end (113:58 – 116:41) is also very good.

The following are the movies that both my students and I enjoyed and some of the highlight scenes. The choice of the scenes is based on the student questionnaire when they first see the whole movie and my own preference as a language teacher. My criteria for a good scene are: good English, clear speaking, two people speaking (*Monsters, Inc.* is the exception) and the independence of the scene.

*Sleepless in Seattle*: Jonah talks to a psychiatrist on the phone (13:42 – 15:02),  
Annie and Walter part (89:53 – 89:58, 91:36 – 93:13)

*Anastasia* (animation): Anastasia and Empress meet again (69:05 – 71:40);  
Dimitri and Empress talk to each other (74:17 – 75:10)

*Truman Show*: Truman and Sylvia spend time together (23:20 – 26:38);  
Truman confronts Christof, the producer (92:06 – 95:00)

*Monsters, Inc.*: Sulley, the monster, put the girl Boo to sleep (32:30 – 34:00);  
Sulley and Boo part (77:50 – 79:40)

*The Mighty*: Kevin and Max first speak to each other (11:35 – 14:57);  
Kevin and Max talk after the Christmas party (81:42 – 83:22)

The easiest way to get the movie script is to get it in book form. In Japan there are three companies publishing bilingual transcripts, Screenplay, Arc and DHC. Aikusha publishes original screenplays that are different from transcripts. It is also possible to look for a transcript on the web. One of the most comprehensive web sites for movie scripts is <http://www.script-o-rama.com>. The third possibility is typing off the DVD. I prepared the script of “Monsters, Inc.” with DVD. Note the occasional gap between the

subtitle and what is being spoken. Another movie-site, All Movie Guide, available at <http://www.allmovie.com>, provides all the information about movies.

### **Examples of Student Feedback about Using Movies in the Classroom**

The following data was taken from the reflection space that is voluntarily filled in on the other side of the task-sheet. Students turned in their task-sheets at the end of each class. I encouraged them to reflect on their attitude change toward English and their change in learner identity. Self-assessment and reflection were written in Japanese. Reflection was not required. I did not tell them explicitly about M I Theory.

The effect of using movies was most conspicuous with the repeaters class (economics and business majors) at Meijo University in Nagoya, Japan (1999). The repeaters are those who failed English once or more, so are often lower-level students with little motivation. One such student wrote, "Whenever an English class was on the schedule, I did not want to go to school". It was obvious that they did not like English. On the other hand, they liked watching foreign movies. Most of them used to rent an English movie with Japanese dubbed voices. If they were not able to find a certain film with Japanese, they rented the original English version and only read the Japanese subtitle without listening.

Change was rather fast. Students who initially felt negative about studying English began to feel all right about it. Most of them stopped renting Japanese-dubbed versions. Instead they spontaneously chose to try the English version. They were surprised to find themselves listening to English when they rented the original. One student wrote, " I do not believe what I am doing!" Another wrote, "Now I feel close to English, from which I used to stay away as much as I could." "When I watch a movie, I almost forget that this is an English class until the bell rings" is one of the most memorable comments I have ever had. Movies motivated students unexpectedly well. Most people noticed that the Japanese subtitles do not convey all that is said in the original and that they would miss a lot by just reading them. Some realized it is important to pay attention to how the lines are delivered.



They also started to hear positive inner voices of their own telling them, "Yes, I can do this" by achieving small goals they themselves set in each class. They enjoyed learning many words and expressions successfully. They did much better on the paper test than I expected. One student wrote, "I do not believe that I am going to get an A in English! This never happened in my life." Some said that it is difficult to forget the words and expressions that they learned in movies, because they just stick to their minds easily. Most of them improved their listening comprehension as well. One wrote, "English sounds slower than before."

The activity they enjoyed most was acting out the dialogue. This was partly because the class had a lot of athletes, and also because it was something that they had not experienced in high school. Speaking English with emotions certainly does not help with the entrance exams. As is clearly stated in Kagan and Kagan, (1998), each person's intelligences can be stretched. It seems to me that students in this class improved their Interpersonal Intelligence and Intrapersonal Intelligence at the same time. My intuition is based partly on their positive attitude toward pair-work and partly on their reflective comments that kept evolving. Most students gradually developed their capacity to set realistic goals of their own, believe in their progress and motivate themselves in their own way.

I had been told not to expect much from repeaters and that they were really low-level and very low-motivated. Instead I found most of them eager to understand what was being spoken on the screen. I was able to see how concentrated they were when they watched a movie in class. In the semester-end questionnaire, about eighty percent said they wanted to continue studying English through movies. As M I Theory indicates, these were simply differently talented people.

Changes occurred not only in the students in my class but also in myself. Teaching this class made me more accepting of all kinds of students, including late-comers, even noisy ones, those with unusual hair-style or clothes, those who turn in incomplete assignments and so on. Teacher preparation for each movie class required a lot of time-consuming work such as getting the script ready. In the end, however, this turned out to be one of the most rewarding and eye-opening classes I have ever had.

## **Evaluation, or More Correctly, Assessment**

This is an important issue since it has much to do with students' self-esteem and their expectations for themselves. M I Theory focuses on people's strengths rather than weaknesses. Many teachers have come to realize that students should be given academic records based on their versatile intelligences, not just on Linguistic and Mathematical-Logical Intelligences. It is about time more flexibility be introduced into the school grading system.

I strongly believe that everybody can make progress in learning a foreign language at his or her own pace. Therefore, I do my best to assess my students in terms of the efforts they made. A teacher who evaluates students by giving a regular normative test might not know how much a student improved or did not improve. Nor would he or she realize if those traditional intelligences are the strengths or the weaknesses for this particular student. Diverse abilities he or she may have will go unnoticed just like hidden treasures. Assessment is a serious issue that will require a whole new paper. I certainly would hope to explore it in a future study.

## **Conclusion**

Flexibility and open-mindedness play an important role both in teachers and students. Just as teachers start to regard their students as multifaceted, students start to look at their peers from a wider perspective and have more respect for others who are different from them, thus creating a favorable school culture.

So far M I Theory has not had the chance to prove its worth in Japanese schools yet. A child is like a seed. As "The Rose" (sung by Bette Midler) goes:

Just remember in the winter  
Far beneath the bitter snows  
Lies the seed that with the sun's love  
In the spring becomes the rose

I hope more teachers will study the theory and put it into practice, making our schools a better place where all kinds of children will be regarded not as smart or dumb but simply as differently talented.

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## Movies

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The Mighty, dir. Peter Chelsom, 100min., Miramax, 1998, videocassette and DVD

Monsters, Inc., dir. Peter Docter, Lee Unkrich and David Silverman, 92min., Buena Vista, 2001, videocassette and DVD

Notting Hill, dir. Roger Michell, 2hr. 3min., Universal, 1999, videocassette and DVD

Sleepless in Seattle, dir. Nora Ephron, 1hr. 45min., Tristar, 1993, videocassette and DVD

Truman Show, dir. Peter Weir, 1hr. 42min., Paramount, 1998, videocassette and DVD

## **Resolved: Debate is an effective language classroom task!**

James Venema, Nagoya

### **Introduction**

Arguments in favor of incorporating debate in the classroom (Le, 1995; Stewart and Pleisch, 1998; The Daily Yomiuri, March 3, 1997) have tended to fall into three broad categories. Firstly, debate is a popular and challenging activity that can effectively motivate students. Secondly, debate is an effective activity to promote language development. Finally, debate helps develop meta-language skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and expressing opinions. The second claim is of particular concern to the language teacher and is the primary focus of this paper. In particular four characteristics of debate that help make it an effective pedagogical task in the EFL classroom are examined: debate as goal oriented task, debate and the exchange of meaning, debate as a framework for organizing speech, and debate as a public and evaluated task.

### **What is debate?**

Looking up the word “debate” in the “Compact Dictionary of Canadian English” (1976) one finds the following two listings: “**1** an argument; discussion. **2** a formal presentation of arguments on both sides of a question by speakers before an audience.” This paper focuses on the second definition of debate involving formal, public speeches and rules of procedure.

### **Debate as a goal oriented task**

Advocates of task-based learning have primarily described the task as “a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome” (Willis, 1996). Tasks with a clearly defined goal and outcome are seen as facilitating the expression and dissemination of meaning that is at the heart of language competence. In debate the goal is necessarily very clear; to argue for and against a given resolution such as the ever popular topic among my students:

*Resolved: Japan should retain the death penalty.*

In reality the goals of debate are two-fold: to argue and defend one's own case, and to refute the opposing team's arguments. These goals are evident in the individual speeches of the debate. Note the following description of the second speech of debate in the American Parliamentary format as described in a text for EFL classes:

*"In this speech the negative team must first attack the affirmative's case and then build their own case." (Lubetsky, LeBeau and Harrington, 2000)*

Arguing or attacking a position facilitates logical, critical thinking while managing the successful transmission of these complex arguments orally should facilitate language and communication skills. The advantage of debate as a classroom task (as we shall explore in more detail later in this paper) lies in aspects of the debate task itself that encourage real and effective transfers of meaning, facilitate coherent expressions of complex ideas, and encourage reflection on the degree of success with which the task was carried out.

### **Debate and the exchange of meaning**

Horowitz and Stein (1990) have noted that students tend to fall into the roles of "speaker" and "listener", with the latter's assumed role primarily a passive one. Thus they have found it "necessary to re-educate students about their roles as speakers and listeners, preparing them for the ideas that it is normal and desirable for speakers and listeners to *interact...*" (p. 13), Foster (1998) noted a surprising lack of negotiation of meaning among students completing tasks in pairs and small groups and speculates that requests for clarification and repetition could be seen as interruptive and discouraging in addition to contributing to a loss of face.

In debate the clear exchange of meaning is a crucial component in the successful execution of the debate speeches. In the language of "cooperative learning" *positive interdependence* is built into the task, as the participants are dependent on one another to complete the task. (See Kluge 1999 for an introduction to cooperative learning.) This is evident on the following (deliberately accessible) example refutation, "Cats are better pets than dogs."

*Signpost: Their first point was care.*

*Rephrase: They said that cats require less care.*

*Negation: That is not important!*

*The whole point about care is not relevant to owning a pet.*

*Rationale: The reason that we have a pet is to take care of it!*

(Lubetsky, LeBeau, and Harrington, p. 67)

Clearly the fact that a refutation demands the rephrasing or paraphrasing of an opposing team's points demands the effective transfer of meaning. In addition the structured nature of debate allows for a cross-examination period immediately following a debate speech. In an EFL class this is best set aside for questions of comprehension and clarification, and could include not only requests for repetition or clarification but also the transcription and/or translation of problematic vocabulary. In this manner an active, interactive role on the part of the listener is built into the task.

### **Debate as a “framework” for organizing presentations**

Debate on a resolution such as *“The death penalty should be retained in Japan”* would appear to be beyond the ability of many classrooms where false beginners and low intermediate students predominate. In open discussions the real time nature of the discussion, and the language flexibility thus demanded, may very well make it impossible for these students participate in a meaningful way. The same students may find it easier to express themselves in oral presentations where they have time to prepare and organize their discourse. The presentations can be further facilitated by the introduction of a language framework upon which to construct complex arguments. Boyle (1996) has written that an “algorithm” such as the well-known Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation pattern can serve to facilitate the construction of coherent presentations. He further argues for the importance of drawing students' attention to clause relations and prediction in discourse. The following example (again from a deliberately accessible topic in Lubetsky et al.) illustrates a clear model which students would be able to incorporate in building arguments.

*Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. Today we are debating the resolution, “Soccer is better than baseball.” We, on the affirmative team strongly support this resolution. We have four reasons: cost, excitement, simplicity, and colour.*

*Our first point is cost. Soccer tickets are much cheaper than baseball tickets. In this city, the price of a ticket to a baseball game is about three times higher than the price of a ticket to a soccer game.*

...

*We have talked about cost, excitement, simplicity, and color. We have shown that soccer is a much better sport than baseball. (p. 50)*

An outline such as this should also help to improve the coherency of the speeches through the use of advance labelling (see Francis, 1994), as well as prediction including enumeration, and recapitulation (see Tadros, 1994).

### **Debate as a public and evaluated task**

Advocates of task based learning such as Willis (1996, 2000, p.7) argue that there is a need to incorporate demands for accuracy within tasks to avoid the situation where students “gain fluency at the expense of accuracy.” One means of doing so is by incorporating a public element to the task so students “feel the need, at a prior planning stage, to organize their ideas clearly and to check that their lexical choices, their grammar and pronunciation are accurate”.

The public, formal speeches of debate have the additional advantage of being evaluated speeches that provide feedback on the coherency and quality of the speeches made. Immediate feedback is given during the debate as each team responds to points with refutations, and refutations with defences. The competitive, ongoing nature of a debate encourages continuous reflection and critical insight as well as adjustments and counter arguments. Feedback provided upon completion of the debate when judges (observing students, the teacher, or the participants themselves) rule on a debate winner can also be informative and specific. Lubetsky et al. (p. 115) encourages a multi dimensional evaluation including judgements on the quality of the arguments (“matter”), the language and style in which those arguments are presented (“manner”), and the overall organization of the speeches and demonstrated teamwork (“method”). In judging “matter” judges are asked to reflect on questions such as: Were their reasons clear and easy to understand? Did they refute the other team’s reasons and supports clearly? Did they defend their points well from the other team’s refutations? With regards to “manner”

judges are asked to reflect on questions like: Were the speeches interesting? Did they speak clearly with good pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary? Did they have good voice, eye contact, gestures, and posture? Finally when reflecting on “method” judges ask such questions as: Was each speech clearly organized? Did the debaters stay on topic? Did the each team have good teamwork? Such a specific, multi-dimensional judging system should facilitate the quality and depth of evaluations and allows for the possibility of constructive feedback.

### **Tips for Teachers**

The textbook by Lubetsky et al. has proven to be invaluable as both a course and reference book. Their website, <http://www.discoverdebate.com>, which includes a teacher support page. Kinseido has a number of texts focusing on debating contemporary issues such as “Viewpoint: For and Against”, (1995) and “Taking Sides: critical thinking for speech discussion and debate”, (1999). The primary advantage of these texts lies in the introduction of potential topics (I usually allow students input into which topics from the text are ultimately covered in class as there is rarely time to cover them all) and the inclusion of possible arguments (which students are asked to classify as for and against). For teachers interested in getting more information on how to incorporate debate in the classroom, Stewart and Pleisch (1998) as well as Le (1995) offer descriptions of a debate curriculum including specific activities.

### **Conclusion**

In my experience debate has proven to be a persistently popular activity with students of varying levels. Students appear to appreciate the focus on relevant, meaningful issues and the opportunity to reflect on these issues critically in developing arguments for and against. In particular students tend to buy into the activity and lose their inhibitions when debate is stressed as a kind of “game” where expressing real personal opinions (which would involve putting themselves at risk) is secondary to working together with team-mates to win the debate. Regardless of who wins, students are able to derive considerable satisfaction in the successfully communication of often complex arguments. The pedagogical value of debate lies in the inherent aspects of debate that maintain a focus on goals and meaning, facilitate the successful communication of ideas, and encourage continuing evaluation of performance.



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## **STIMULATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES**

### **A Secondary School Collaborative Professional Environment**

Charles Wu and Simon Kew, Anjo Gakuen Senior High School

#### **Introduction**

Developing a collaborative professional environment within a school can create an innovative and successful language program. This paper presents one such case, Anjo Gakuen Senior High School.

This private high school was founded 91 years ago in 1912, and is located in Anjo-city, Aichi-ken. It began as a sewing school for girls, but eventually became Anjo Gakuen Girls Senior High School in 1948, and then co-educational in 1999. Currently, the student population is about 1800.

The philosophy of our school is to provide the opportunity for students to find their own path in life and to pursue it. As many high schools in Japan tend to focus almost entirely on academics, we also allow our students to excel on their own strengths, be it music, sports, the sciences, or language. This is illustrated by the school's varied profile. It has a nationally recognised brassband club, which won many National awards and even performed many times overseas. Many of our sports clubs (including basketball, volleyball, softball, handball, tennis) are also very well-known for being very strong and often competing at the national level. It is also becoming recognised for its Oral Communication Program (the Program), developed through the collaborative efforts of the Japanese and foreign teachers, who also saw this as a significant professional development opportunity.

#### **The OC Program**

This Program started in 1990, with the hiring of the first Native English Teacher (NET). The goal was to introduce new teaching methods and ideas, and give the students the opportunity to have "contact" with a native English speaker. Since then, the Program has expanded and grown into a comprehensive and well-organized one.

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students have required weekly OC classes, taught using textbooks that the NET's themselves designed and wrote specifically for the Program. Copies of these are available by contacting the NETs at the school directly. An example lesson plan is provided at the end of this article. In 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year, extra elective OC courses are provided for students who wish to better improve their conversation skills. There are 3 special OC classrooms, all of which are equipped with the latest audio and visual equipment.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Year OC Class**

Lessons in first year comprise about 40 students, 2 NETs and 1 JTE (Japanese English Teacher). It may seem that this is a high teacher-student ratio, but we have experimented with a number of different combinations over the last 10 or so years and we have found the current system to be the most effective.

Benefits? To start with, there is an "international atmosphere" in the classroom, more energy, and more interaction among teachers – which in turn tends to promote dynamism among the students. The pace of the lesson is fast – and the presence of 3 teachers means we can readily incorporate various class materials, such as music, videos, posters, and OHP, which students respond to well.

This combined teaching requires extra preparation time and effort. Our weekly meetings are very intense as we flesh out our different ideas and approaches. But invariably, the extra scrutiny of each other's ideas simply adds to the success of lessons. This is the third year of putting together our own in-house OC textbook. It contains a considerable variety of ideas and activities designed to meet the needs of the students of Anjo Gakuen. Unlike 'regular' English textbooks, we are able to add more of a cultural (and personal) focus to lessons – particularly concerning Canada, England and Australia – the home countries of our NETs, and the 3 countries where our school organizes homestay programs for the students.

The JTE's role is important. They ensure students understand the purpose of each activity in the lesson. They explain (mostly in Japanese) the goals of the lessons,

grammar points, new phrases and vocabulary, which are needed to complete classroom exercises and to take part in classroom activities which the 2 NETs then facilitate.

It must also be noted that the JTE's role is very delicate. They are not there to translate what the NETs say. No translation is involved. When the NETs speak, the students must listen and comprehend without the help of the JTE. Each of the three teachers' roles is clearly defined, and a weekly meeting is held to go over each lesson plan in detail.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Year OC Class**

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Year OC classes are divided into 2 halves with 20 students in each half. An NET is in charge of each half while a JTE "floats" between each class every week. Lessons 1, 3 and 5, are team-taught and are specifically designed for team-teaching. Lessons 2, 4 and 6 are taught by the NET only and are specifically designed for an "English Only" class.

We start Week 1 (W1) with all teachers and students in the same classroom. At that time, we explain the new system, introduce the teachers (who's pictures are printed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year textbook), split the class into 2 halves, and introduce the two 2<sup>nd</sup> year OC rooms to the students. From W2, one half begins L1 (team-taught) while the other half does an extra lesson (an assortment of Extra Lessons can be found at the back of our textbook). In W3, the first half starts L2 (NET only) while the second half begins L1 (team-taught). This process goes on until the end of W9 when both halves should have finished all lessons including a test at the end.

As in our 1<sup>st</sup> year classes, it is essential that all 2<sup>nd</sup> year OC teachers meet weekly and discuss each lesson plan in detail. Timing is also very important. If one teacher is absent, the whole schedule is disrupted, so communication between the teachers must be close.

With a 1 to 20 (NET only) and 1 to 10 (team-taught) teacher/student ratio, students have more opportunity to speak English. With fewer people in the classroom, "shy" students are also able to open up more. The class is also much easier to control.

The downside is the complexity of the schedule. Therefore, the success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year OC system greatly depends on the communication and dedication of the teachers involved. And as already mentioned, timing is crucial so if anything is “missed”, it would affect everyone, students and teachers alike. Luckily, we have a wonderful staff who are dedicated to making this program as good as it is, and are always looking for ways to improve it.

### **Seminar Electives**

In 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year, students have the option of choosing elective classes. These classes include the option of studying English Conversation for an extra two or three 50-minute classes per week. Classes usually comprise about twenty students. They are team-taught with one NET and one JTE. While these classes do have a set textbook, they enable teachers to incorporate a larger variety of activities into the lessons, including ongoing tasks which may last for three or four weeks.

Examples of different activities successfully employed in recent years include:

1. Tape exchange: Very similar to “pen-friends”, our students exchange “mail” by recording their messages on tape which are then sent to another school taking part in our program. The students record their replies and send the tapes back to us. The structure, including topics and number of words, is controlled by the teachers.
2. Field trips: Our elective classes have field trips to places where students can experience an “international” feeling. There, we set up meetings where students can interview and interact with foreigners. Some examples of our field trips include the Nagoya International Center and to ZIP-FM, the local radio station.
3. Kindergarten class: This is another successful activity where our students would go to the affiliated kindergarten adjacent to the high school to teach English to the children (mostly vocabulary and pronunciation). Of course, weeks of preparation are necessary. The main idea behind this is that in order to teach something, such as the pronunciation of a word, one must first master it. Our students become highly motivated to spend a lot of time practicing pronunciation.

4. Movies: Students enjoy watching movies. However, we also follow up with students learning how to discuss and express their opinion about them.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is taken very seriously in our program. Besides speaking and listening, we feel that the students' attitudes towards our lessons and attitudes towards learning in general must also be taken into consideration when evaluating their oral communication skills. The students' scores are broken into five parts: quizzes, ID card, speaking test, listening test, and attitude.

A 5-minute review quiz, written by our NETs, is done at the beginning of every lesson each week. Students must also create an ID card that includes their pictures and personal profile. We have a competition every year for the two students with the best designs in each class. These cards are then used during their one-on-one (with a NET) speaking test where they have to introduce themselves. The students must also take a listening test at the end of every term in which all topics covered are tested. The test is designed specifically so that students have to apply the material learned to different situations and not just memorize it for the test. Finally, students are also graded on their classroom attitudes. During every class, the NETs, who are responsible for twenty students each, take notes on every student for whom he or she is responsible. We watch how much they are willing to participate and how positive or negative their attitudes are, and assign a grade.

In our text book, we also include a "stamp" page in which students are given stamps by the teacher every time they get perfect on a quiz, complete a classroom exercise, or win at a game. We feel that this encourages the students since they are able to actually see their progress by the number of stamps. In addition, students who complete the whole page will be awarded a Certificate of Excellence signed by the NETs at the end of the school year.

## **Teachers**

Arguably, the teachers are the most important part of the program. They are the ones who come up with new ideas, they are the ones who make it happen (which is by no means an easy task), and they are the ones who have to evaluate everything in the end. It is very essential for the success of the program that our teachers are experienced and willing to put in the time, but also love to do their jobs.

Our school's foreign language program consists of nine foreign teachers. Five of them are part of the English OC program, while the other 4 teach Chinese, Korean and Spanish. The OC teachers come from Australia, Canada, and England. Despite being only in their twenties and thirties, they collectively have been teaching for more than forty years, mostly in Japanese senior high schools.

The most positive point is that the teachers communicate well with each other. They are very open to each others' criticism. We have 2 meetings every week with the JTE partners. During these meetings, problems, future lesson plans and new ideas are discussed. These meetings are very important because it is essential that we work well as a team in order to have a successful team-taught class.

## **Challenges and the Future**

One of the biggest challenges a program of this scale faces is the tremendous amount of planning. After a lesson plan is created, the NETs and JTEs must meet to make sure of his or her duties. We must also practice the lesson in order to make the class run smoothly. Since all of us have different (and busy) schedules, it's not always an easy task!

In spite of these challenges, we are always trying to improve our program. During our meetings, we review and comment (which sometimes turn into hot debates!) on the week's lessons and lesson material. Our suggestions are always taken seriously and changes are made immediately to the textbook draft for the following year.

**Sample Lesson Plan** – Anjo Gakuen Senior High School textbook

**Lesson Topic:** Wanted!

**Goals:**

Review the topic on 'personal information' through exchanging personal information about Anjo Gakuen's teachers.

1. develop listening and speaking skills
2. gain some enjoyment in the study of English

**Procedure:**

<b>JTE</b>	<b>NTE</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Time</b>
1a. Introduce lesson 1b. Pre-teach difficult vocabulary		Listen	5
	2. Place picture of Santa on the roof on OHC, and read passage to students	Listen carefully with texts closed, and try to catch the key points	5
3. Asks some questions to students to check comprehension	Same as for JTE	Try to answer teachers' questions	5
4. Frames and explains the pairwork info gap activity / tell Ss to work out who the burglar is	Demonstrates activity	Listen	5
5. advises / encourages / monitors	Same as for students	Work in pairs, desks face-to-face, and exchange info.	20
6. ask Ss answers	Same as for JTE	Tell answers	5
7. hand back quiz / preview next class	Same as for JTE	Listen	5

**Note:** usually there is a short listening quiz at the beginning of the class to review the previous class.



## ESSAY

### Bringing Cooperation into the EFL Classroom

Jane Lightburn, Aichi Gakuin University

With the exception of safety, cooperation is perhaps one of the most important values to apply in the constructivist EFL classroom. There is the obvious role that cooperation plays between instructor and learner, without which the class would not exist. Also in the applicative sense, cooperation plays a key role in guided conversation partner practice in oral skills building. However, there is yet another way for educators to use cooperation in the oral communication classroom that is not only instructive but also creative, and revealing in the results it may bring to the teacher and the learners.

The method is learning about cooperation through employing it in a timed and guided classroom creative activity. This allows students to practice oral and written English and at the same time be creative and enjoy a learning experience. This cooperative learning activity is called "Building a Better World". Students are asked one week prior to the activity to think about the following conditional question: "If you could make a whole new and better world, what would it be like, what could you see and do there?" In the following class students are asked to put their ideas (in English) onto posters that express their vision. The class is divided into groups, given markers and paper, and has about 20 to 25 minutes to create their group Better World Posters. Students are told that using English in their poster is essential, although artwork is also allowed in expressing their vision.

When the time limit is up, the instructor conducts a whole class follow-up tour of each poster, pointing out the good and positive results for each group and vision. The instructor is now playing the role of a positive motivator instead of just a demanding teacher in the case of the follow-up. The teacher can adapt this activity to the level of her or his class, making it simple for lower level students and more complex for higher-level classes. An example of the latter might be to ask students to complete a follow-up homework and write their visions and ideas in a short essay form.

Directly following the conclusion of the evaluation, the instructor can restate the key values of cooperation and imagination on the front board in English. The teacher could bring these terms into the awareness of the students by explaining that not only were they using English in their activity but were also using cooperation and imagination to complete a creative and positive language arts task. The teacher can also encourage students by explaining that these two values will be useful if not essential tools for their everyday life long after the English communication class is over.

The results of my experience with using this activity in the 1<sup>st</sup> year university Oral Communications classroom have never ceased to impress me. This year was no exception. In both the International Culture and Letters and International Business Management classes, each with about 35 students, the posters were imaginative, full of life, filled with English words, slogans, and sentences, all complemented with colorful artwork. This year's posters were particularly revealing in that the most common idea and phrase in 10 out of 12 posters was "no war", or "no crime", or "peace". This showed me as an educator that "feeling safe" is a top priority for these students. Also as an educator it made me reconsider if I myself am providing a "safe" classroom environment in which students feel understood, respected, and appreciated. My primary responsibility is to teach English as a Foreign Language to Japanese university students. In a cooperative classroom, motivation, imagination, creativity and positive feedback are key factors to consider for successful teaching. This activity gives the instructor the chance to see how these values can be used in their own class setting and at the same time bring cooperation into the students vocabulary by making it come alive through a creative language arts based task.

Having said this, I add that if there are students in the class group who do not wish to participate or feel too shy to do so, I at least encourage them to stand up and become part of one the groups making a poster. For those very few who might decline to participate at all, they become observers and at least passively watch cooperation in action. Forced cooperation in this activity is not preferred with the exception of the instructor discouraging any foul English language expressions that can occur. In these cases I politely ask the student to refrain from using foul language in their posters.

This kind of activity works well in a 90-minute class, in which the first half of the class can be used for regularly planned instruction and English practice. This activity gets the students out of their seats and onto their feet and brings a positive atmosphere into the classroom. I hope that other educators will try this activity out and help their students enjoy learning cooperation in the English Language classroom.

**Source:**

Global Cooperation for a Better World Project. 1988 UN Peace Messenger Initiative.

Brahma Kumaris.

<http://www.globalretreatcentre.com/bk/projects.htm>

### **Upcoming Conference Information**

There are lots and lots of teacher development events on this summer in Japan!

Bookmark these URLs now, and check them regularly!

The largest listing is at <http://www.elcalendar.com/>. This URL lists events that are organised by all groups in Japan, and also covers bookfairs. Groups listed include JALT, JACET, Oxford University Press, Nellies, David English House, Tokyo British Council Seminars, and Temple University Japan.

For JALT events, including chapter presentations, see <http://jalt.org/calendar/>.

For further non-Japan events, the TESOL Worldwide Calendar of Events has an extensive listing of events at <http://www.tesol.org/isaffil/calendar/calendar-full.html>.

## **What is the Teacher Education SIG?**

A network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively, the TE SIG has been active since 1993. Our members teach at universities, high schools, and language centres both in Japan and other countries. The TE SIG focuses on five areas: action research, teacher reflection, peer-based development, teacher motivation, and teacher training and supervision.

If you would like further information about the TE SIG, please contact:  
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## **Explorations in Teacher Education**

Newsletter of the Japan Association of Language Teachers  
Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG)

### **Published:**

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter

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**Explorations in Teacher Education**  
**Spring 2003:** Volume 11, Issue 1, Page 28