Outside the Box:
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Articles

Language Learning and Teaching

Special Section: Teaching Ideas from OkiJALT

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Lessons from Okinawa JALT

This issue features a section of teaching ideas from the Okinawa JALT "My Share" event held a few months ago. Teachers often have to operate 'in their own world' without cooperating by sharing resources and knowledge gained from multiple trials of their own resources and procedures. This collection of presentation proceedings focuses on practical teaching activities and insight from members of the Okinawa Chapter of JALT. The presentations were useful and dynamic. The written adaptations should provide readers with a similar experience. In the first article, George MacLean gives us tips on teaching pronunciation with emphasis on the "S" morpheme. Tokuyu Uza then provides us a glimpse into his thoughts on language change, discusses groups influencing such change, and argues about the importance of maintaining cultural identity. He also introduces an activity that can be effective in cases where structure may particularly be needed for language learners. The third article, by Michael Bradley, has written step-by-step instructions for a class activity that utilizes comic strips to promote communication and introduces article use.

Thereafter Fernando Kohatsu presents an excerpt from one of his textbook activities for learning verb tenses in Spanish. Moving into a recent format, Norman Fewell explains how to use *pecha-kucha* as a time-saving presentation activity. Meghan Kuckelman then describes a writing activity promoting community involvement and awareness via the *Welcome to Nago* blog. Finally, Tim Kelly shares his wisdom on the importance of considering psychological aspects in language teaching. These articles are useful to reflect upon, and hopefully will add to our readers' teaching repertoires. If you are interested in presenting and writing about experience garnered from your own teaching, you are cordially invited to participate in similar future Okinawa JALT events. For more information, please consult the Okinawa JALT webpage at

https://sites.google.com/site/ okinawajalt/home

Teaching Pronunciation of the "S" Morpheme

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Pronunciation: To Teach or Not to Teach

Much has been written about maturational constraints governing second language acquisition and a supposed critical period that governs the acquisition of native-like pronunciation (e.g. see Doughty & Long 2003). Many researchers argue that the acquisition of native-like pronunciation is impossible beyond a certain age. Moreover, some sociolinguists have argued that linguistic features such as accent are intimately related to a person's sense of self, and that non-native speakers actually maintain such linguistic features to express their distinctive ethnic identity (Rickford, 1996). This has tempered my zeal for aspiring to have my students achieve perfect, native-like pronunciation, but I think everyone will agree that learners should strive for comprehensible pronunciation that avoids unnecessary communication breakdowns or misunderstandings.

The case of the "S" morpheme is especially problematic for many non-native speakers. Partly because it is a morpheme and not just a phoneme, it has particular salience for native speakers. In the case of its use as third person or possessive "S," its absence can contribute to communication breakdowns. Where "S" is used to denote plural, its absence can be even more problematic, as in the utterance "I like dogs." versus when the "S" is omitted because of pronunciation challenges and becomes "I like dog." The illocutionary impact of the first utterance conveys the fact that the speaker enjoys the company of furry four-legged creatures known as canines whereas the second utterance indicates a gastronomic predilection for 'man's best friend,' i.e., dogs. With such examples in mind, it seems clear that pronunciation should in some cases be actively taught, especially where morphemes are concerned.

I personally believe pronunciation instruction should not be excessively prescriptive. If a student's English is fully comprehensible and they seem to be happy with their speaking then their learning experience has been a success, regardless of whether they sound like a native speaker. Still, my experience of over twenty years teaching language has shown me that many students are able to improve their pronunciation remarkably when they focus on it. I have coached dozens of students for speech contests. Many of them were able to generalize the lessons they learned while memorizing their speeches and apply those lessons to every day speech. The students whose pronunciation improved the most were influenced by three factors: instruction that paid careful attention to their efforts, ample time for practice, and a concern for correctness on the student's part. This can often be instilled for the most part using game-like activities.

Teaching and learning pronunciation can be fun. It does not have to be about drills and corrections. There are times when explicit instruction is helpful (especially with adults), but it is best if students have chances to model their speech based on clear pronunciation, without undue pressure from the teacher. A game environment lets everyone take part, and embeds the nature of the instruction in a less threatening context. This is important because perfect pronunciation may not be a reasonable goal for all learners, but when the game is perceived as the task, so nobody feels left out. Discretion and setting a good example is the better part of being a good pronunciation teacher.

The Rule

Third person, possessive and plural "S" occur in three varieties: /s/ as in drinks, /z/ as in flies, and /iz/ as in matches.[1] The

Table 1. *Pronunciation of the "S" Morpheme*

Form	Category		
	/s/ unvoiced	/z/ voiced	/iz/ sibilant
Plural	eats	gives	wishes
Third Person	gets	buys	passes
Possessive	Eric's	Sam's	Chris's

pronunciation of "S" varies according to whether the preceding sound is voiced, unvoiced or sibilant (See Table 1).

It would be a good idea prior to any pronunciation activity featuring "S" to explain the above categories. For voiced versus voiceless sounds, have students put their fingers on their Adam's apple and say a few of the target words from the activity, e.g., eats, or buys. Students will be able to feel their Adam's apple vibrate because vocal cords vibrate when a sound is voiced. Where there is no vibration, the sound is voiceless. As for the English sibilants, they are a closed set consisting of /s/, /z/, /ʤ/, /ʧ/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. It would be good to demonstrate these sounds as well and perhaps display examples that do not occur in the activity somewhere so that the students can refer to them.

The Activity

I have used the following activity to teach new vocabulary words, spelling and, in its best incarnation, as an aid to draw students' attention toward their pronunciation challenges and to heighten their concern for better pronunciation.

Whatever your students' nationality or nationalities may be, Avery and Ehrlich's chapter on problems of selected language groups in their book *Teaching American English Pronunciation* (1995) can be especially helpful. In this case, I have selected third person "S" as the target pronunciation form for this activity.

Target Level: Beginner – Advanced

Objectives: Develop phonological awareness
Promote student-student negotiation
Promote a learner-centered classroom

Skills: Listening and speaking

Materials: F1 Bingo!!! A Sheet and B Sheet (See Appendix A)

Time: Approximately 20 minutes

Procedure:

1. Prepare a list of words according to your students' pronunciation challenges, for example, third person "S" (See Appendix B). For the student handouts, do not include the phonological information about which category the words belong to.

2. Introduce the target words to the students and practice them. Divide the students into pairs. Give one student 'A sheet' and one student 'B sheet'.

3. Let students dictate their words to each other. Student A has to write the words Student B says in the blanks on his/her sheet and vice versa.

4. Once students have written out all the words, correct their answers as a group using the answer sheet (Appendix B), and address any questions they might have. This is a good chance for supplementary instruction too. Alternatively, make copies of the answer sheet sheet and have the students correct their answers in their pairs.

5. There are twelve spaces in the racetracks at the top of Handouts A and B. Have the students choose three words from each of the columns at the bottom of their handout, and write the words in the blanks on the racetrack at the top of their handout.

6. Let the races begin! (play bingo). The announcer should non-sequentially read one word from each column from left to right until there is a winner. Continue and acknowledge second place and third place. Pick up the pace and finish reading all the words thereafter. It is not uncommon for some students to miss words and thus have words that are not crossed out at the end.

7. Display the target words in the three phonetic categories (voiced, unvoiced, sibilant) and have students evaluate their results (See Appendix C).

Note

[1]The phoneme shown here as /i/ is a high, front, lax, unrounded vowel as pronounced in *fit* or *win* in North American English. Depending on the notational system used, it can be written as /i/ or /ɪ/.

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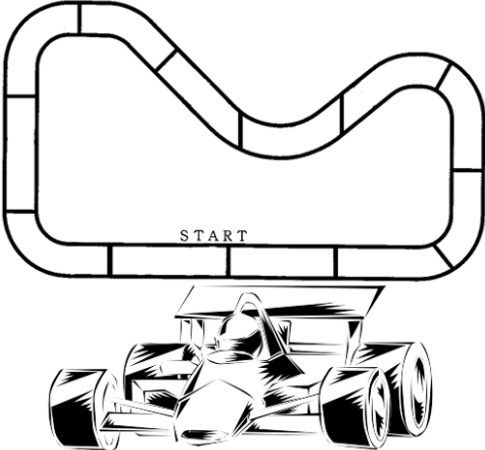
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Appendix A. F1 Bingo Sheets A and B

F1 Bingo!!!   A sheet

START
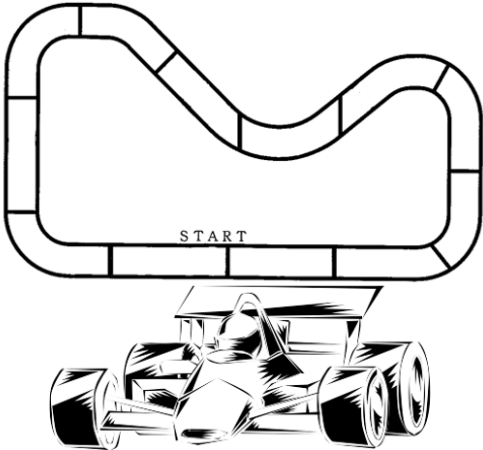
gives _____ studies _____
hatches _____ walks _____
hides _____ takes _____
hopes _____ drives _____
taxes _____ watches _____
supposes _____ waxes _____
jumps _____ wishes _____
lets _____ writes _____

F1 Bingo!!!   B sheet

START

_____ buys _____ looks
_____ pushes _____ loves
_____ drinks _____ matches
_____ eats _____ moves
_____ expresses _____ passes
_____ faxes _____ puts
_____ flies _____ reads
_____ gets _____ runs

Appendix B. F1 Bingo Answers with Categories Indicated

/s/ unvoiced	/z/ voiced	/iz/ sibilant
hopes	gives	hatches
jumps	hides	taxes
lets	buys	pushes
drinks	flies	expresses
eats	studies	faxes
gets	loves	supposes
takes	moves	watches
walks	reads	waxes
writes	runs	wishes
looks	drives	matches
puts		passes

Appendix C. F1 Bingo Answers with Third-Person "S" Categorized

/s/ unvoiced	/z/ voiced	/iz/ sibilant
hopes	gives	hatches
jumps	hides	taxes
lets	buys	pushes
drinks	flies	expresses
eats	studies	faxes
gets	loves	supposes
takes	moves	watches
walks	reads	waxes
writes	runs	wishes
looks	drives	matches
puts		passes

Where Should I Go?

Encouraging Learners to Put Their Place Into Learning

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Abstract: The inclusion of ideas of 'place' in education, not only Geography, is one way to connect learners with the world around them and more specifically the world with which they are most easily able to interact directly. Incorporating this concept as much as possible into day-to-day lessons was a motivating factor for adapting a more advanced lesson into, initially, a model lesson for junior high school students. "Where should I go?" is an activity to give students the opportunity to think about local places they could recommend to someone visiting their area. It incorporates a background slideshow to silently stimulate student participation with hints about places the students are likely to know, but which may not immediately come to mind within the time constraints of the lesson. Through this exercise, it is hoped that there will be some progress made in realizing the benefits of place-based education.

Introduction

If you were to ask a kindergartner where a good place to eat was, she would likely recommend somewhere not far away. Obviously a kindergartner has little information beyond the places she sees in her everyday life, hears her friends or family talking about, or visits from time to time. Without being aware of it, she has a keen sense of place with regard to her home area, as she probably knows little about other places. As we get older there seems to be a process whereby we are conditioned to think of our local places as being less important, unless we actually live in one of the centers of our society. There may not be a conscious effort to bring about this change in values, but it does seem to happen nonetheless. The situation may even be exacerbated in Japan by the fact that much of the television programming is Tokyo-centric, imbuing younger people in particular with the perception that 'important' things happen in places other than their own locale. Perkins and Thorns (2012) give an example of one interpretation where "sense of place relates particularly to the routines of everyday life set in particular local biophysical landscapes" (p.

15), which would suggest that the connections the kindergartner has established are truly components of an identity incorporating place as it is traditionally perceived in Geography. That this may be lost as time passes would also suggest some loss of identity was occurring.

Background

In Geography, the role of 'place' is a key concept whose significance, while generally acknowledged within the discipline, prompts a variety of interpretations and valuations from others. By way of introduction to his thesis, de Blij (2009) points out the expanding belief that the world is "flattening under the impress of globalization" and that "the idea that diversities of place continue to play a key role in shaping humanity's variegated mosaic tends to be dismissed by globalizers who see an increasingly homogenized and borderless world" (p. 3), suggesting that the traditional role of place in human experience is being relegated, as if some type of outgrown anachronism, to the dustbin of history. Though de Blij was countering this argument in the context of highlighting the disparities hidden behind assumptions of 'flattening,' we could just as readily question the desirability of such an outcome in the context of wishing to nurture a 'sense of place' as a means of strengthening connection to and therefore

valuing of one's 'home place' whether that be one's original or adopted home.

The assertion by the 17th century Czech educator Comenius that "Knowledge of the nearest things should be acquired first, then that of those farther and farther off" (as cited in Calkins, 1881, p. 49) expresses one of the central ideas of place-based education (Sobel, 2004, p. 4). Sobel goes on to emphasize the merit of the approach in a wide-ranging array of benefits:

> Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources in the life of the school. (Sobel, 2004, p. 7)

Elizabeth Templeton, in Baldwin, Block, Cooke, Crawford, Naqvi, Ratsoy et al (2013), sees a focus on place as a way "to resist what has sometimes seemed a troubling sense of fragmentation in time and place" that has ensued partly as a result of the digital revolution (p. 10). She cites Nicholson as observing that the revolution has resulted in a "scarcity of attention" and Menzies as linking "our increasing state of fragmentation to a changing sense of space-time continuum arising from our technological world" – the implications of which educators must contend with in their everyday work. Could it be that a revitalized sense of place might go some way toward recovering some of that attention? It is certainly a major challenge that is only likely to increase, so any positive leads should be followed up on.

Approach

In addition to endeavouring to inculcate a sense of place, the method of teaching also needs to be considered and, a generally constructivist approach is taken. In their book *Constructivist Strategies for Teaching Second Language Learners*, Reyes and Vallone (2008) note, "sheltered instruction and scaffolding are two modifications that can be used when teaching content in a second language" (p. 9). Although the activity in question is not directly part of a content course, the institution at which it is taught has content-based courses as an integral component of its curriculum, and the approach taken in those is often reflected generally throughout the curriculum. The depth of the activity does not entail any particular scaffolding, but rather a degree of sheltered instruction through the emphasis on having learners consider their local context and specifically places with which they are familiar. This is felt to be the case given that according to Lessow-Hurley sheltered instruction "uses comprehensible input and context-embedded instruction within a social, communicative context to provide access to both the core curriculum and to the English language" (as cited in Reyes and Vallone, 2008, p. 9).

Furthermore, many of the items on a list of "recommended activities for engaging second language learners in constructivist language arts and content area instruction" provided by Reyes and Vallone (2008) on page 62, are present, or may be depending on the examples chosen and overall approach taken. This activity can be considered to include aspects of the following items from that list:

- contextualize instruction to promote language acquisition
- maximize the social context of language acquisition
- teach language through content
- use humor to motivate language acquisition (if examples that amuse the students are included)
- embed instruction in real life experiences; facilitate context-embedded learning
- use cooperative group work
- have students work in pairs
- choose curricular topics of inherent interest to students
- utilize community resources
- encourage students to ask their own

questions and find their own answers

- use silence as a learning tool (in that the examples are provided via images without a spoken commentary)
- maximize the social context of learning.
                    (Reyes & Vallone, 2008, p. 62)

It is possible that others on the list may also be utilized, though it is equally true that the depth of utilization is certain to vary depending on the approach taken.

Rebecca Alber (2014) advocated having the students "share their own experiences, hunches, and ideas about the content or concept of study and have them relate and connect it to their own lives," (¶8) with teachers providing scaffolding in the form of hints and ideas, which the students will pick up on and incorporate into their learning. She also recognized the efficacy of visual aids in these processes.

Activity and Procedure

The activity itself originated as a sample lesson for about 12 JHS students that was to be loosely based on our college's lessons, in which "students will be actively engaged in conversation for more than half the class time" (45-minute class).

The original activity was pairwork and would generally involve individual students preparing on their own in advance of tackling the activity. Its inspiration was an activity to "suggest and compare interesting local places" from *English Firsthand 2* (Helgesen Brown, Kahny, Mandeville, & Wiltshier, 2010, p. 6). The concept seemed appropriate for the students, who were likely familiar with their home area.

As the class to be undertaken for the original lesson was a demonstration and the students were unknown to me, I needed to utilize as many shortcuts as I could to stay within the overall 50-minute timeframe. Thus I had the students prepare in groups to accommodate less confident or motivated learners.

A slideshow, consisting of images of about 10 local places which could fit the role of place types expected to be discussed in the lesson, was prepared and set-up to play when the computer was idle for a set period of time. The slideshow provided hints by silently projecting the selected places while students were engaged in the task. No commentary would be necessary. The computer was being used to show a standard PowerPoint as part of the usual lesson content, or a description of the school when it was part of a demonstration, as in the initial instance.

Actual implementation of the activity is very straightforward. First, preparation includes the following steps:

Find, or take, a selection of photographs of local points of interest. These should be places that would be of more interest to someone who was intending to spend an extended amount of time in the area, rather than someone visiting as a tourist. As with the original lesson from English Firsthand 2, the idea is for learners to recommend places that they would actually visit themselves.

If using a Mac, the photographs should be installed in one folder, which would then be selected as the source for the screensaver's slideshow. Presumably the process would be somewhat similar for other operating systems. There are likely to be other acceptable approaches to displaying the images to the group.

It is useful to have the computer up and running before actually having the slideshow run to ensure that connections are working and that the images are displaying correctly on the screen via the projector. Using 'hot corners' is a useful way to allow you to begin the slideshow at the moment of your choosing.

Using the Activity

Learners were introduced to the idea of thinking about places by first answering on their own some simple questions about foods that they like, things they like to do, and kinds of music they like. This could also be performed as pair work.

Secondly, they ask and answer questions with a partner about experiences, particularly relating to food, places, music, etc.

The third part is where the slideshow can be used, and involves learners in groups brainstorming places to eat, play and watch sports, enjoy live music, and shop. The final aspect is breaking up into pairs (or forming new groups) composed of members of

different groups, and sharing their ideas by again asking and answering questions.

Conclusion

A focus on place can be incorporated into a wide variety of lesson approaches and may produce a variety of benefits for learners, including a renewed sense of pride in their home area and hopefully motivation to share that area with others via the vehicle of a second language. That other language speakers may actually be interested in one's home area is perhaps a motivational key, which may be manipulated in the quest to encourage a learner to feel a greater sense of ownership of their studies.

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Thoughts on Vocabulary, Internationalization, and Culture

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These days, a lot of people are in environments where one can receive a variety of information via the Internet, television, radio, movies and other media. This availability of information is a great advantage of today's technology. On the other hand, the problem is how to use the information one receives. It is extremely simple to just emulate the received information, but it may not have a good effect on those who use it without truly understanding the meaning behind the words or the information. Therefore critical thinking and cultural awareness are essential components to be taught in language classes in Japan.

The Olympic games will be held in Japan in 2020. With this in mind, as an immediate goal, it is desirable to foster multicultural multilingual citizens who can effectively represent Japan at an international level.

There is unfortunately a misconception in many Japanese contexts that becoming international means losing one's Japanese identity. Okinawa is likely the place where the most contact between Japanese and foreigners occurs, and thus I will refer to the case of M. Kelly as an example that refutes this notion.

Kelly (1991), from Okinawa Japan, explains through her experience becoming bilingual and bicultural that marrying an American did not mean that she lost her first language (L1) cultural identity. Her identity as an Okinawan did not change. According to Kelly, one must first of all possess a strong sense of heritage. In her case, she is Okinawan. She explains that from there, one can be receptive to and adapt to other cultural values: In order to become a truly bilingual and bicultural person an individual must possess pride in their own culture and

nationality. Thereafter, they may adapt to another culture and supplement their primary L1 culture.

By possessing a strong sense of heritage, it becomes possible to enhance one's academic achievement in a diverse cultural environment (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

As an example, when a Japanese teacher teaches the Japanese language to American students, the teacher must overcome the barrier of being from a different culture. In such cases, the most important element is to articulate and illustrate how each culture expresses various values. Students need to be aware that difficulties may occur because of differences due to cultural misunderstandings. If this happens, it is helpful when one is secure about one's primary culture (Yamazato, 1991). This essentially means that one must retain and value one's cultural identity and avoid negative cultural schismogenesis (Erickson, 1987). Emulating and uncritically adopting other languages without understanding the meaning behind the words and the cultural underpinnings they entail can cause a person to lose respect and understanding of their own culture. This has been the case for numerous civilizations and it results in an immense loss in the form of moribund or declining languages, such as those of Okinawa in the current age. There exists a certain responsibility for parents to 'pass on' values and also language to the next generation.

Particularly in a mass media world that is saturated by western values, it is possible for emerging generations to lose perspective about their own culture and its value. According to Tanaka, Higuchi, Iemura, Igarashi, Shimomiya, and Tanaka (1994), younger generations characteristically tend to create a new range of vocabulary, which is a central way for them to distinguish and define

themselves. Often, foreign words are considered as being "cool". For example, approximately ten years ago, the word respect was used frequently among many younger people in Japan. The direct translation of the word respect is 尊敬 (*sonkei*) in Japanese, and it means exactly the same in English. However, the content of the meaning has different nuances. Japanese *sonkei* has numerous other implications. It is possible (and even likely) according to the research cited thus far that, for example, using the word respect for the purpose of being "cool" can lead to a decline in the significance of the fundamental meaning of *sonkei* in Japanese.

Vocabulary and culture are intricately entwined even in one's own language. When people misuse words, it can detract from the primary (and respectful) meaning of cultural concepts, and diminish their impact and significance for future generations. As another example, the word お・も・て・な・し (*omotenashi*), meaning hospitality, has become a common word in Japan and a lot of people used it lightly by just 'parroting' the phrase without any sense of the underlying meaning of the word.

Using the word おもてなし (hospitality) without understanding its real meaning reduces the value of the word and this can also contribute to dilution of its fundamental cultural value. According to Genjiro's English translation (2013), *omotenashi* is a complex word that includes generosity, modesty, and similar meanings, whereas it has been spoken rather perfunctorily at times in popular parlance when it is used without proper attention to its cultural origin.

In the case of Japanese people, our ancestors have bequeathed us a vast lexis that one hopes we can retain in our hearts despite the pace of ultra-modern Japanese society today. One of the beauties of Japanese culture is its vibrancy and its ability to adapt to a modern world – all the while retaining its fundamental cultural values.

It is important for Japanese teachers of English to make sure to teach not only the English language, but also to teach the differences in how cultural values are expressed. The most important element in teaching the English language in Japan is to teach students not to forget that they are Japanese. Without understanding one's own culture and language, how can one learn another culture and language? Losing one's cultural values is akin to when a library burns down: Incalculable loss of knowledge and culture occurs.

Japan is experiencing rapid cultural change and aspiring to become more international with such events as the 2020 Olympics. With all this in mind, it is desirable for Japanese people to embrace international culture but to also honour, retain, and foster their own identity while integrating into an international (global) society.

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A Communicative Way to Teach Article Use

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It's a truism that Japanese students of English have difficulty using articles, since there is no direct equivalent in their own language. This activity is designed to get students thinking about the purpose of articles – why and when we use them. The first part of this consciousness-raising exercise is a classic information gap focusing on meaning. The second part focuses more on form. In traditional language classes, grammar points are usually presented first, then practiced before students are asked to produce them in some kind of freer activity (the so-called PPP approach). By inverting that process and getting students to first produce, (and making mistakes in the process,) they will hopefully be more likely to appreciate the need for the grammar point in question, when it is introduced later in the class.

Quick Guide

- Keywords: collaborative storytelling, negotiating meaning, articles
- Learner English level: Pre-intermediate to upper intermediate
- Learner maturity: High school and above
- Preparation time: 10 minutes
- Activity time: 25 to 40 minutes
- Materials: A copy of the suggested comic strip and a whiteboard (or blackboard)

Part 1: Preparation

Step 1: I use a short comic strip which is printed on Page 57 of the recommended *Pairwork 2* book (and copied below). I use the comic strip in a different way from that suggested in the text.

Step 2: There are seven pictures in the comic strip. I cut the strip into individual pictures, arrange the students into groups of seven and give each student one picture.

Step 3: If the number of students in the class is not divisible by 7 – I will either make some groups bigger (which will mean giving two or more students the same picture,) or if there are not enough students, I will give some students two pictures.

Part 2: Procedure

Step1: I tell the students to reconstruct the story without showing their pictures to their partners, and without speaking Japanese. The activity is not as straightforward as it sounds because it has a twist.

Step 2: If the students are having difficulty getting started, I will invite them to describe their pictures in turn. (If their level is low, I will pre-teach some vocabulary, e.g., tie, untie, fence, etc.)

Step 3: During the activity, I will circulate between the various groups, making sure there are no major misunderstandings. If necessary, I will ask leading questions, such as, "How many people are in this story?" or "Who is the young man with the black hair?" or, "Who owns the dog?"

Step 4: If after 15 minutes or so the students still can't work out the story, I will allow them to lay the pictures out on a desk so they can all see them and figure out what's happening.

Part 3: Performance

Step 1: I ask the students to tell me the completed story. As they are doing so, I write it on the board. While writing, I correct any grammatical errors EXCEPT for those relating to the use of articles, which I will faithfully include.

Step 2: Once I have written the entire story on the board (for an example see below), I will underline all the nouns in a bright color and ask the students to identify any mistakes with article use. The students discuss this in pairs.

Step 3: I go through the story again, and the students tell me where to insert/delete/change articles.

Step 4: Once we have agreed on a corrected form of the story, I ask the students, in pairs or groups, to come up with a rule for article use. Hopefully, they will arrive at something like, "We use 'a' for the first reference to single countable nouns, and 'the' for subsequent references".

Step 5: I erase the story on the board, give each pair of students a copy of the complete comic strip and ask them to retell the story, paying particular attention to the use of articles.

Conclusion

Even on its own, the first part of this activity ticks a lot of boxes for language educators. It is a genuine communicative activity where students have to negotiate meaning with their classmates to complete the task. Lightbown and Spada (2006) define the negotiation of meaning as an opportunity for learners to, "express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions etc, in a way that permits them to arrive at mutual understanding" (p. 150). There is "mounting evidence" concerning how such negotiation of meaning "can promote second language learning" (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013. p. 161). Advocates of the benefits of interaction have argued that learners will notice new language features "including articles" during negotiations of meaning (p. 161). However other researchers, including Michael Long, now believe that interaction by itself is not sufficient for learners to acquire grammatical items: "Corrective feedback has been identified as one feature that is believed to play a crucial role in helping learners make connections between form and meaning" (Lightbown & Spada, 2003, p. 151). Thus, it is no longer unusual for otherwise communicative activities to incorporate an element of formal grammar instruction. Applied linguists have realized that "second language learners cannot achieve levels of grammatical competence from entirely meaningful-centered instruction" and this has led them to "propose that learners can benefit

from form-focused instruction" (Laufer, 2006, p. 4)

In my case, I thought the story reconstruction exercise provided an excellent opportunity to focus on the usage of articles. As Scott Thornbury (2010) observed, "[T]he definite article can only be taught, explained, and practiced in contexts that are normally larger than a sentence" (¶3). Of course, I realize that the grammar rule that I introduce – "a" for the first time, "the" for subsequent references – is neither comprehensive nor absolute. Raymond Murphy's intermediate *Grammar In Use* (1989), seen by many language instructors as the Gold Standard in grammar teaching, devotes eight units to the various rules governing article use. Likewise, Michael Swan gives them ten pages in his reference book, *Practical English Usage* (1980). Swan goes on to say, "[T]he correct use of articles is one of the most difficult points in English grammar" (p. 54). Notwithstanding their complexity, and acknowledging that the rule – "a" for the first time, "the" for subsequent references – does not always apply, I felt that if my pre-intermediate students were able to grasp that articles are often used in this way, it would go a long way to eradicating many of their mistakes with this tricky piece of grammar.

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Appendix

This is the story which one of my intermediate classes produced: One day, fat bald man tied his dog to gate. Then fat man smashed car's window because he wanted to steal computer from car. Car owner saw this and shouted, "Hey you, what are you doing?" Fat man ran away without his dog. Car owner called police. Policeman came and untied fat man's dog. Dog went back home and policeman followed. Finally policeman arrested fat man in his house.
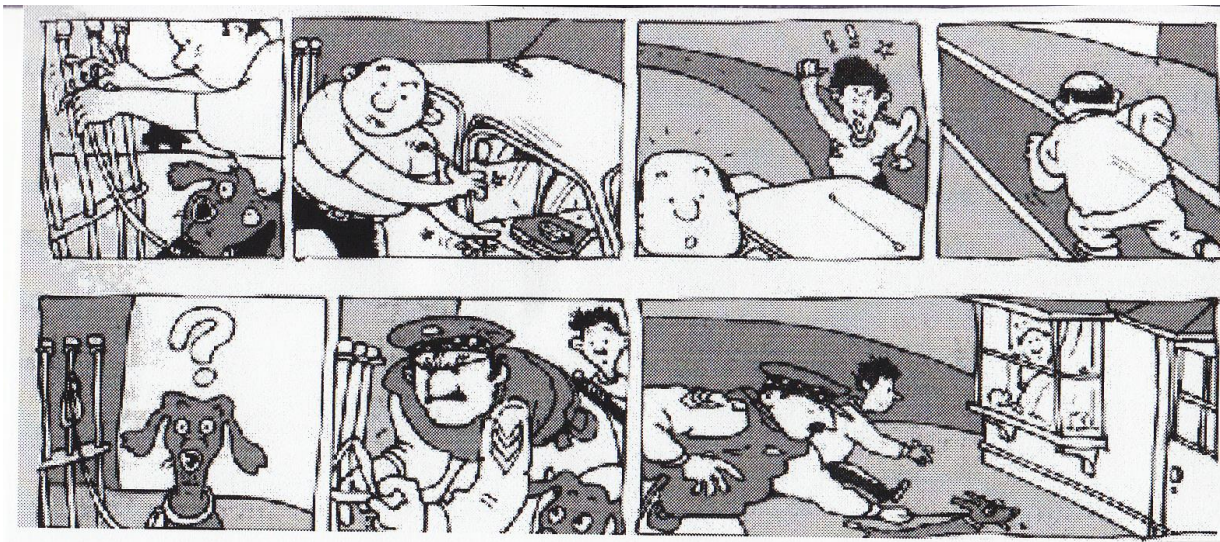

Figure 1. Comic strips (Watchyn-Jones, 2002)

Utilizing the Pecha-Kucha Format for Presentation Activities

Norman Fewell

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: presentation, pecha-kucha
- Learner English level: beginner to advanced
- Learner maturity: elementary and above
- Preparation time: 10-30 minutes
- Activity time: 6 minutes 40 seconds
- Materials: Projector, PowerPoint,
- Pecha-Kucha slides

As the media buzz surrounding a number of sensational presentations held in the TED Talks venue continues, a renewed interest in the mastery of public speech seems to have taken hold. In the crevasses of public speaking lurks a relatively less-known form of delivery known as *Pecha-kucha*, appropriately named from a Japanese onomatopoeia meaning chit-chat. Pecha-kucha events are often held at local venues with interested spectators attending to learn something new and participants simply wanting to share their insight with the public. The sharing of information is more freely available with the inclusion of everyone, and this is one aspect that distinguishes Pecha-kucha from TED Talks – the absence of a rigid screening process. Admittedly, quality issues are in question at times. One could even critically describe Pecha-kucha as being an amateurish version of TED Talks with its informal approach to public speaking. Nevertheless, the magic of Pecha-kucha is in its basic presentation format. The delivery of presentations, most often via PowerPoint, is limited in one important respect – time. Presenters are given a limited number of slides, 20 in total, and they are given a time

limitation of 20 seconds per slide. These are welcomed restrictions for any audience member who has ever sat through a dreadfully long speech. Another peculiarity with Pecha-kucha is a rule that slides must contain only images. Texts are not allowed. This forces the audience to focus exclusively on the presenter's speech for key information.

Pecha-kucha is not only an attractive option because of time efficiency; additionally, it offers a multimodal dimension to teaching with the utilization of auditory, visual, and tactile sensory modalities (Tomsett & Shaw, 2014). However, it could be argued that the creativity often prevalent in many Pecha-kucha presentations may cover the full-range of multiple intelligences, as each presentation is unique. As Gardner (1983, 1999) pointed out, each individual has at least seven – and quite possibly eight intelligences – at their disposal. Gardner's multiple intelligences categories include linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The distinctiveness of our individuality ultimately effects the way we utilize these intelligences. In essence, the basic framework of Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) presupposes that all of us are wired somewhat differently.

It is recommended that educators create conditions in the classroom that are ideal for developing these intelligences and a balance in introducing these intelligences could maximize the benefits of strengthening underutilized intelligences for all learners (Haley, 2001). In order to promote success in learning, teachers must present material to students in ways that are most receptive (Beckman, 1998). Nolen (2003) states that

material used in a foreign language class should be presented in ways that address all or most of the intelligences since these are available to every learner. Providing students with more variety leads to more accessibility to understanding and learning. As Pecha-kucha presentations may ultimately provide more presentations in a shorter time span, learners would likely be exposed to multiple delivery styles and content. In using Pecha-kucha in the language class, students are provided with a wider array of input to stimulate their interests and learning, a shared concept with MI theory.

The basic format of Pecha-kucha may be ideal as a class presentation activity. Due to differences in time availability and language proficiency levels, teachers may adjust the number of slides and the number of seconds per slide. Essentially, there are an unlimited number of ways to carry out class activities based on the Pecha-kucha framework. For instance, students could create their own slideshows for class presentations, or they could choose from thousands of slide sets available on the official website, www.pechakucha.org. One time-saving strategy for teachers is the use of in-group presentations that can be done simultaneously. For instance, one main Pecha-kucha slideshow could be displayed from a class projector while students in their respective groups engage in separate in-group presentations. Below, the basic instructions for such an in-group Pecha-kucha activity are outlined.

Preparation

Step 1: After determining the amount of time available and student proficiency levels, set a time limitation for each slide and decide on the number of slides for the entire slideshow.

Step 2: Choose the theme/content of the slideshow. Original slideshows may be created with software such as MS PowerPoint. A collection of slideshows are also readily available on the website pechakucha.org.

Step 3: Provide slideshows to students in advance, especially to English language learners at the beginner to intermediate proficiency levels.

Step 4: Encourage students to prepare and rehearse their presentations before class.

Procedure

Step 1: Divide the class into groups.

Step 2: Explain the procedure to the students, i.e., number of seconds per slide, etc.

Step 3: Play the slideshow and let the students perform their presentations.

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Call for abstracts: The next issue of the *OTB Forum* is planned for the summer of 2015. The review process is ongoing, so authors are encouraged to submit a short abstract (about 200 words). Please send abstracts to **editor@otbforum.net**

Aprendizaje y Fijación de los Verbos Regulares en Español: Una Idea Más

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Abstracto: Cuando los estudiantes japoneses intentan aprender la lengua española se encuentran con la dificultad de memorizar las conjugaciones verbales. En este caso presento una actividad que me ha dado muy buenos resultados en las clases de español que dicto en dos universidades de la prefectura de Okinawa, y la cual se ha visto plasmada ya en el libro ¡Bienvenidos a Japón! de la editorial Asahi (lección 5, página 25). Esta actividad oral promueve la fijación consciente (e insconciente luego de la práctica) de los verbos regulares del español. Un grano de arena para activar la enseñanza comunicativa de idiomas en las aulas japonesas de ELE.

	habl**ar**	com**er**	viv**ir**
yo	habl**o**	com**o**	viv**o**
tú	habl**as**	com**es**	viv**es**
él/ella/usted	habl**a**	com**e**	viv**e**
nosotros/nosotras	habl**amos**	com**emos**	viv**imos**
vosotros/vosotras	habl**áis**	com**éis**	viv**ís**
ellos/ellas/ustedes	habl**an**	com**en**	viv**en**

DESTREZA: oral

NIVEL: básico

EDADES: estudiantes de secundaria o universitarios

DESARROLLO DE LA ACTIVIDAD: libre

DURACIÓN: 10 a 15 minutos

ORGANIZACIÓN: Por parejas (estudiante A y B)

PREPARACIÓN: Una clase antes de llevar a cabo la actividad pedir a los estudiantes la memorización de la conjugación de los tres verbos regulares base: hablar, comer y vivir.

MATERIAL: Lista de verbos regulares en español y algunos ejemplos de oraciones para calentar motores.

Ejemplo:

-ar: trabaj**ar,** bail**ar**, cant**ar**, cen**ar**, cocin**ar**, compr**ar**, desayun**ar,** etc.

・ Yo hablo español, inglés y japonés.

・ ¿Trabajáis vosotros hoy?

-er: aprend**er**, beb**er**, comprend**er**, corr**er**, cre**er**, le**er**, recorr**er**, etc.

・ Ellos beben *sake*.

・ Nosotros aprendemos italiano en la universidad.

-ir: abr**ir**, escrib**ir**, part**ir**, recib**ir**, sub**ir**, etc.

・ Ella no vive con su familia.
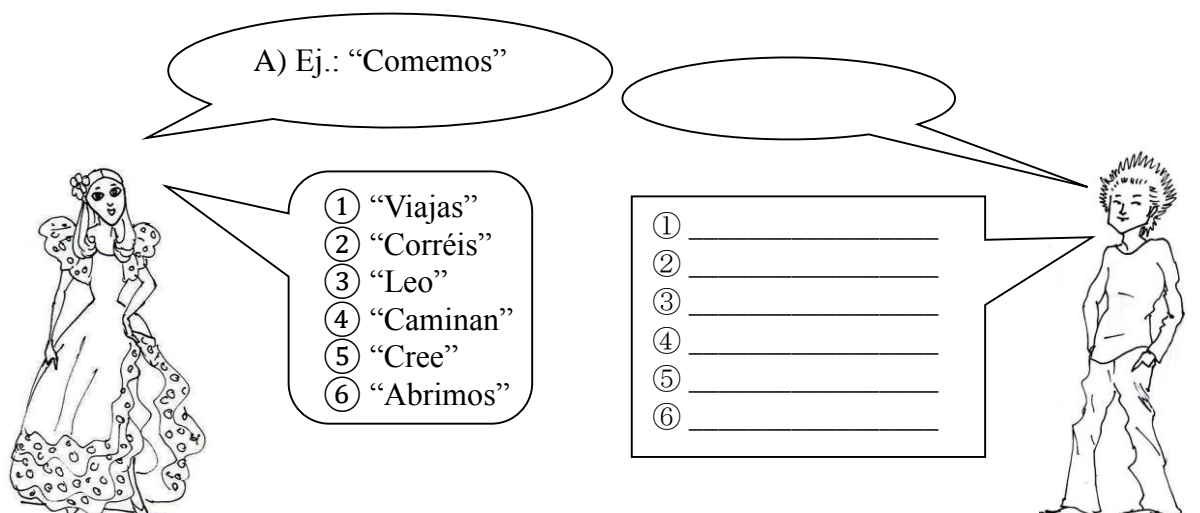
・ Tú escribes cartas en español.

Pasos

1) El estudiante A dice un verbo regular conjugado (Ej.: "Comemos") y el estudiante "B" piensa y responde a cuál pronombre personal (o a cuáles) pertenece la conjugación dicha (Ej.: "Nosotros"). Abajo, la actividad y sus respuestas.

1. Practica en parejas siguiendo el ejemplo.

A) Ej.: "Comemos"

① "Viajas"
② "Corréis"
③ "Leo"
④ "Caminan"
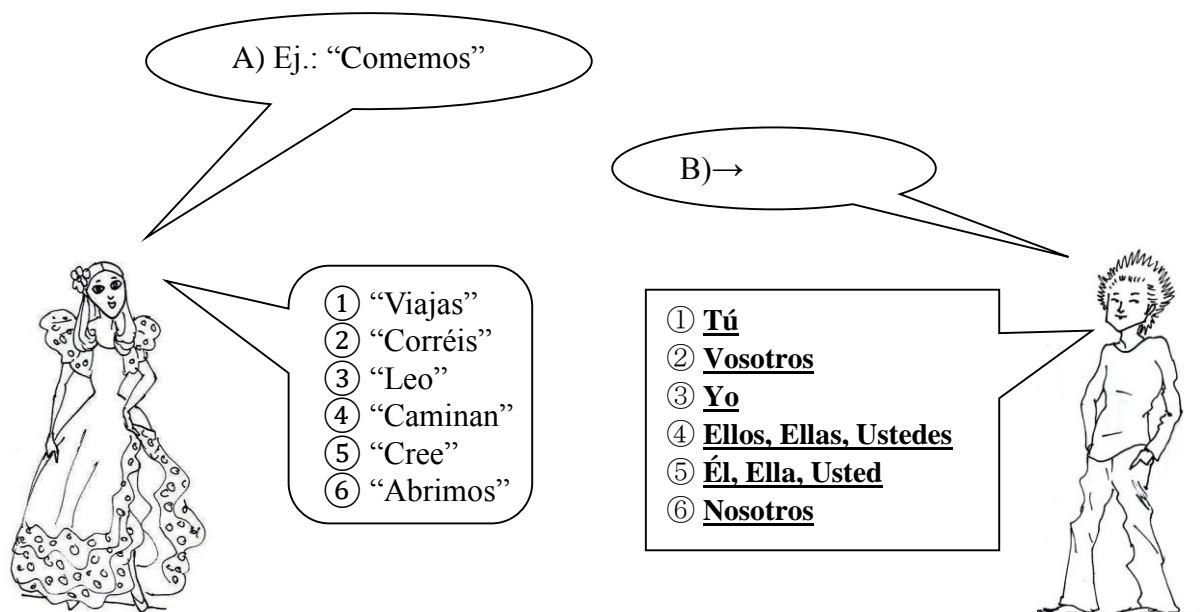⑤ "Cree"
⑥ "Abrimos"

① _____
② _____
③ _____
④ _____
⑤ _____
⑥ _____

Respuesta

1. Practica en parejas siguiendo el ejemplo.

Ej.: "Comemos"   → Nosotros

A) Ej.: "Comemos"

B)→

① "Viajas"
② "Corréis"
③ "Leo"
④ "Caminan"
⑤ "Cree"
⑥ "Abrimos"

① **Tú**
② **Vosotros**
③ **Yo**
④ **Ellos, Ellas, Ustedes**
⑤ **Él, Ella, Usted**
⑥ **Nosotros**

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"Welcome to Nago" Website: A Sophomore English Writing Project

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The impetus behind this semester-long English writing project comes from my desire to have students think of themselves not as merely "students" of the English language, but real "users" of that language. Much has been written about Japanese students' struggle to communicate effectively in English, regardless of their English test scores, and thus I'm interested in improving basic communication abilities and confidence. The question is, though, how can this be best accomplished in a writing class?

My solution is inspired in part by the concept of the "ideal L2 self," which links a student's sense of personal identity to their L2 abilities (Takahashi, 2013). I want to provide opportunities for students to be able to "imagine themselves as being English users" (Takahashi, 2013) and to be able to present an image of themselves and their identity to the world at large. I decided that this goal could be best accomplished through an online writing project that would have tangible benefits for the students and their community.

The course is two sections of a first-semester sophomore writing course at a small university in Nago, which is a medium-sized town in the northern region of Okinawa. I created a semester-long writing project in which students from both classes, working in small groups, will build a single website describing their favorite places to go in Nago and the surrounding areas. Though there is a good deal of information about Okinawa in English on the web, much of it is from the perspective of those with connections to the US military, such as the quite large blog www.okinawahai.com. Other online English-language information on northern Okinawa, which is much more sparsely populated than the southern half of the island, can be obtained through a rather hit-or-miss survey of travel websites like TripAdvisor. All these factors work together to create a situation in which the vision of Okinawa presented in English to the non-Japanese-speaking world is not a local perspective. Given the rather fraught state of Okinawa's current political situation—which necessarily includes an international element—I wanted to change that, while at the same time helping my students develop their English composition skills.

One of the main ways that college-age students use their own language is through online activities, whether general web browsing or social networking applications. It makes sense, then, to transition this tendency toward foreign language learning. As Black (2009) points out, integrating online work with language instruction, particularly in a group setting, "provides options for [students] to use language and other modes of representation for authentic communication with peers, teachers, and other experts that they may encounter in their research and explorations… thus extending learning outside of the classroom walls." Before publishing their writing, then, my students were asked to leave the comfort and safety of the classroom and to venture out into the community. They were asked, in fact required, to make key decisions without the guidance of their teacher and turn those decisions into a publishable writing project.

Plan

First, I created a very basic website using Google's blogger.com platform. This platform is quite easy to use and can be accessed using a simple Google account login (I created a Meio Writing account for this project). All the students were given access to the account. My own access allowed me to proofread and edit their work before it "went live," ensuring that web illiteracy (which a surprising number of the students have)

would not damage any good writing that was done.

The project itself was divided into eight "meetings" throughout the semester:

Class 1: Introduction to the project

Class 2: Groups formed; planning session

Class 4: Individual roles assigned; visit(s) planned; examination of www.Okinawahai.com

Class 7: Work on entry outline

Class 9: Rough draft of entry due; peer review; explanation of how to use blog platform

Class 14: Revised rough draft of entry due; peer review

Class 15: Class proofreading of website (upload entry and pics to site by this class)

Class 16: Presentation of website

In between classes 4 and 7, the students visited their chosen location. Groups visited local tourist attractions, favorite restaurants, sweets shops, and more. I suggested to them that they try to imagine what a foreign exchange student would want to know about Nago before moving here for a year.

After the groups visited their chosen sites, the website meetings became very lively, productive sessions, as they selected pictures, decided the best way to organize their text, and worked with me to find vivid language and exciting hooks (which they had practiced in a description essay midway through the semester). One of the most difficult parts of the project for most of the groups turned out to be writing driving directions to their sites. Because streets in Japan do not generally have names, the students were forced to use very precise language that accurately described the geography of the city (for example, "turn right at the stop light in front of the large resort"). They also had to imagine navigating the streets without the benefit of being able to read Kanji. Thus, they had to stretch their language abilities because they were using that language in a very precise communicative situation. Imagining a foreign visitor to Okinawa lost on the mountains of Motobu was a much more compelling motivation for

precision and correctness than any test or essay prompt I could have devised.

My own workload on the project was minimal until the end of the semester. Then, I met each group individually during class time for proofreading. I also ended up having to do quite a bit of editing on the blog itself, as most of the students didn't really consider design and readability when they set up their entry on the blog. Unfortunately, this is not something I foresee being able to change, as I don't want to take away class time in a writing class to provide instruction on using the blog platform beyond the most basic steps.

At the end of the semester I distributed a survey to the students about their assessment of the project. Only about half of the students in one section of the class were able to take it, as a typhoon cancelled the last day of class. However, the overall satisfaction rate was high:

58% of students were "very satisfied" and 39.5% were "somewhat satisfied" with the project.

25.6% of students "strongly agreed" and 55% "somewhat agreed" that the project helped them develop confidence in their English writing abilities.

Nearly 70% found the project more helpful than the textbook, though they were much more divided on whether it was more helpful than the regular course essays (28% said "more helpful," 42% said "less helpful" and 30% said "both were helpful")

Below is a small selection of comments the students made about the project. They have not been edited for grammar. (Most comments were in Japanese and these have not yet been translated, so this is a limited selection of the English comments.)

I wrote my sentences carefully than usual because once we publish, many people in the world have chance to see them. Also this was a great chance for us to contribute each other as we work together….If we can advertise this website more, that would be better.

Essay[s for class] and this is different. 'How to get there': This is not write in essay. I could learn how to write something except essay.

In this time, we didn't see the example. Next time, to show the example more.

I didn't think I can do this project first time. Because I had never written long story in English. However, I tried to write English. Of course it was difficult though I liked spending time to make this website! I want everyone to know this website and come to Nago! It think this project is good way to improve my English skill and know about Nago!!

I can make friends thanks to this project. And I was glad that I visited the place I have never been to by this project.

You should identify the purpose of this project more so your students will do your best more.

The biggest problem I ran into during the semester was that only a few groups managed to meet all the draft deadlines I'd set for them. Several groups arrived at their proofreading appointment with a number of differently sized pieces of paper covered in handwriting instead of the typed draft I'd asked for. During the next iteration of the project, I plan to make rough draft deadlines a part of the project grade.

I have a few future plans for the project. First, each spring, my sophomore writing classes will add to the site, forcing students to travel further and further out of their comfort zones to find new places to visit in Nago. Second, eventually I would like to shift the site from a blog platform to a real website. There, entries could be arranged by topic instead of by date. I'd also like to make the site searchable. Third, if the site proves successful, I'd like to present it formally to the Meio community and the city of Nago as a way of enhancing the ties between our university and the local community.

The course in which this project was embedded is a general essay writing course. The following English writing course in our curriculum focuses exclusively on academic writing. Most of my students in the more academic writing course had participated in the website project. I noticed that they were very comfortable thinking of their writing as something they had control over and which could/should be revised again and again before it was finished. They saw me as a guide, not as a towering authority. As the project continues to evolve each spring, my hope is simply that, by providing students a chance to formally publish their English work in a way that tangibly benefits their school and community, students will begin to imagine themselves as users of English, not simply passers of tests.

The site can be found at

http://welcome-to-nago.blogspot.jp/

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A Focus on Functional Language

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Introduction

There is a critical need to improve conversational skills for EFL learners. The way to improve these skills is to focus on the functional language at the core and foundation of communicative interaction. Functional, in this sense, refers to basic phrases one will need to master in order to gain the confidence and automaticity needed for communication. Below, a detailed explanation is given for an approach that may assist teachers to handle such concerns.

- Target Level: Beginner to Advanced
- Objectives: Lessen fear about learning English; get accustomed to speaking the English language aloud; acquire the English language instead of simply learning about it.
- Materials: Any class textbook.
- Time: 5 seconds per flashcard on the Verbal Test and 30 seconds on the Written Test in both English and Japanese.
- Speed Reading Test: 10 to 20 seconds
- Keyword: Iteration learning
- Purpose of Verbal Test: By using flashcards and participating in peer work, students will be able to verbalize the acquired phrases instantly without thinking.
- Written Test: By giving a time limit, students will write as fast as they can, and in order to do so, the students must write a lot. By the end of memorizing all the phrases, students may not be able to explain the grammatical structure, but they can gain a 'feel' of whether the grammar is right or wrong. Furthermore, the students may explain what they have learned and mastered in the class.
- Speed Reading Test: By reading a book out loud as fast as possible, the students'

pronunciation speed will fit more naturally into the English language.

Procedure

1. The teacher must select approximately 100 appropriate phrases from a textbook.

2. Give students the lists of the selected phrases and ask them to write down the phrases on a flashcard, on a one side in English and the other side in Japanese.

3. Give a quiz. Start with 10 phrases and add another 10 phrases per a week. (Note you must be cautious about overloading. When and if students seem overloaded, avoid adding the additional phrases and give the same quiz the next week or take a break.

The basic principle of initiating this quiz is to make pairs and the students test each other. Tell students that cheating will not help their partner to improve their English skills and be very strict about the right and wrong answers. If time allows, you can give students the test five times with different partners and take the individual's average score.

The teacher may begin the quiz either from the verbal test or written test, but it is a good idea for students to decide which one to start from.

Verbal Test (5 seconds per flashcard)

1. Make pairs. (Make sure to make a different pair for each quiz.)

2. Swap the individuals' flashcards and shuffle the flashcards.

3. Teachers should use a stopwatch equipped with an alarm.

4. Set the timer. The quiz time will be 5 seconds per phrase (e.g., with 20 phrases, 20 phrases x 5 seconds = 100 seconds or 1 minute and 40 seconds).

5. Student (A) will give the phrases in Japanese by looking at the shuffled flashcard (randomly in order), and student (B) will translate the given Japanese phrases into

English. During the quiz, while student (A) is giving the phrases by watching the flashcard, student (B) must not see the flashcard.

6. Since time is limited, student can say "pass" if they cannot answer. When the examinee says, "Pass," the tester should move the phrase to the end of the flashcard and retest again until the alarm goes off.

7. When the answer is wrong, the tester should move the phrase instantly to the end of the flashcards and retest it until the alarm goes off.

8. When the answer is correct, the tester must remove the flashcard from the stack.

9. Every paired student begins the quiz at the teacher's signal.

10. When the alarm rings, students must stop taking the quiz. (Have students count the answered phrases later.)

11. Students' scores will be the percentage of correct answers (e.g., 15 correct phrases out of 20 phrases [15 ÷ 0.20] = 75%).

12. When the students' scores are lower than you expect, you may give them two more chances and calculate the average scores. (Let students work with different partners).

Written Test (30 seconds in both English and Japanese)

1. The students will write whole phrases without looking at any materials. (The students must memorize the provided phrases).

2. Remove all materials from the desk. (Allow only writing materials).

3. Teachers should use a stopwatch equipped with an alarm.

4. Set the timer. The quiz time will be 30 seconds per phrase (depending on the length of the phrases; for example, 20 phrases = 20 phrases x 30 seconds = 600 seconds, or 10 minutes).

5. All students begin writing on the teacher's signal. (The teacher starts the timer.)

6. When the alarm rings, the students must stop writing.

7. Swap the individuals' completed paper and check the phrases (i.e., spelling check, translation check, and punctuation check). (Make

sure students are not cheating while checking the answer sheet and inform them that cheating will not help their friends).

8. The English phrases can be in random order, but the phrase and the translation must be written as a set.

9. Both the English phrase and the translation must be correct to get credit.

10. When checking the answer sheet, the students can look at their flashcards for confirmation.

11. Students' scores will be the percentage of the correct answers (e.g., 15 correct phrases out of 20 phrases = 75%).

Speed Reading Test (10 to 20 seconds)

1. The teacher must select approximately 10 appropriate-length paragraphs out of the textbook.

2. The length will be approximately from 5 to 20 seconds to complete the reading. (By the time students reach the assigned time, they will have memorized the whole paragraph without noticing it and they may choose not to look at the textbook to increase the speed).

3. Teachers must prepare a stopwatch equipped with an alarm.

4. Set the timer. The quiz time will be 5 to 20 seconds to complete the reading. The time varies depending on the length of the paragraph. During the quiz, students may look at their textbooks. Have all the students stand up and begin reading out loud on the teacher's signal. (The teacher starts the timer).

5. Start with 15 seconds, and if the students were not able to read within 15 seconds, they sit down and their score will be zero. If the students did make it on time, they remain standing and they will go to the next level, which is 14 seconds. Whenever students sit down, they need to remember their time and the scores, e.g., 10 seconds = 100 points.

    15+ seconds = 0 points
    14 seconds = 60 points
    13 seconds = 70 points
    12 seconds = 80 points
    11 seconds = 90 points
    10 seconds = 100 points
    9 seconds = 110 points
    8 seconds = 120 points

7 seconds = 130 points
6 seconds = 140 points

As you may have noticed, the first quiz will provide bonus points, so students can get a high score. By allowing a high score, it will help to motivate the students.

A student's final score will be the individual's percentage of the total score.

Flashcard quiz = 75 points
Writing quiz = 75 points
Fast reading quiz = 120 points
The total of the score = 270 points
The average of the total = 90 points

Every week, the students will learn new 10 phrases and add to their flashcards. The first quiz will be 10 lists of phrases. The second week will be 20 phrases. The third week will be 30 phrases. When students reach around 40 phrases, the teacher will need to be cautious with the students' stress level. When and if the students' seems stressed out, the teacher must slow the pace of the amount of phrases, e.g., give students a week off from the quizzes. (For the next quiz, the teacher may add additional phrases or just do the same quiz as a review, depending on how well student cope with the volume of work).

The author of this study strongly believes that the learning process can be accelerated by nurturing repetitive behavior. By following the author's instructions, students will be able to acquire the targeted language more naturally. The key is the time in the sense that students are told that they have a limited time to complete the activity, so most of the students practice over and over to attain their goals.

Despite the negativity towards repetitive tasks in language learning activities, some scholars believe that repetition can reap benefits. According to Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2013), "…in the TESOL context, repetitious and repetitive are hardly the most exciting adjectives to apply to a classroom task. Despite the evidence that immediate task repetition led these learners to change and improve their spoken English" (p. 159). Furthermore, Chase and Johnston (2013) divided the learning process into three levels of early English proficiency that include *Level 1: Emerging; Level 2: Beginning;* and *Level*

3: Developing. Based on the early English proficiency levels, the repetition is under *Level 3: Developing* and requires repetition and rephrasing of new material.

In a study by Gashan and Almohaisen (2014), the authors strongly recommended that "…researchers and teachers might find it very beneficial to devote some of their time to design effective task repetition to help language learners improve their oral production" (p. 36).

Azimzadeh (2014) studied the impact of task repetition on accuracy, fluency and complexity of EFL learners' oral production and the results of his study indicate that "task repetition has a significant impact on the development of learners' oral production in terms of fluency and accuracy" (p. 95). In addition, Azimzadeh argued that "performing the same task for the second time with the time interval of one week had a significant effect on the improvement of participants' fluency" (p. 101). The activities described above can assist students in gaining a solid foundation of basic communicative phrases. In some cases, repetition can lead to automaticity in communication.

Notes

1. Begin with 10 phrases and by the end of the semester, the students will be able to express at least 100 phrases instantly.

2. Let the students learn the phrases prior to using the textbook.

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Psychological Considerations in Teaching

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While educators give a lot of thought to the methodology they will use in their classroom while conducting their classes, they tend to focus on activities rather than psychological considerations regarding the students. One factor that strongly affects students' in-class performance and foreign language (FL) learning is anxiety. Levine (2003) found that students with lower grade expectations had greater anxiety, which led to less target language (TL) use. Ganschow et al. (1994) confirmed that, while approximately 25 percent of high anxiety students are successful FL learners, the majority of high anxiety students tend to exhibit poorer language skills and FL aptitude. Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) also found that higher anxiety had a negative effect on oral accomplishment: the more anxious students were, the poorer the quality of their English, and MacIntyre (2011) concurred that anxiety has a significant effect on both language learning and communication. Liu and Jackson (2008) found that Chinese students of English were apprehensive about public speaking, feared being negatively evaluated on their speaking, and that their unwillingness to communicate in the FL correlated significantly with their FL anxiety. Horwitz (2000) refuted claims that anxiety is a result of poor FL performance rather than a cause and stated that the idea that anxiety can interfere with performance and learning is one of the most accepted phenomena in psychology and education.

All of this has direct implications on the classroom and indicates the challenge we face in motivating our students, and lower ability level students in particular, to choose to participate in class. MacIntyre (2007) stressed the importance of adapting methodologies to focus on the process of how students choose whether to initiate or avoid SL communication, and Young (1991) discussed the importance of creating a low-anxiety classroom environment. This might be particularly difficult in Asian classrooms. Japanese students are notoriously risk averse, and although FL students everywhere often cite having to speak in front of the class as the most anxiety-provoking aspect of FL classes, Japanese students can be particularly reluctant to volunteer to speak. Analyzing the psychological ramifications of classroom activities and processes can help us turn speaking in class from a punishment into a reward. Consequently, I have developed a number of activities incorporating psychological considerations.

Everyone Stand/Speak to Sit

When reviewing materials, or when I want students to volunteer to ask or answer questions, I often have everyone stand. Students are told to raise their hands to either ask or answer a question. Once they do either, they can sit down, but the answer must appropriately respond to the question asked. This has a number of benefits.

First, it is sound practice from the theoretical viewpoint of being student centered: all the instructor does is call on students and judge the acceptability (grammaticality, content, suitability) of the utterances. The students do all the talking. They generate the ideas and content for the questions. In addition, they have to interact with each other, i.e., they have to listen carefully to the question in order to be able to answer correctly. It can add a communicative content to the activity that is sometimes missing in pair work activities.

Next, this also introduces, perhaps surprisingly since I have enumerated the problems associated with anxiety, facilitative anxiety, which is slight pressure that purportedly improves performance. Since students are not permitted to repeat questions, they

must pay attention to what questions have been asked, and the longer they wait, the harder it is to think of new questions.

To counteract any negative consequences this pressure might have on students, they should be explicitly taught strategies to deal with the situation. For example, the sooner they speak, the more possible questions they have to choose from; volunteering sooner provides more opportunities.

This method also helps students develop communication strategies. They must decide whether, given the flow of the activity, it is easier to ask or answer a question. Also, by following the flow of the questions and answers, they can tell when the speaker is about to finish, so they can raise their hand and gain the floor (turn-taking skills). Students can also express their creativity in the questions they ask. They can ask humorous questions, and they can ask short or more advanced questions based upon their own language confidence, all of which are rewarded equally by being able to sit down.

The main value in this type of activity, though, is that it turns volunteering to speak in front of the class into a reward rather than a punishment. Rather than the students feeling aggrieved by being singled out by the instructor to speak, they are self-selecting. If the activity is conducted quickly, it develops a momentum with students wanting to quickly participate. Many times, the least interested students suddenly are clamoring to speak first so they can sit down. Furthermore, since numerous students are volunteering at the same time, instructors can discreetly use the speaker selection process to encourage students they feel could particularly benefit from successful participation in a timely manner.

Caution

The first time I do this, I go through the entire class just to give them the idea they will eventually have to participate. After that, though, I only occasionally continue until everyone has spoken, instead finishing after varying percentages of students have participated. Variable-ratio reinforcement schedules produce a high rate of responding; students are never sure how long the activity

will continue, so reluctant students have to weigh whether they can safely hang back and hope to outlast the activity against the possibility that they will end up standing for a long time and become increasingly visible to the rest of the class. In addition, this process can become time consuming and tedious in a large class if everyone speaks every time. If the process drags out and takes too long, the momentum is lost, and it starts to lose the ability to excite and motivate students to participate. The psychological benefit of the activity is lost.

Correcting Assignments

Correcting assignments in class can be very anxiety inducing for students. Not only are they being singled out by the instructor to speak before the class with everyone watching them, there is the real chance the instructor will tell them directly that they are wrong. This is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, in Japanese communication style in Japanese, people do not like saying no directly. To be directly told they have the wrong answer can be embarrassing for students. Take the following situation:

> Instructor: Kenji, what's the answer to question 1?
>
> Kenji: True.
>
> Instructor: No, I'm afraid not.

Not only is Kenji embarrassed, but who is taking all the responsibility for answering the question? Obviously, it is the instructor. If the instructor continues, "Yumiko, what do you think?" even if Yumiko has true, the instructor did not like that answer, so she will probably answer false.

Instead, when I correct such exercises, I call on students for the answers and write whatever they say on the board without comment. The first time I do so, I see many students changing their answers to match what the instructor wrote, assuming they have the wrong answer. After the questions are all answered, though, I ask if anyone has different answers. I write any different answers offered on the board without comment. Then, when everyone is finished, I go over all the questions and confirm the

correct answers with the information that explains why questions are true or false.

There are a number of psychological reasons for doing it this way. First, it removes the correction from the student who made the mistake. Rather than a student being directly corrected by the instructor, one of two answers on the board is crossed out. By that time, the direct connection to whomever gave the answer has been broken, and the students have greater anonymity for wrong answers. With less fear of being singled out, they have greater willingness to answer.

Next, responsibility for the correction is being removed from the instructor to classmates. The instructor does not indicate the wrong answers initially; students are increasingly trained to speak up and initiate responses. Even if they make an incorrect correction, they also are not directly contradicted. This helps accustom students to volunteering, initiating communication rather than just responding to direct questions, and it provides a less threatening classroom environment where anxiety is reduced.

"Voting" in Class

A variation on the "everyone stand up" tactic is useful when students are reluctant to commit to an answer in cases such as T/F or multiple-choice questions. Some textbook questions are poorly written or are particularly difficult, and many students have each of the answers. If I ask, "How many think the answer is T? How many think it's F?" and only a few of the students raise their hands, I have everyone stand. I then tell everyone who thinks the answer is T to sit down and then those who think it is F to sit down. Usually, everyone will sit down, although some do so hesitatingly. I then say, "Good. Everyone voted that time." This is a lighthearted way to encourage everyone to make a decision. Even if they are afraid of being wrong and will not risk raising their hand, even students with no clue or who did not answer the question will usually sit down for one of the choices; it is a group action. I want to convince them that communication is the goal, rather than perfection.

This is particularly useful for poorly written questions where the answer is ambiguous: they are all right! The point is, though, that I don't care if they have the right answer to the question or not – I just want them to commit to an answer. There is no punishment, and since everyone is participating, they are not singled out (unless they get embarrassed by being the lone person standing there not knowing what to do, which usually only happens once, in which case I just pause for a few seconds and they usually sit down). If they are unwilling to take a risk and say true or false, they are unlikely to be able to speak up in public or participate in conversations. This has the further advantage of waking everyone up and getting them to pay attention. A little exercise is good for the blood flow, and for those not paying attention, it focuses their attention on what the question is.

Pairwork

Certainly everyone knows the rationale for using pair work in class. Besides the obvious benefit of greatly increasing the amount of time students spend speaking in class, though, having students work in pairs also has psychological benefits. When answering questions in pairs, they have a chance practice their answers. They can receive feedback from their partner about their vocabulary and grammar, which can help develop increased confidence to give their answers in front of the whole class. In addition, they can consider the content of their answers before having to perform in front of everyone. The added advantage for more open-ended questions is that they have the opportunity to think of more answers and more details. The depth and breadth of answers tends to expand when students have a chance to try them out on a partner first. By increasing the chances of a successful response, we reduce anxiety and encourage the will to respond.

Conclusion

When the instructor calls on only a few students to speak in class, there is much more pressure on the few who are chosen. The speaker sticks out, feels vulnerable, and anxiety rises. If everyone is speaking a lot in pairs, though, speaking and listening to other students in class is not unusual, and there is less of a spotlight when a sole student speaks.

If we can normalize the practice of speaking in class, if we can accustom students not only to speaking willingly but also to initiating speech, if we can maximize their chances of success and reduce any perceived negative results for mistakes, we can reduce the anxiety that using the TL produces. In the process, we can psychologically empower our students to take an active role in class, to gain confidence in using the FL, and to increase their fluency in it.

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