Explorations in Teacher Education

JALT Teacher Education SIG Newsletter

Winter 2004 Volume 12, Issue 1

Special Issue: Mini-conferences for Mega-development

This month in …

2 ***Explorations in Teacher Education***

And now a word from …

3 The Editor, Robert Croker

5 The Coordinator, Anthony Robins

Nanzan University Mini-Conference

6 Mini-conferences for Mega-development

Brad Deacon

15 "Reading" the Media: Introducing Media Literacy in EFL

Louise Haynes

22 Adding Spice to Vocabulary

Mathew White

33 Using a Structural Encounter Approach in Japanese Teaching

Chie Matsunaga

35 Two Ways to Step out of the Textbook

Ben Backwell

JALT 2003 Annual Conference – Featured Speaker presentations

41 Our World in Our Words: The JALT 2003 Annual Conference Participants' Plenary

Kurt Hartje

44 Publishing Guidelines for *Explorations in Teacher Education*

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

Editor: Robert Croker <croker@nanzan-u.ac.jp>

This month in *Explorations in Teacher Education*

Special Issue: Mini-conferences for Mega-development

Brad Deacon of Nanzan University organised a mini-conference at the Nagoya campus at the beginning of December 2003. **Mini-conferences** are an excellent avenue for professional development. This mini-conference brought together eight teachers and teachers-in-training from universities and high schools in Aichi Prefecture, for an evening of sharing teaching ideas. Four of the presenters agreed to write up their presentations to share with you. Brad Deacon, in 'Mini-conference for Mega-development' (pp. 6 to 14) outlines how to organise your own mini-conference, step-by-step, in an informative and useful article. Louise Haynes, also from Nanzan University, introduces her new media critical literacy course in ' "Reading" the Media: Introducing Media Literacy in EFL' (pp. 15 to 21). Mathew White, presently at Chukyo University, explores new vocabulary teaching ideas in 'Adding Spice to Vocabulary' (pp. 22 to 32). Chie Matsunaga, a graduate student at Nanzan University Graduate School, introduces a new approach in 'Using a Structural Encounter Approach in Japanese Teaching' (pp. 33 to 34). Finally, Ben Backwell, Nanzan Boys' Junior High School, shows ways to adapt high school textbooks to make classes more interesting, in 'Two Ways to Step out of the Textbook' (pp. 35-40). They all hope that you find their articles useful, and encourage you to contact them with comments and feedback.

The **JALT 2003 Annual Conference** was held at Shizuoka at the end of November. The TE SIG sponsored Featured Speaker, Elka Todeva, made three presentations, and one of them is written up here. Kurt Hartje of K.E.S. English School writes about Elka's plenary in 'Our World in Our Words: The JALT2003 Annual Conference Participant's Plenary' (pp. 41 to 43). Rather than make a presentation, Elka decided to use her plenary to encourage all conference participants to reflect about three questions: What trends do you see, not only at the Conference, but in language teaching in general? What are you excited about? And What's on your radar; that is, what would you like to see being discussed in the future?

I hope that you enjoy this issue! Robert Croker, Editor.

And now a word from … **the Editor**, Robert Croker

Welcome to the Winter issue of Explorations in Teacher Education, the newsletter of the Teacher Education Special Interest Group (TE SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teachers (JALT).

For those new members who have joined in the last few months, welcome! I hope that you enjoy being a member of the TE SIG, and find that it helps you achieve your professional goals, both as a teacher and as a teacher educator. Let me tell you a little more about our SIG here, before explaining about our activities. Anthony Robins, our Coordinator, is his Coordinator's Message (see p. 5), expands upon some of these ideas. Information about how to publish in our newsletter, *Explorations in Teacher Education* is available on the inside back cover. We strongly hope that you will submit something this year!

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

The TE SIG is run by a small group of volunteers, elected at the JALT 2003 Annual Conference. Here we are:

Coordinator: Anthony Robins <anthonycrobins@yahoo.com>
Recording Secretary: Miriam Black <miriamblacktesig@yahoo.com>
Newsletter Editor: Robert Croker <croker@nanzan-u.ac.jp>
Webmaster: Anthony Crooks <tony@japan.email.ne.jp>
Program Chair: Brian Long <blong@hotmail.com>
Membership Officer: Ikumi Ozawa <ikumi_ozawa@hotmail.com>
Treasurer: James Venema <venema@sb.starcat.ne.jp>

Our 100 members live throughout Japan – 8 in Hokkaido and Tohoku, 32 in the Kanto region, 19 in the Chubu region, 15 in the Kansai region, 10 in Shikoku and western Japan, and 10 in Kyushu. We also have members in the U.S., England, and New Zealand. If you would like further information about the TE SIG, please contact: TE SIG Coordinator, Anthony Robins <anthonycrobins@yahoo.com>

The TE SIG has a number of activities. Firstly, each year is the Annual Retreat. Last year the Retreat was held in wonderful Maiko near Kobe, on the theme of teacher and learner motivation, organised by Janina Tubby. The Retreat was written up in the Autumn 2003 issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*. The retreat is a pleasant weekend of professional reflection and development. Look for further information in the Summer issue about the Retreat for this year.

Secondly, the TE SIG sponsors a number of activities at the JALT Annual Conference. Last year we sponsored a Featured Speaker, Elka Todeva of the School for International Training, Vermont, who gave three presentations. She was interviewed by Brian Long for the last, Autumn 2003, issue of the newsletter, and one of her presentations is written up in this issue. This year, we are sponsoring another Featured Speaker, who will be interviewed for the Autumn 2004 issue of the newsletter.

Thirdly, the TE SIG has a Yahoo group bulletin board, to announce TE SIG news, publicise events, and act as a medium for questions members have about teaching and teacher education. To join, please contact Anthony Robins, the TE SIG Coordinator, at <anthonycrobins@yahoo.com>. Alternatively, contact the list moderator, Miriam Black, at <miriamblacktesig@yahoo.com>.

Fourthly, the TE SIG newsletter, *Explorations in Teacher Education*, comes out three or four times a year. Members are strongly encouraged to consider submitting. You make this newsletter! Submission guidelines are on the back page.

All the contributors and I join in wishing you a prosperous 2004, and hope that you enjoy this issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*! Robert Croker, Editor

And now a word from … **the TE SIG Coordinator**, Anthony Robins

First of all, I would like to wish everybody a happy and fruitful New Year! In particular, I would like to welcome members who joined us in the latter part of 2003. We look forward to your involvement. Our collective strength is our membership, something which enables us to organise more activities and widen our vistas. We have to continue to work hard to reach out to groups which are underrepresented in the SIG, not least those working with younger learners.

I would like to focus on a few of our activities. Based in Japan, it can be tempting to look inwards, just concentrating on the teaching and learning environment here. However, it is obviously stimulating to learn from, and through, experiences in other countries. If nothing else, it can put our problems and successes in perspective. Teacher educators active in the Volunteer Educational Network, which works in less developed areas of South East Asia have now joined our SIG. I am sure that this will provide some rewarding interchange and urge all members to support this worthwhile organisation. Further information can be found at <www.vol.ednet.com>

There is much debate in JALT about the relative benefits of chapters and SIGs. With our wide geographical spread, we cannot replicate the monthly meetings of chapters, so it is doubly important that we further develop our means of communication during 2004. Robert is carrying on his sterling work as editor of this newsletter, but for frequency of communication, our Yahoo group functions as our main contact and discussion mode. Many SIG members, but not all, are already sending and receiving these messages. If you have not joined, do! We'll welcome your contributions and insights. Contact me or the moderator Miriam at <miriamblacktesig@yahoo.com>.

We can look forward to various chances to meet face to face during the year. At JALTCALL in Mito in June, at the JALT Annual Conference in Nara in November, and between those, our annual retreat, this year planned for Kashima. I look forward to as much support as possible during 2004 in publicizing the SIG, both through such events and informally. Your friends and colleagues can add to our collective strength!

Anthony Robins, Aichi University of Education <anthonycrobins@yahoo.com>

Article

Mini-conferences for Mega-development

Brad Deacon, Nanzan University <deak@nanzan-u.ac.jp>

Imagine for a moment that your friend Brad has invited you to join a mini-conference that he is planning at his school. As usual you are busy, you wonder if the conference will be worthwhile, and you are curious to know who else will attend. As the event draws nearer you decide what the heck it will give you a chance to see some friends and you might even learn something.

Upon arriving at the school a few smiling students greet you, give you a handout listing the presentations, and invite you to pay a meager 1000 yen for a pizza party that will be held after the conference. You sign-up, say hi to a few friends, and seat yourself for the opening presentation.

You look around and notice about 20 other people who range in age, teaching, and learning backgrounds. The girl beside you, Miyuki, is actually a student at the school. She says she wants to be a teacher and decided to attend to learn some ideas to help her in the future. You smile and say you are here for the same reason. After the opening talk you plan to go to the next room for the first concurrent session. Miyuki stays for the other presentation but you both look forward to meeting again during the break. About half of the group joins you next door.

The first concurrent session is lively and you learn a great idea to use on Monday morning with your 'slow' class. After the next short presentation where you pick up another good idea you check your program and notice that it is now break time. You head over to another room where Miyuki smiles, hands you a drink, and asks what you did in your sessions. You exchange ideas and then browse the books that you find have been displayed by a local bookstore. After catching up with a few friends you then attend a few more lively presentations. Everyone then returns to the main room for a final talk by a "Special Guest". Afterwards the group returns to the break room once more where stacks of hot pizza are waiting. You eat, drink, and continue to exchange ideas and socialize. Before leaving you mention how much fun you had and that you

can't wait for the next mini-conference.

As you are walking home you suddenly think, "Wouldn't it be great to hold a similar event at my school!" Later in the week you send Brad an e-mail to ask for advice. He writes back encouraging you and attaches an article that he says he started just a few days ago. After printing the article you go to a nearby café, order a coffee, and then your eyes are drawn to the title that says, "Mini-conferences for Mega-development".

Introduction

I once read that there are two forces that most lead to change - inspiration and desperation. These words seem true to me as I reflect on a mini-conference that I set up and conducted with a colleague last year. Eager for alternative professional development opportunities, and also noticing few chances immediately around us, we decided to resurrect a past tradition, the mini-conference, at our school. Upon overhearing our plans, other colleagues grew excited about the possibility of also renewing mini-conferences. Some even mentioned how much they missed this tradition that had not been sustained after the departure of its' founder – a former colleague who had since moved on to another teaching position.

As the name implies, mini-conferences are a series of short presentations for small groups of like-minded individuals. They involve significantly less effort compared with regular conferences to set-up and engender a tighter 'communal feel' among participants. Mini-conferences can allow like-minded teachers, and students who want to be teachers (we decided to make this event open to our students as well since many of them are interested in eventually becoming teachers), to join together in order to exchange ideas in a mutually supportive and enriching atmosphere.

In this article I would like to share some key insights and suggestions from reflecting on this experience that may help others to successfully set up and conduct similar mini-conferences. A further goal in writing this report is to map out and refine the process of holding a mini-conference in order to make future conferences more enjoyable and successful and, of course, less work!

Setting up a mini-conference

Behind the success of any event, whether it is major or minor, is careful planning. The following steps require care and attention and can help to make conferences run more smoothly.

Collaborate

First of all, the spirit of any conference comes alive through its community. Therefore rather than planning solo it makes more sense to build community from the start by collaborating with another person or small group and to make democratic rather than autocratic decisions in the organization and planning of the conference. In addition, while mini-conferences are meant to be short and simple and thus relatively low maintenance for organizers, there are still numerous decisions and arrangements that need to be made in order to keep the event running smoothly. Working with others helps to keep morale high, leaves more space for yourself to enjoy the conference as an active participant instead of just an organizer, and allows others an opportunity to participate in the organizational process.

Consequently, I found a colleague at my school who was willing and interested to collaborate on running the mini-conference. I also recruited a few students as volunteers to assist and direct visitors on site. We then held a few short meetings to plan and arrange the remaining steps below.

Determine a time, date, and location

We have found it best to hold mini-conferences near the end of the semester in late June and mid December from approximately 6:00-9:00 p.m -see appendix for an example of time and presenter schedule. We hold concurrent presentation sessions for 25 minutes each. This time frame gives more presenters the opportunity to present and offers attendees more variety in terms of presentation content. The short 5-minute break lets attendees switch between rooms with minimal interruption and allows presenters ample time to break-down and set-up their presentations. We also offer a short break in the middle of the conference for drinks, book browsing, and informal discussion. At the conclusion we have an optional pizza party where participants can continue to discuss the presentations and get to know each other further.

You will need to make room reservations at your school and it is best to negotiate this part of the process as early as possible in order to find the best rooms available. We reserve three rooms in total: two for the presentation sessions and one for the book fare/snack room.

Find presenters

If you plan to hold concurrent sessions then you will need approximately 8-10 presenters for a 3-hour mini-conference. This includes a break in the middle and one or two opening and closing sessions with 'special guest speakers'. Alternatively, a mini group of 4-5 speakers could be arranged for a one-room conference only.

As you spread the word about the conference you will soon notice certain colleagues who will grow excited and share a theme or idea that they are currently exploring in their teaching. Invite these people to present. Other people who are interested in presenting will emerge likewise and this will make your life easier. It's no fun to have to beg or plead with others to present, after all mini-conferences are for people who *want to* share and participate. If you need further help in finding good presenters then you can ask your colleagues for suggestions. Remember that you can present too! You might even plan to fill in for an emergency in case one of your presenters needs to cancel at the last minute.

Once you have confirmed all of your presenters you should ask each for their affiliation and presentation title in order to prepare a short advertising flyer for the mini-conference. Be sure to also flesh out any special requests or needs that can be noted and taken care of quickly for your presenters. Do they need special equipment, handouts copied, directions, or other arrangements? The more you know in advance the better. They may also ask for an approximate audience count and the background of attendees who will be present. It has been our experience that approximately 20-30 participants, including presenters and guests, can be expected to join a mini-conference. Our audience is primarily interested in practical, workshop-like presentation themes.

Advertise

Basically enlist the help of everyone and anyone you know in this process including colleagues, colleague's friends, and of course the presenters to spread the word. There are many ways to advertise. For example, you can use word-of-mouth and e-mail. Start this process early because people get busy fast! You should prepare a simple flyer (again, see appendix) and make a few large A-3 size posters to post in nearby locations at your school including elevators, outside buildings, and hall ways. You may also contact local publications to advertise the details of your conference. Be sure to provide a contact number for interested participants to get more information. Contact them early.

Buy snacks

Participants need breaks and they get hungry and thirsty. Therefore, purchase a few bags of snacks, bottles of juice, tea/coffee, paper cups, napkins, paper plates, and/or other small goodies for the break. You can usually borrow a hot water container from the staff room and remember to bring some tapes/CDs and a tape/CD player for some relaxing BGM.

Finalize extras

We are fortunate to have a local bookstore who sets up a wonderful book display that our attendees enjoy browsing during the break and after the conference. You may know a local bookstore in your area who is available and interested in providing a similar set-up for your conference. You will need to direct them to their set-up room. These kinds of 'extras' do take time and energy and are a further illustration of why it is critical to collaborate and have other hands available to attend to the smooth over all running of the conference.

Make a greeting area

On the day of the mini-conference we set up a table, chairs, and bring a stack of schedule flyers for attendees. Our students host and distribute flyers (they get free pizza for their efforts) as we usually need to be free to attend to other matters at this time. Student hosts collect a nominal fee from those who plan to join the pizza party at the sign-up table. Alternatively, a collaborator could assume this role.

During the conference

Taking care of the steps above will help to ensure a smooth start for your participants and presenters and will allow you to more freely attend to the next stage: the actual conference. Below are some of the responsibilities you will need to assume in order to allow for the on-going successful running of the mini-conference.

Assume duties as Master of Ceremonies (MC)

Once everyone is seated you will need to make an opening address to the attendees where you thank them and the presenters for attending your event. You may give everyone a brief introduction to what they will experience in general before introducing the first speaker in particular. Encourage participants to join concurrent sessions equally to ensure approximately even numbers for all presentations. One suggestion from a colleague is to invite the attendees to pair up with a mini-conference partner who will participate in the opposite session. Afterwards partners can meet during the break to exchange what they learned. Thus, more can be learned by sharing and listening to what happened in all sessions instead of merely those attended by oneself. I will offer this suggestion to future attendees. You may also want to add any logistical reminders such as: keeping strict attention to the presentation time limits, providing bathroom and snack room locations, offering a reminder to sign-up for the pizza party at the break, and any other points that are necessary.

Enjoy the presentations and remain alert

You will now be free to enjoy the presentations while at the same time being available to directing any late-comers and taking care of other matters that arise. At some point before the break it will be necessary to set-up the snack room.

Ensure smooth transitions

You will want to monitor the time so that all presentations do begin and end on time. In addition, if you have concurrent sessions you will want to perhaps ‘invite’ one or two participants to join another less well attended presentation if necessary. You may need to be available to help with setting up mechanical equipment and to be ready to help out with glitches that can and do happen. Again, assisting and orienting presenters in matters such as proper equipment usage before their presentation are

strongly suggested. As crazy as it sounds, you may be blamed for these kinds of problems if they suddenly arise. Therefore, prepare well in advance so that they don't occur!

Other potential situations that have needed attention in my experience include the need to suddenly make additional photocopies, ordering pizza and later greeting the pizza man.

Follow-up

Once the event is over and all attendees are ready to go home you can begin the final stage of the mini-conference. The following steps will help to keep you in the good graces of your university so that you can continue to hold future mini-conferences, make the presenters feel even more appreciated, and allow you to run an even more successful event the next time.

Gather feedback

You can gather written or verbal feedback from your participants. You might ask them about their experience informally during the social period after the final presentation or invite all participants to offer their comments on a pre-planned feedback questionnaire. Whatever method you choose will be valuable to alert you to ways to continue to making the next event even better.

Clean up

Have a few spare plastic bags to dispose of any extraneous trash in the snack room or elsewhere. Be sure to turn off all lights and have any keys or other materials ready to be returned. Take down any advertising signs for the conference. Do one final sweep before leaving the area to make sure all is in order.

Send thank you notes

In the following few days, send a quick e-mail to the presenters to thank them for their time and effort to share their ideas. Often presenting is its' own reward but it is never a bad idea to say thank you again by note or other means. You might even want to write up your experience with some of the presenters and submit it for publishing.

Reflect

As soon after the conclusion of the mini-conference as possible, take a few moments to note what went well and how you would like to improve. You should get together with any collaborators and/or attendees to discuss your notes and exchange ideas. To illustrate, here is an excerpt from my notes after our recent mini-conference:

> Overall I think the mini-conference was a success. The participants commented that they had a good time and were glad to have this kind of an opportunity. I am disappointed that these kinds of opportunities are not often available at my school but I guess that means there is a window of opportunity to be an organizer. A few participants commented that it would be even better if more people could attend the mini-conference and I agree. I will take a more active role in spreading the message and will encourage colleagues to help out more actively. It may be a good idea to invite speakers from different schools as they can spread the word more widely as well.

Reflecting, gathering participant feedback, and discussing the event with collaborators will give you insight into how to improve. Be sure to keep these insights handy for the next mini-conference. I keep my notes in a folder labeled 'mini-conference' so that they are easily accessible months later.

Conclusion

Hopefully, the above notes on setting up, conducting, and following up for a more successful mini-conference will inspire you to launch your own event. Although it may seem like a lot of effort, the steps in this article should help to minimize your workload and thus allow you to enjoy more fully the fruits of your labor. Organizing a mini-conference can be a highly rewarding way to develop and grow not only for yourself but for others as well. Someone has to take the initiative, so why not you?

Brad Deacon is currently an Associate Instructor at Nanzan University in Nagoya. He has been very fortune to grow as an educator by collaborating with many inspiring colleagues and precious students. Aside from his interest in professional development he spends his time loyally doing whatever his beloved wife commands. He is also a huge fan of Mini-Me from the *Austin Powers* film series.

Appendix 1

Nanzan's 18th ELT Mini Conference

Wednesday, December 10, 2003, 18:00-21:00

Open to All Teachers and Teachers-to-Be

Nanzan University, L Building Rooms LL1, LL2, LL3 in Basement

*****Free for everyone*****

Special Guest ***Matt White, Chukyo University***

Enjoy LearningVocabulary with Matt! in LL1, 18:00-18:30

ROOM LL1

18:30 Prisca Molotsi (Nanzan University) *Shake, Rattle, and Roll with Mama!*

19:00 Ben Backwell (Nanzan Boys JHS) *Some New Tools for the Toolbox.*

********19:30 Coffee Break, Asano Book Display*******

20:00 Mayumi Ito (Freedom U.) *Discovering Courage in Italy!: Personal Storytelling*

ROOM LL2

18:30 Chie Matsunaga (Nanzan Grad. School) *Using Structural Encounter Approach in JapaneseTeaching*

19:00 Takashi Matsunaga (Nanzan University) *ZPD Interactions in the Classroom*

********19:30 Coffee Break, Asano Book Display*******

20:00 Louise Haynes (Nanzan University) *Introducing Media Literacy*

Special Guest ***Jean Marie Simonian, Aichi University Toyohashi***

How will I teach?: choosing a pedagogy in LL1, 20:30-21:00

***21:00 Pizza and Idea Exchange Party (Please sign up at the reception for pizza at the end of the conference)

***Thanks to Asano Book Store for the great book exhibit!

“Reading” the Media: Introducing Media Literacy in EFL

Louise Haynes, Nanzan University <louise@nanzan-u.ac.jp>

After about two years of reading about the media and its relation to how public opinion is formed, I have just recently begun to teach introductory media literacy skills. In order to be an active participant in the local, national and global community, a person living in the 21st century must be able to choose wisely from the barrage of information we experience on a daily basis. Developing basic media literacy skills help students to increase awareness of certain types of bias in reporting, advertising and entertainment media.

My presentation at the Nanzan University Mini-Conference outlined here reported on the main points covered in a mini-course on media literacy that was conducted over two weeks in a class of freshman English majors at Nanzan University. The class met for 45 minutes, three times a week for a total of 4.5 hours, with one more class two weeks later for student presentations.

The Basic Concepts

We begin our study by raising some very simple questions such as what we mean by the term “media” and by listing examples of media we find around us. Next, the students are asked to describe their media “diet”, that is, how much and what kind of media they experience through any given week (Thoman). Part of becoming media literate is learning how to create a balanced diet of a variety of sources.

Asking students what they use the media for will raise awareness of their purpose in using the various forms of media: whether they watch a program or read printed matter in order to be informed about a product or a situation in the community, for example, or to be entertained, as in the case of a talk show, comedy or drama, or comic book.

Next, we can ask who pays for the media; we consider where the money to produce magazines or TV shows comes from. We become aware that, in some way, the viewers of almost all forms of the media are buyers or potential buyers. For

example, we buy magazines and newspapers, go to the movies, use the Internet, listen to the radio or watch TV. Remember that most TV and radio stations have commercial sponsors that pay large amounts of money to place their advertising where many people will see or hear it. That means that the TV or radio station is selling an audience to such sponsors. Thus, we can ask such questions as:

- Who benefits from our "consumption" of this product?
- Is there anything the consumer might lose?
- Do you see any potential conflict between the purpose of the sponsors and the expectations of the viewers?

We then move on to discuss how media is constructed. Who decides what is produced? Who chooses the stories we see / read about? Why do they choose those stories and not others? What is the impact of not providing the other stories? From whose perspective do we see the issues? Why? Are we given other perspectives? If we are not, why not?

At this point we can stop and recap what we've learned so far. There are some basic concepts that students should keep in mind throughout their study about media, called the "Five Core Concepts". They are:

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power.

(Center for Media Literacy)

Reading the images

Encourage learners to pay attention to the video images or photographic images they are shown. Draw their attention to the following questions:

- If it is a video clip, does the commentary match the images or is it different?
- Are the same images shown time and again?
- What is the effect of showing the same images repeatedly?

- Are a variety of images shown or only a select few?
- Do the images show the scene from different points of view or only a select few?
- Why do you think such images were chosen?

An obvious example of the importance of perspective in photographic media is the image of the felling of the statue of Saddam Hussein during the Iraq War. The images that were published in news magazines such as Time and Newsweek gave the impression that there were large crowds of people around the statue. Another perspective of the event – a photograph taken at a higher elevation looking down on the square – revealed a much smaller gathering, relative to the size of the square. Have students compare the assumptions that the viewing audience might have if they were given one or the other picture.

Reading the voices

In this section, we look at who is chosen to deliver the message. When we watch a news program or read a newspaper article, it is important to think about why certain people are chosen over others. For example, do we see more women than men delivering the main news stories each evening or vice versa or do men and women speak in a balanced amount of time? Are the stories they present of equal importance to the viewers? For interviews, who is interviewed? Was it a government official, an "expert", and average worker in the community, a college student? Why are some people chosen to give their opinions on television and not other people?

News programs on television and radio do not normally have unlimited time to deliver their news stories. They are restricted to a certain amount of time, usually 10 –30 seconds, to deliver the message. We can observe how theses "sound bites" are used in the media by asking the following questions:

- How long are people from each of these groups allowed to speak?
- What is the location where they are filmed?
- How does the background affect the viewer's perception of the "credibility" of the speaker (for example, protestors yelling slogans outside a company office building as opposed to an interview with a company executive in a corporate meeting room)?

- Is one viewpoint given more time or column space than another? If so, why?

Reading stereotypes

One way that students can experience the effect of the media in a very personal way is to ask them how much they know about certain groups of people such as gays and lesbians, people with HIV, people from other Asian countries, Hindus or Jews or Christians, and so on. Have them talk about what they know about these people. Then ask where they got their information. Do they know members of these groups personally? What influences most strongly their perception of people from these groups. Do the students think their perceptions are accurate? If so, to what extent are they accurate? (See also the lesson and worksheet "Looking at Ourselves and Others", published by the Peace Corps).

If students follow the images and messages in the various media, they may be able to track how the media sometimes presents only certain aspects of these groups. News about crimes committed by foreigners, images of gay men cross-dressing, reports of problems in hotels that refuse service to certain marginalized groups of people: are these true of all people in these groups? Students can keep count to determine whether the reports that viewers "consume" are similar to these or the media shows positive images of members of the groups.

Reading silence

One of the most important points to consider when learning to read the media is what is omitted from what we see or hear. The students may have found through their discussion about stereotypes that many times we simply have no information whatsoever on diverse groups of people. This applies to a wide variety of issues in the world around us as well. As teachers, we can stretch the students' critical thinking skills by having them consider what questions are not being asked and answered during an interview, a talk show, a newspaper or magazine article.

Advertising

Although we did not spend much time on the different methods advertisers use to convince us to buy their product or services, I gave my students a homework

assignment to count, in one day, the number of brand names or logos they could see easily on clothing, bags, shoes, jewelry, cell phone straps, glasses, etc. This included easily recognizable characters such as Winnie the Pooh, Pokemon, and so on. One student came back the next class to say she was surprised that she'd counted close to one hundred. This provided an opportunity to raise the issue of free advertising. Companies pay billions of dollars every year for media to place their advertising, yet consumers very freely wear logos on clothes or bags, yet are not paid for this advertising. This became the topic of a lively discussion.

Project

The students got into groups of four or five and each student in the group chose one Japanese media source to follow over a three-week period. As the purpose of this assignment was to use their new awareness of aspects of media bias, and so as not to overburden them with sources in English, they were encouraged to observe their own culture's media. One student chose an Internet news source, another chose a radio news source, and still another used a morning TV news commentary. As a group they decided on one issue in the news, for example, the war in Iraq, the Expo, the Japanese abduction issue, the situation in Palestine. The students then chose specific questions to answer each time they watched their particular news source. A sampling of the questions includes:

1. Count the number of interviews given to the various representatives on an issue
2. Record the number of appearances made by "establishment" figures, such as government spokespersons on corporate chief executive officers, and compare those to the number made by demonstrators or people with opposite views
3. Count the number of times a story appears in the particular media outlet you're monitoring
4. Who are the sources used in the story? List their names and positions (politician, store owner, government official, school principal, homemaker)
5. Is the coverage factual or based on speculation or opinion?
6. List the vocabulary used most frequently to describe events or people. Are negative terms used to describe sources that might be considered alternative

to the “official” sources? For example, are environmental groups labeled “radical” while governmental officials are labeled “official”? (Brookfield)

Three weeks later, the students regrouped and gave short presentations in English to other students who had focused on other topics. Their presentations reported on the data their group had gathered for the project.

Student Reaction

I was quite impressed that after we finished the two-week study of the media, the topic kept recurring throughout the remainder of the semester as we dealt with other topics such as gender, fashion, HIV/AIDS, and discrimination. Students were able to link many issues to either the impact that the media has on how we form our beliefs and opinions or how the lack of information leads to our misperceptions about the import of issues facing us on many levels. It is my hope that these students will continue to use elsewhere the skills they further developed through this study of the media.

Conclusion

Developing awareness of certain types of bias in reporting, advertising and entertainment media is fundamental to basic media literacy skills. Teachers can assist learners in this process. We should encourage students to monitor the kinds of media they experience, how the information they receive through this media is produced and for whose benefit, and who decides what, how and through whose voices we, the consumers, are to experience media messages.

Finally, we can support them in considering what values we are being imparted through the selective messages we are given in the various media. Students can work together to identify stereotypical images and reports of groups of people, or the exclusion of certain piece of information, and the effects that these images or omissions may have on the general public.

This particular course material was difficult to encapsulate in a 25-minute presentation in that there were many sub-topics to describe, and although a handout

provided more details, many sample exercises and further suggestions had to be deleted due to the time constraints.

Suggested Reading and Resources

Aiex, Nola Kortner. (1989). “How to ‘Read’ Television: Teaching Students to View TV Critically”. <http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed318039.html>. Accessed Jan. 26, 2004.

Brookfield, Stephen D. (1987). *Developing Critical Thinkers.* Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Center for Media Literacy. <http://www.medialit.org/>. Accessed Jan. 24. 2004.

Chomsky, Noam. (1979). *Language and Responsibility.* Harvester Press, Ltd.

Chomsky, Noam. (2003). *On Democracy and Education.* Routledge.

Fairclough, Norman. (1995). *Media Discourse.* Oxford University Press.

Hazen, Don and Julie Winokur. (1997). *We the Media: A Citizens' Guide to Fighting for Media Democracy.* The New Press, New York.

Herman, Edward S. and Noam Chomsky. (2002). *Manufacturing Consent.* Pantheon.

McNair, Brian. (1995). *An Introduction to Political Communication.* Routledge.

Peace Corps. “Looking at Ourselves and Others”. Worksheet. <http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/looking/lesson35.html>. Accessed Jan. 24, 2004.

Thoman, Elizabeth. (1995). “What is Media Literacy”. <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/ teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm>. Accessed Jan. 26, 2004. Center for Media Literacy, Los Angeles.

Louise Haynes currently teaches English oral communication and writing courses at Nanzan University in Nagoya. She has published and presented on teaching HIV/AIDS in EFL for over eight years and is the director of a non-profit AIDS education organization, JAPANetwork. Her current research interests include media literacy, gender issues, and peace studies.

Adding Spice to Vocabulary

Mathew White, Chuyko University <mathewspaldingwhite@hotmail.com>

Introduction

I've been teaching English for a little over 10 years now, teaching everyone from toddlers to retirees. For the past three years, my teaching has been limited almost exclusively to Chukyo University and its Open College. For those who may not be familiar with Chukyo, it provides a very supportive learning environment, full of very enthusiastic students and teachers. However, attempts to increase the focus on vocabulary acquisition have met with some challenges, namely some negative feedback by students within the department about the boredom of studying vocabulary and using vocabulary cards. My presentation explored ways teachers could facilitate students' vocabulary acquisition without turning students off English.

As the father of a 21/2 year-old child, I can testify that children are indeed, as Tim Murphey (1998) so aptly put it, "language hungry". However, the appetite for English, especially when taught as a foreign language, can wax (increase) and wane (decrease). I think that one of the factors leading to a diminishing appetite might very well be the lack of variety in our students' English learning diets. If we see vocabulary as a staple part of their diets, we might consider how turned off rice we might become if we never added any variety to it when eating. In my presentation, I hoped to provide teachers with examples of the following spices (activities) to be used to give vocabulary learning more flavor.

1. Concentration Word Clap

Student groups form circles (or can be done as a class). A four beat rhythm is set (I usually use: slap your hands on your legs; then clap your hands; next snap your right fingers; and finally snap your left fingers). To begin with, one person decides the topic. On the fourth beat, the person who named the topic says something in that category (e.g. for countries, the first person might say Japan). The person to his/her left must name another country on the fourth beat. An example would go something like this (please keep in mind that all students are slapping, clapping, and snapping together):

S1: (slap, clap, snap) “Japan”
S2: (slap, clap, snap) “China”
S3: (slap, clap, snap) “Thailand”

Students are not allowed to repeat a word that has been said before. Airheads like myself sometimes like to include continents, such as Africa, as names of countries, but making mistakes is all part of learning. Once students understand the game, they can be put in small circles (3 or 4) so that there is not a lot of time spent waiting for a turn. In the following lesson, the vocabulary for this activity might focus on nationalities in order to thread the lessons together allowing for recycling and expansion on the initial country word clap. (You have my apologies if this is unclear. This activity is much easier demonstrated than described in writing!)

2. Thumper

Thumper is another circle activity. The first step is to get all members of each circle to designate their own individual gestures. Gestures are used to call on individuals during the activity. As an example, one student sign might be the peace sign (two fingers extended) and one of the other students might have the thumbs up sign. The person who initiates the game says his word, makes his/her own gesture and then makes the gesture for someone else in the group, indicating it is that person’s turn. This creates spontaneity and a need for students to really pay attention, because they never know when someone is going to call on them. All members of the circle are continuously drumming on their laps or desks (hence the name Thumper); the rest of the steps are as follows: 1) say something in the target vocabulary; 2) make the gesture you have designated for yourself; 3) make the gesture for someone else in the circle, thus calling on them to repeat the process. Again, using the country vocabulary as an example the game might proceed something like this:

S1: (thumping) “France” (makes her peace sign, then makes the thumbs up sign, calling on another student)
S2: (thumping) “Spain” (makes his thumbs up sign, then makes a gesture for the next student

*The first few times this game is played, it will be helpful if the teacher either assigns gestures or has a repertoire of gestures for the students to choose from. This could connect nicely with a lesson incorporating sign language.

3. Backs to the Board

In pairs or groups, only one member of each team sits so they can see the board. The teacher writes the word on the board. Students explain the word to their team members, without actually saying the word. When a team member knows the word, he or she can a) yell it out b) raise his or her hand and whisper the answer in the teacher's ear c) write it down on a paper (Alternatives B and C allow more people to answer, and teams can be working on different words at the same time if a teacher lists 5-10 words on the board at the same time. However, Alternative A seems to generate a lot of excitement!).

4. Get your partner to say...

This is another partner activity, and is similar to Backs to the Board. Half of the students are shown a word. Their job is to get their partner to say that word. However, instead of explaining the word, like in Backs to the Board, students say or do something that will make their partners respond using the word. (For example, to get your partner to say, "Thank you," just give them a compliment! To get them to say, "What's the matter?" just make a sad face.)

5. Sorting / Putting into Categories

The object of this activity is for students to name the category or connection about a list of words. David Paul demonstrates the power of this activity by using connections that really make participants have to engage themselves and search for the connections. Here, I start with some that will be fairly clear. The lists can be presented on the board or read aloud by the teacher, or students. The first time you do this I would suggest simply writing a list on the board and drawing a box around the list indicating that they are connected. Below are some examples, with the suggested categories indicated below each one.

back eye face foot head hand
(parts of the body)

boy child girl man mother woman
(people)

after before century during early hour late minute
(times)

carry draw hold point write
(your guess!)

At the min-conference, I provided participants with three separate sheets containing words already in categories. With the three separate sheets, learners can work in groups of threes. Students take turns reading one of the lists on their sheets, and the other members of the group compete against each other, or the clock, to identify the category. The student calling out the words is provided the facilitative tension of needing to pronounce the words intelligibly, so the other members of the group can understand. Each sheet is different to make sure that students don't simply scan the sheets in their hands (although that could be another activity!). Also, I believe it's important to let the learners keep the sheets they've read. If learners were unfamiliar with the pronunciation or meaning of any words on their lists, this gives them the opportunity to look them up. Even if students were familiar with the words, they might review them again on the way home or repeat the activity at home with their family members. Also, if students are asked to create their own category lists, the versions they take home can provide a nice model.

6. D<u>ee</u>p but not Profound

I like this activity because my students often continue using it outside the classroom. Similar to the previous activity, students are categorizing words; however, this time, students are determining which words go in each category. The leader decides on a pattern that will determine what is acceptable and what is not. The object of the game is for others to discover the rule and thus be able to contribute appropriate words. The original version required that any words allowed must have double vowels. Therefore, any words with 'ee' or 'oo' in them are acceptable (hence "D<u>ee</u>p" but not

“profound”). The game might begin something like this:

T: I’m making a special dictionary, and I will only be allowing certain words. You must try to add words to the dictionary. Pay close attention to the words that I accept for the dictionary, and you will soon learn why some words are accepted and some words are not. The first word in my dictionary is ‘foot’ (Teacher writes the word on the board). The second word in my dictionary is ‘cheek’ (Teacher writes the word on the board). Okay, who can give me another word to add? (If the word fits the pattern, the teacher accepts it and writes it in the appropriate space on the board. Words that are not accepted should also be written on the board in a separate space to aid students with solving the puzzle and give visual reinforcement to the vocabulary students provided.). At Chukyo University, we sometimes play this game at lunchtime. Here are some additional categories we have used: words starting with the letter ‘R’ (a great way to emphasize the importance of pronunciation!), words with two syllables (candy was okay, but not cake), words that end in ‘t’.

* This activity flows easiest when the teacher and at least one other person are familiar with it. Therefore, it is ideal for situations in which an assistant language teacher or teaching colleague is also present.

**Students need to be reminded not to shout out the rule. If they know what the category or rule is, they can show it by saying an appropriate word each time there turn comes around. In this way, everyone can continue to participate.

7. Word Cards

These are known to be a successful way for students to increase their vocabulary, and you are probably familiar with them. Unfortunately, I have to agree with my students when they say that word cards can be extremely mundane. The goal is to find activities that make word cards more interesting and force students to think a little deeper. For example:

1. Have students work in pairs using one student’s ring of word cards. Have them remove 15 of the cards randomly and lay them on a desk so they can see them all.

Next, have them organize the cards into 3-5 different categories (e.g. They might put all the verbs together, all the food words together, all the animal words together, etc.)

2. For homework, have students select five to seven of their word cards and write an open-ended question on the front side underneath the word itself. In the next class, students can ask their questions to their classmates. (This idea was provided by Stoeckl (2003).

8. Identifying / Noticing

It's also good to remember that what is not necessarily new and interesting for you might be for your students. Let's face it, many of us have been around a lot longer than most of them have!

1. Word Searches - These are puzzles with words hidden among a bunch of letters. You can make these for free on the Internet (See references section). It's a good idea to limit the number of characters across and down. Otherwise, they can be more frustrating for your students than challenging.
2. Count the number of times a particular word appears in a text (written or listening). This can also be done with writing assignments when you want to encourage your students to use synonyms instead of repeating the same word!
3. Find a certain amount of words connected to a particular word. Take a text you have or are about to use in a lesson. Have students look for all the words related to beach, travel, and so on.
4. Underline all the words ending in *–ing*, *--tion,* etc. This can be linked to other activities, such as Concentration Word Clap in which a student must say a word ending in *–tion*.

    5. Did the following words appear in the text? (Provide a list in which some did and some didn't.) You could even allow students to make bets as to how confident they were about words appearing or not in the text.

9. Selecting/Recognizing and making choices

1. Odd one out (big small short carry tall). These can be made in various levels of difficulty (for example, list things normally found in miso soup, but include one that isn't!)

2. Choose 5 words from the following list to describe yourself. If you feel your students may not be willing to describe themselves, have them choose five words to describe a family member, or a food that they like.
3. Choose 5 words from this list/lesson to learn and teach them to your classmates next week.
4. As a follow up to Item 2 or 3, collect the words selected by students and make them part of the vocabulary quizzes and exams.

10. Matching/Recognizing and put words in pairs

Word lists can be provided in which students must find pairs of synonyms (for example, 'spicy' and 'hot'). Simpler versions might have students draw lines from words in one column to their synonym in another column.

1. with antonyms (interesting/boring)
2. with collocations (take a bath, shower/watch a movie, game)

* If you are teaching your students varieties of Englishes, then you might have them try to recognize and match synonyms used specifically in one country. For example, when focusing on Australia, one could help students discover that 'ankle biter' or 'rugrat' = child or that. (More importantly, those planning to visit Australia could benefit from learning that 'Dunny' = 'toilet'!!!)

11. Rating and Sequencing / Put words in some kind of order

A little flavor might be added to a review of foods by having students (individually, in pairs, or in groups) put the words in order by the frequency in which they eat them. In the process, they might be surprised to find that their classmates do not come up with the same answers.

1. Frequency- this can be how often the students or their family members do activities (for verb review), etc.
2. Order/Sequence- students can put words in the order they heard them in a story they just read or the sequence in which they did the activities last night (First I ate dinner, then I watched TV, after that I did my homework.)

3. Preference- in reviewing animals, provide students with a list and have them place them in order from the ones they would most like to have as a pet to the ones they would least like to have as a pet (As a follow up, have them explain their choices.)

12. Riddles

Research shows that the more we actively work out a solution to a problem, the more likely we are to store that information permanently (Carter and McCarthy, 1988, 65). See references for a good riddle source. You could even do a riddle a day!

1. Rich people want it. Poor people have it. If you eat it, you will die.
2. What has towns, but not one inn (hotel)? What has rivers but no fish swim?
3. What is 3/7 chicken, 2/3 car and 1/2 goat?
4. How many letters are there in the alphabet? (Not 26!)
5. How many months have 28 days? (More than you might think at first!)

(Thanks to Michael Kruse for sharing # 1 and 5, and Brad Deacon for # 3!).

13. Quizzes / Exercises

In some vocabulary exercises, the answers are provided at the bottom of the page. These are called closed gap exercises. People sometimes add extra answers to make it more challenging. You're probably familiar with the following example.

Fill in each blank with a word from the box below.

1. You can _____ books at Maruzen.
2. A: I went to bed at 8:00 p.m. last night. B: Wow! That's _____!
3. He likes *yakisoba* and *okonomiyaki*. He can't _____ which one to eat.
4. My brother can _____ well.

activity	buy	agree	door	early	clear	decide	change	draw

However, I find that students need practice in considering form when completing vocabulary exercises. In the following closed gap exercise, the word is provided at the bottom, but the form sometimes needs to be changed.

Example:

Fill in each blank with a word from the box below. You may need to change the form of the word.

Example: We _____ *takoyaki* at the school festival. (sell)

We *sold*_____ *takoyaki* at the school festival.

1. I _____ a book at Maruzen yesterday.
2. A: I went to bed at 8:00 p.m. last night. B: Wow! That's _____!
3. He likes *yaksisoba* and *okonomiyaki*. He can't _____ which one to eat today.
4. My brother can _____ well.

activity buy early agree door clear decision change drawing

*I often let my students take vocabulary 'quizzes' home, so they can use a dictionary or work on them independently at their own pace. I also encourage them to discuss the possible answers with their classmates.

14. Loci (location)

The use of maps in our minds has been used since the times of Plato and Socrates. People found that they could remember long speeches by walking around town and saying a different part of the speech at each location. When they finally gave the speech, they remembered the lines by thinking of the places in order.

Similarly, we can put vocabulary items or cards around the room and have students learn them by location. Turn them face down and students will be amazed at how many they are still able to remember! Note: This doesn't work so well if you attach words to pets in your house, as cats, and dogs tend to get irritated and often move around, messing up your location anchor!

15. Reading Graded Readers, and Listening to Graded Readers on Cassette

One of the best things students can do to recycle vocabulary, increase the recognition of words, and become more familiar with how these words are used in

association with other words is read. Encouraging your students to read and helping them learn to read for pleasure is one of the best things you can do for your students. *The key is to help them find books at the right level.* Oxford has a guide to extensive reading (available in Japanese and English!) written by Dr. Rob Waring that explains this in detail. If you'd like a copy, contact Robert Habbick of Oxford University Press at habbick@oupjapan.co.jp. Tell him Mathew White sent you!

Reflection

In presenting for Nanzan's mini-conference I realized my tendency to try and rush things in my excitement and eagerness to cover lots of material. It was a good reminder that I need to slow down and take the time to make sure everyone understands. Preparing for the mini-conference also prompted me to look more closely at my current teaching practices and to jog my memory for previously successful activities I haven't made use of for some time. Sticking around for other presentations allowed me to pick up some new spices (activities) to add to my own lessons, and to feed off the enthusiasm of other presenters and participants. I'm truly thankful for that.

References

You can make word search puzzles for free on the web at the following site:
http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com

You can find plenty of riddles at the following site:
http://www.riddlenut.com (You can even sign up to have a riddle sent to you every day!)

I experienced some of these vocabulary activities during my own language learning experiences, and I am grateful to Mrs. Sands, my Spanish teacher. Some of these activities were also originally drinking games from college (you don't have to tell your students that!). In addition, many of these activities are available in language teaching resource literature. I have found the following books especially useful, and some of the ideas presented today can also be found in them

Carter, Ronald and McCarthy, Michael. (1988). *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. New York: Longman.

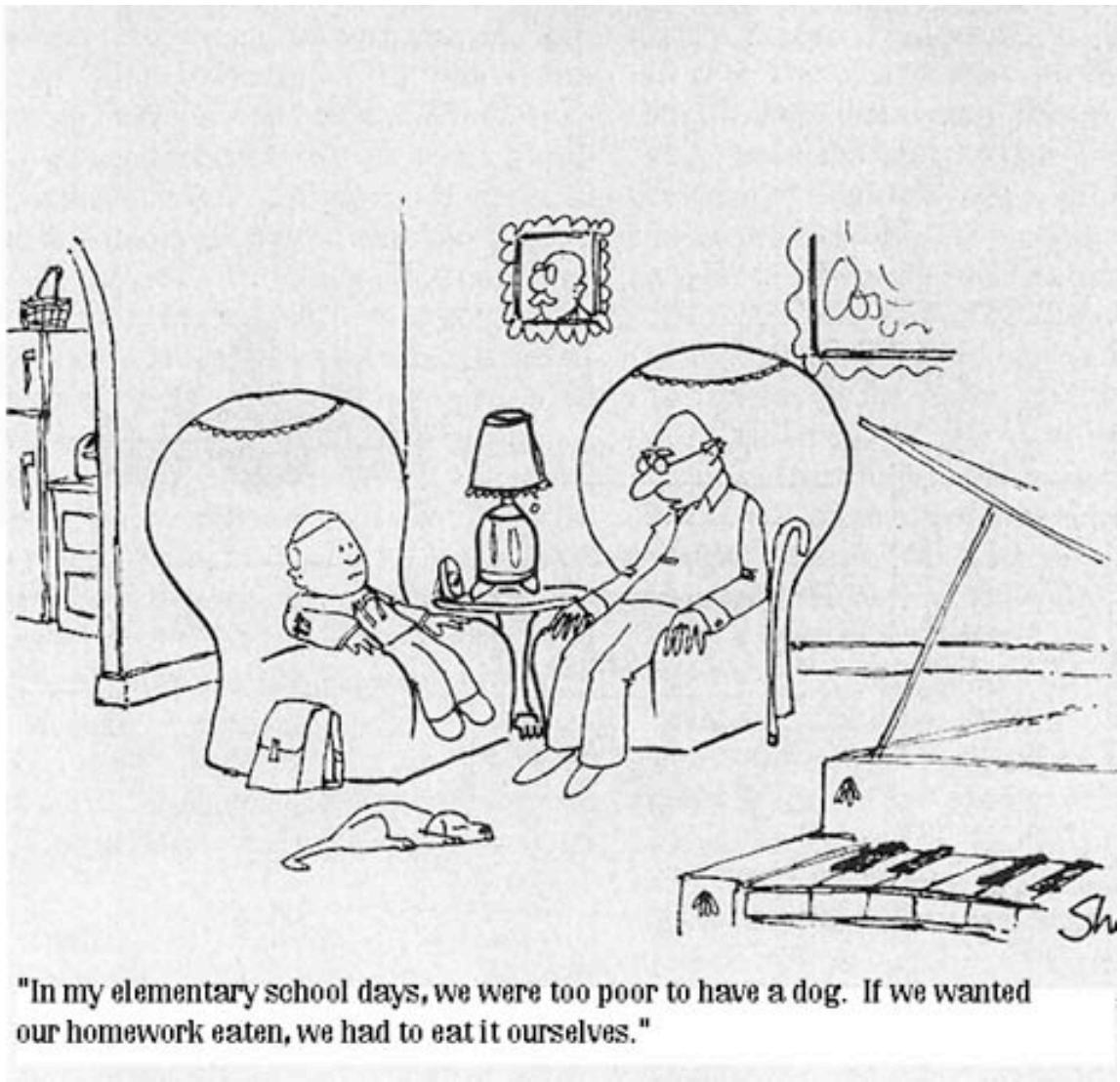
Murphey, Tim. (1998). *Language Hungry.* Tokyo: Macmillan Languagehouse Ltd.

Paul, David. (2002). *Teaching English to Children in Asia*. Hong Kong: Pearson Education.

Stoeckl, Tim. (2003). 'Vocabulary Circle: Using Target Vocabulary in Small Group Conversation'. Tokyo: *The Language Teacher.* My Share. December, Volume 27, Number 12.

Thornbury, Scott. (2002). *How to Teach Vocabulary*. Essex: Pearson Education.

Mathew White is presently an Instructor at Chukyo University, Nagoya. He has just completed a Masters in TESOL at Birmingham University, and is taking up a position in the Department of English and American Studies, Nanzan University, from April. Mat is a proud father!



Using a Structural Encounter Approach in JapaneseTeaching

Chie Matsunaga, Nanzan University Graduate School

国際交流を目的としたボランティア活動は、外国人と日本人のフリートークの会や、外国人に日本語を教える会になることが多い。フリートークの会では、考え方や感性を分かち合うまで互いに親交が深まらないことが多く、また日本語を教える会では、教える側と教えられる側で立場がはっきりとわかれてしまう。交流を深めながら、日本人も外国人もともに学び会える場をつくりたい。そのような思いから、南山大学の日本人学生と交換留学生に対して、週に一回「日本語の会」という場を提供し、２００３年１０月から１２月にかけて、計１２回のボランティア活動をおこなった。

日本語の会では、留学生と日本人学生が一緒にアクティビティを行うことによって、互いの国の文化や、各自の体験、考え方と出会うことを目的とした。アクティビティは、３０分ほどの共同作業を行い、それに関する個人の体験や感情を互いにわかちあうという構成で行った。

具体的な内容としては、おにぎり作り体験、世界地図作成、日本の童謡の替え歌作成、はないちもんめなどの昔の遊びなど、毎回テーマを決めて１２回行った。参加者は生まれ月や好きな料理などによって小グループにわかれ、互いに協力してアクティビティにとりくんだ。

これらのアクティビティは、構成的エンカウンターグループの理論を日本語教育に応用したものである。互いの個性を認め、個人が尊重される場作りを目指した開発的カウンセリングの理論背景をもつアクティビティである。

毎回、会の実施後に行ったアンケートからは、参加者のさまざまな感想を聞くことができた。日本人の参加者からは、「いろいろな日本語の表現をみなおすことができた」「大きな声をだすと簡単にうちとけられると思った」などの意見がだされ、留学生からは、「みんなで歌うのが楽しかった。新しい単語を習いました。楽しめると習

うのが簡単だと思った」「世界地図を書くときに、国籍もしゃべる言葉も違っていても、世界がひとつだなと感じた」「みんなとの距離が少しちぢんだように感じた」などの意見がだされた。

りゅうがくせいの参加が極端に少ない会があったこと、アクティビティのテーマがはっきりしない会があったことなど、反省する点はあったものの、普段なかなか話す機会のない大学生と大学院生、留学生が互いに知り合うきっかけをつくり、会の終了後も交流が続いているなど、日本語の会は成果をあげることができた。

今後、さらに実践をかさねて、ボランティアの現場や日本語教育の現場で各個人が尊重される学びの場づくりについて考えていきたい。

参考文献

中野民夫（２００３）『ファシリテーション革命　参加型の場づくりの技法』　岩波アクティブ文庫

林伸一（１９９４～１９９５）　「グループで学ぶ日本語」『月刊日本語』　アルク

南山大学大学院　松永美千絵

Two Ways to Step out of the Textbook

Ben Backwell, Nanzan Boys Junior High School <benbackwell@hotmail.com>

I've been teaching in Japan for six years, three of which were happily spent on the JET program. Last year I started studying the M.A program at The School for International Training in Vermont, America. This is mainly an online degree but four months are also spent in the summer time on SIT's campus. At my current high school I teach English and play and coach the senior high soccer team.

In my teaching I am moving towards lessons based on student generated material, such as framing sentences. This involves giving students sentences with textbook grammar points but allowing them to choose and fill in other words.
e.g. Do you know the ____ who is ____ing by the ____?
Yes, I do. Everyone knows ____. That's ____.

Like many teachers my hope is that students find my classes interesting and develop an internal motivation to study English. The reality of my situation however is that students are expected to learn and pass tests based on an old fashioned textbook that students find difficult to identify with. To develop students' interest in English whilst enabling them to pass their tests I have been experimenting with two activities: *The Dialog Game* and *Hot Potato*. The first activity I presented focused on how to use co-operative learning with a textbook dialog. My students have confirmed through feedback that given the choice of working alone with the textbook, repeating and shadowing the teacher or working co-operatively in pairs the latter is by far their most preferred form of study. My students want to work together. They feel alive when they become more responsible for their own learning. I therefore wanted to share this successful activity with other conference participants at the Nanzan University mini-conference. High school teachers and teacher developers, may find these activities useful.

The Dialog Game

We started the presentation by making pairs. As an illustration, I used a textbook dialog between David Beckham and Hideki Matsui. Couples chose who would

play which character, and each person took a handout accordingly. The Beckhams had a handout with only Beckham's sentences on it and blank spaces where Matsui's lines were. Likewise the Matsuis had a handout with only Matsui's sentences on it and empty lines for Beckham's words. Matsui's handout looked like this:

Matsui

M. Do you know the girl standing by the door?

B.

M. Oh, she's the generous girl who won first prize in the flower contest isn't she?

B.

M. What a nice girl she is.

B.

Beckham's handout looked like this:

Beckham

M.

B. Yes, I do, everyone knows her. That's Jane Catts.

M.

B. Yes. She gave lots of flowers to her friends.

M.

B. I think so too.

I told everyone that they may look at their handout but may not see their partner's handout. I continued by explaining we would go through this dialog three times in three different ways. The first time, we would just read the lines so that everyone got a general understanding of the conversation. My partner and I modeled this and then all the pairs read through the dialog.

Next, I asked the Matsuis to read their first line. The Beckhams would listen, remember it and repeat the sentence back. If it was repeated correctly then it was the Beckhams turn to say their response and the Matsuis would listen, remember the sentence and repeat it. They would continue like this through the dialog to the end. My partner and I modeled this 'read and repeat' activity, then pairs did it themselves.

For the third and final practice, I then asked the pairs to go through the dialog themselves. This time, one partner would read his sentence and the other would listen, and write it down in the blank spaces. In this way participants would have the complete dialog written down at the end of the activity. Once again my partner and I modeled this 'read and write' part of the activity, and then all the pairs went to work and did it.

To complete the first half of the presentation I pointed out four characteristics of the *Dialog Game*.

1. The general pattern of demonstrating the activity was a brief oral explanation followed by modeling it, and then the participants doing it for themselves.
2. A core motive for using this activity is to develop peer group learning where students become less dependent on the teacher. They realize they can also learn from each other.
3. It is best to use this activity as a review. Use vocabulary and grammar points the students have already studied. The teacher could of course create their own dialogues.
4.Chunking the sentences may well be necessary so students should know how to do this before starting the activity.

The presentation concluded with pairs taking a minute to discuss how they could use this co-operative learning activity in their own classrooms.

The Hot Potato

This activity is a popular oral output game adaptable for various levels of learners. *Hot Potato* can be used to go beyond the boundaries of the textbook. It encourages students to make their own sentences spontaneously.

The participants found a new partner and each pair was given a piece of paper. They were told to scrunch the paper into a ball and that now it wasn't a piece of paper but a hot potato. I told them we would explore using this game at the elementary, junior high and university level. At the elementary level it can be used as a review of topics such as colors, foods, animals, and so on. My partner and I threw the hot potato to each other whilst saying colors.

A. Red B. Brown A. Purple B. Green A. Silver B. Blue

When a player caught the ball he said a color and then tossed it to his partner who said a different color and then threw the ball back to the first player who had to say yet another color and so on. The game ended when one of us repeated a color already mentioned.

Pairs then practiced this. After a minute of practice I reminded them the potato was very hot and therefore they should respond quickly to get the ball out of their hands. In my oral tests, students are expected to answer questions without long pauses, so this game is perfect preparation for a rapid-fire speaking test.

The second practice focused on the junior high level. In my classes, students have been formulating questions using 'who', 'whom' and 'which'. I asked everybody to find out their partner's favorite sport and ask three questions using these words. My partner likes ice hockey so I asked:

Who do you play ice hockey with?

With whom do you watch ice hockey?

Which is your favorite team?

Each time I asked a question I threw the hot potato and after each answer my partner threw the hot potato back. Following this modeling each pair played the game.

My final explanation was for the University level, where teachers could use it to bring a class back together again after a vacation. Students ask each other questions about their partner's vacation, such as 'Where did you go?' 'What did you do in the vacation?'

Unfortunately, time had run out so we didn't practice *Hot Potato* at the university level but by now the participants had a good general understanding of how the game could be played.

Two comments I made on this game were:

1. It is highly adaptable so teachers were encouraged to develop their own way of playing the game according to the needs of their students.
2. The stereotype of Japanese learners of English is that they don't speak very fluently.

In my experience however the hot potato distracts the students from the pressure of speaking. Concentrating on the ball actually frees the student to speak more spontaneously.

There was a little time so I asked the pairs to briefly discuss how they might use *Hot Potato* in their classrooms. Then everyone was given a handout detailing how I have used both games in my lessons. Finally each participant was given a feedback form to fill in. The form had two questions on it and a space for additional comments.

Was this presentation understandable?

1 2 3 4

Do you think it was relevant to your teaching context?

1 2 3 4

Comments

Reflection

One of the characteristics of this conference was the short amount of time for each presentation. We learn by doing so it was important that participants have a real experience of the activities and an understanding of the core principles behind them. Everything else can go on a handout for participants to take home and read at their leisure. If there had been more time I would have liked the pairs to have had a little more time to discuss the possibilities of each game in relation to their students. This would give them an opportunity to express their ideas and hear another's opinion on the experience. It also enables clearer, well thought out feedback.

Despite the short time the feedback was very insightful and I would recommend this teaching tool to any presenter. From the feedback I gauged there were two groups of participants at the mini-conference. One group consisted of fairly experienced teachers who had a firm understanding of their own pedagogical beliefs and knew the activities I presented. They gave several helpful suggestions on how to improve the games. One hint was for developing motivation in *Hot Potato*. Simply set a timer for two minutes, the student holding the ball when the timer rings has to answer a question from the teacher.

The second group were young teachers or teachers to be who were

exploring new ideas to use in the classroom. They gave valuable information on what they would feel comfortable using from my presentation. Several teachers favored *The Dialog Game* as they felt *Hot Potato* did not suit their content-based curriculums. From this, I realized *The Dialog Game* gives students an initial taste of ownership over their learning. In my teaching I am moving towards lessons based on student generated material, such as framing sentences. One way to move in that direction is activities such as *The Dialog Game*, where students take responsibility for their own learning.

On a final note, if I were to present these activities again I would change my general presenting structure. At last year's conference, first I explained orally and then modeled the activity. Next time, I would simply model first then briefly explain the core points of the game. A future presentation may look like this.

1. Model activity.
2. Briefly explain the rules.
3. Participants do the activity.
4. Participants discuss activity in relation to their working context.
5. Take questions from the participants.
6. Feedback form
7. Handouts on the activity to take home.

One final comment on the Nanzan mini conference is the fun, friendly atmosphere. All the presenters and organizers did a thoroughly professional job whilst keeping it light-hearted. At the end, I was politely barraged by *Hot Potato* paper balls and a round of warm applause. It was an interesting combination and a strangely pleasing finale to my presentation.

References

Kagan,S (1995). *Classbuilding*. Kagan Co-operative Learning.

Ben Backwell is a high school teacher at an all boys school in Nagoya city, central Japan. He has been teaching in Japan for 6 years, three of which were happily spent on the JET Program. At his school he teaches English and plays with and coaches the soccer team. He teaches English conversation to 2nd and 3rd year JHS students.

Our World in Our Words:
The JALT2003 Annual Conference Participant's Plenary

Kurt Hartje, K.E.S. English School <kurthartje@yahoo.com>

The Participant's Plenary, a new event at the 29th JALT International Conference, held in Shizuoka City, November 2003, offered a chance for those who attended to share their views on the current state of English education. According to the Conference Handbook, the purpose of the plenary was, "to ensure that it is not only presenters that share insights and explore important teaching-related questions, but that all conference goers have an opportunity to raise current issues in a public forum." Dr. Elka Todeva, a teacher educator at the School for International Training, facilitated this teacher-reflection session (see the most recent issue of this newsletter, Autumn 2003, Volume 11, Issue 3, for an interview with Dr. Todeva).

The audience was asked to form groups of three to five members and to appoint one member in each group as a secretary to record the group's responses to three questions. The questions were:

1) What trends do you see? (Not only at the conference, but in language teaching in general)

2) What are you excited about?

3) What's on your radar? (What would you like to see being discussed in the future?)

Three color-coded sheets (one for each question) were distributed to each group. In addition, the participants were told to make sure that all members of their group had a chance to speak. Please enjoy reading the participants' ideas in the following sections.

What trends do you see?

Learner autonomy appears to be the major trend this year as it was mentioned by six different groups (more than any other category). "Presentations concerning student's autonomy, and having students discuss their learning were in great number," wrote one group. The **participation of Japanese teachers** also drew much attention with a total of five responses. While one group believed that *more*

Japanese teachers were getting involved, at least two others felt the opposite, with one group remarking that, “Japanese teachers must be better represented as presenters.”

Four groups saw a trend toward **more audience interaction and group discussion** in presentations, and another four listed a focus on **CALL**. Several comments on **commercial presentations** were received, two of which expressed dissatisfaction with the composition of such presentations. One group remarked:

> *Many presentations promote textbooks, but it is not obvious to the unsuspecting participants. Focus is on promoting texts. Only about 30% of such presentation time dealt with concepts and theory. 70% promoted the book. Jack Richard’s presentation was balanced.*

Those who felt there was too much commercialization might find comfort in a trend that a single group reported seeing—“Fewer commercial presentations.”

Other trends seen that were commented on by at least two different groups can be categorized under **young learners**, **extensive reading**, **pragmatics**, and **stereotyping of Japanese students**.

What are you excited about?

If taken as a single category**, networking, sharing information, and meeting old and new friends** received (somewhat predictably) the largest number of comments. Those who presented will be happy to hear that there were an abundance of **positive comments on plenary sessions, presentations, and workshops**. A few of the most enthusiastic comments were:

> *Pertinent presentations*
> *Presentations getting more professional*
> *Dave Willis’ plenary was excellent*
> *The children’s teachers sessions were very practical and interesting*
> *The pragmatics sessions were great*

The third largest category, the **international food fair,** appeared on the response sheets of nine different groups.

Three groups reported their enthusiasm for the **involvement of the Ministry of Education** at the conference. Other categories that received at least two responses

include **cultural issues**, **meeting famous authors**, and **learner autonomy**.

What's on your radar?

The biggest blip? **Employment issues**. "Job security" was a concern of three different groups, along with a number of other comments such as "discrimination against foreign teachers", "working conditions for part-time teachers", and "social issues facing foreign teachers in universities". **Teaching children** came in a distant second with only two references.

With the exception of the above, it was difficult to determine any general categories under which to place the remaining responses. However, perhaps there should be one for the following comments. I'll leave it up to the reader to decide if these belong together, and if so, what name to give the category.

How institutional organization contributes to students' decreasing motivation.

Lack of discipline of students and how to address the issues.

This conference should address the issue of students' responsibility for continuing study outside class hours. The lack of this is seen as a societal problem.

Problems of team-teaching between foreign/Japanese teachers due to skills in communication and/or pedagogy.

The lowering level of Japanese students' English language ability.

Other comments on topics for more discussion:

Links between different levels

MI (Multiple Intelligences)

Using authentic material from Internet (video, transcripts, etc.)

L1 language research

Error analysis

The latest on brain research and the implications for learning / teaching

Writing

Make sure to keep the 30th JALT International Conference on you radar for 2004! Contact the author for a complete list of responses.

Be published in *Explorations in Teacher Education*!

Guidelines

Articles – sharing your research with other teacher educators. Up to 3000 words.

Essays – your opinion or ideas about a topic relevant to teacher educators based in Japan. Up to 2500 words.

Stimulating Professional Development series – teacher educators are often quite professionally isolated. Write up about your teacher education activities, and the institutions that you work in. See previous issues for examples. Up to 3500 words.

Conference Proceedings –did you give a great presentation recently? Write up your presentation – up to 2500 words.

Alternatively, are you organising a mini-conference? Write about it, and ask the presenters to write up their presentations. See the Autumn 2003 and Winter 2004 issues for examples. First, please contact the editor, to help us plan our future issues.

Conference Reviews or Conference Reports – did you attend an interesting conference? Share your thoughts with the TE SIG members. Up to 2500 words.

Book Reviews – have you recently read an interesting book related to teaching, teacher education, language acquisition, or education? Up to 2000 words.

Font: Helvetica 11 point, single spaced, one line between paragraphs. Indent beginning of all paragraphs one tab space, SINGLE space between sentences.

Notes: Please include a catchy title, your name and professional affiliation, an e-mail address to go at the top of the article, and a 75-100 word bio-data for the end.

Deadlines: ongoing. Submit by e-mail to Robert Croker <croker@nanzan-u.ac.jp>. Attach as a Word document, titled with your surname, such as 'croker.doc' or 'robins.doc'. Both Apple Macintosh and Windows format is fine. Also, please cut and paste your article into the body of the e-mail, in case the Word document does not open.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Editor if you have any questions or ideas.