

Newsletter No. 3

Workshop in October

“Low Stress High Impact Materials for Fostering English Communication”

Presenter: Jean Kirschenmann (Hawaii Pacific University)

Date: October 10, 9:00-12:15 (Zoom Meeting)

Abstract:

Paul Nation has written that a well-balanced language program assigns roughly equal importance, measured by instructional time, to each of “four strands,” one of which is fluency development. National goals for English instruction in Japan today also emphasize the need to build communicative fluency. English teachers, however, feel squeezed between aspirational goals, long-held traditions, co-curricular duties, and limited resources, especially time. Participants in this workshop will experience, analyze, and develop several sets of place-based, student-centered materials designed to foster confidence and competence in spoken English, without making demands on valuable teacher, or instructional, time.



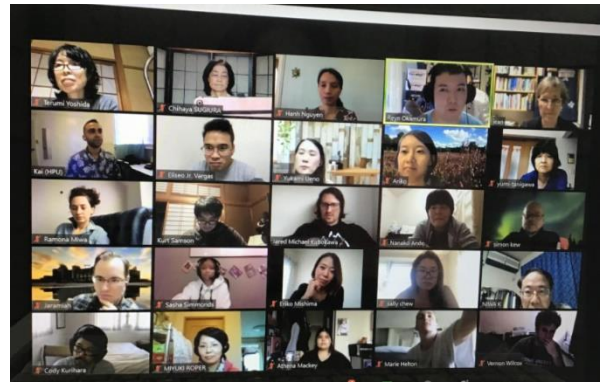
The number of participants: 59

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Transforming sentences into different ones without using nouns as the beginning of the sentence. Students need both basic grammar skills and vocabulary knowledge. Also, it is a kind of game for them. They prefer a challenging task.
- I would like to use sentence starters and discover how creative my students are. This is new to them and I hope that they will have different interesting answers. We have been giving them writing tasks that are too common. We have never done creative writing with them. I think writing is a good way to communicate and be able to put to life our imaginations.
- I liked the group brainstorming of "six actions" to set the basis of story making. Students would really enjoy collaborating to create imaginative and fun stories together, which in turn would give them confidence to then create their own individual stories.
- I do not have much experience teaching creative writing, but even for academic writing, I could use the idea of "reducing auxiliary verbs" for pair/group work when students are revising their drafts to make sentences more powerful and convincing! It could be an interesting exercise for college students to look for the better words in pairs or groups for peer editing, too. Also, "zingy idea" brainstorming

was fun and could be used in my communication classes as well. I think this could be a great starting activity to make students have a casual discussion, without worrying about the right answer.

- Novelty (zingy ideas): Write five zingy ideas for each object. This is what students in Japan really need to try! Including myself, people in Japan are so conservative and afraid of becoming different from others. We really need to invade our boring thinking. Train our brains to expand our imagination and be confident to have unique ideas. That is how we can create original and interesting stories.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- Clear objectives would help learners to improve writing, especially creative writing. I used to encourage them to write more (focus on fluency), so the method is helpful to lead them to create essay better.
- I was very surprised to learn that some students using this method of creative writing instruction can improve their writing performance by up to 400%! The usage of author techniques to push students to develop the creative part of their brains is something I would like to try in my lessons. Thank you Nic and Anthony for a wonderful and stimulating workshop!
- Students can improve their writing skill and creative writing, if teachers have enough knowledge. I thought I needed to improve my teaching technique.
- I didn't know that effective writings can actually be acquired with all these techniques ; structure, expression, word choice, and novelty. As you told us, we should practice writing with the authors' methods over and over so that we can sink them in our angular gyrus to be able to write like a professional writer automatically without thinking.
- I am very glad that I could learn the simple and easy techniques I can use to improve the writings of my students and myself. In fact, I was surprised to see the great differences/improvement you could make on students' writings by just giving small advice; such as to start the sentence with certain elements like "when" and "where". The workshop made me very interested in incorporating some writing activities even in my non-writing classes, and I would love to apply the techniques into my own writings as well.

3. Questions & Comments (Blue notes and responses are from Jean)

1. I really enjoyed this workshop because as a TESOL major right now, I need all the learning and teaching styles I can get so that I know what to do when I start to teach my own classes. Since I'm a very shy person, it was a little hard in the beginning to talk to people because I was afraid of seeing new faces and talking to people that I didn't know. However, this feeling subsided once we started to talk about ourselves and the concepts being discussed that Jean assigned us in breakout rooms. **This writer mentions two important points: First, if we are not comfortable with others in our group, we cannot talk comfortably with them in the target language. Fortunately, most of your students do know each other. Second,**

shyness. My students in Japan were also shy...when I stood near or in front of them, when I asked them to speak on demand, when they had to speak in front of their classmates. They were not shy during lunch, PE, or cleanup time. They were not shy while they were walking to the station, waiting for train, or riding home. Watching them in settings **outside of class** helped me realize they were not genetically shy but rather situationally shy. They inspired me to create activities they can “play” with each other but without a teacher controlling the scene.

2. Thank you, Jean-sensei, for a wonderful online workshop. It really was "low-stress and high-impact" with a big variety of relatively simple-to-implement, yet highly effective materials. I had taken Jean's summer intensive years ago, so it was great to reconnect and experience her lesson one more time! **The reunion with so many of you was just delightful.**
3. I was very grateful that we got this opportunity to meet with the students from HPU! I enjoyed talking with them a lot and we were able to have a very meaningful exchange, thanks to the diversity! Thank you very much! **Thank YOU! They also enjoyed meeting you. Several of them have lived or worked in Japan before or have hopes of doing so in the future. Maybe they could be your colleague or ALT one day.**
4. I was only able to attend the workshop from 3:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. HST. Jean and I were colleagues for many years, so I was already familiar with most of the activities presented. Still it was interesting to meet participants located in different cities/countries and to work through the activities with them. **This writer lived and worked in Nagoya before she moved to Honolulu. She taught me a lot about Japan in the years before I began to visit NUS.**
5. It was very interesting and great to talk with everyone. I learned a lot from people in my groups. I wish we could talk bit longer when we were in the groups. **This is great to hear. Perhaps I should have showcased fewer activities and let the play time go longer?!**
6. I loved hearing about the ways that these activities are used in real-life classrooms and learning about the different opinions of teachers in Japan. **No doubt the workshop felt like a class with me (as the teacher) directing the activities. However, my goal was to model how you could (a) briefly show students the activities,(b) make the materials available, and (c) encourage them to play on their own time or at least play without much teacher control..**
7. I really enjoyed this past weekend's workshop. Thank you for your generous suggestions and I look forward to seeing your work again. **My pleasure!**
8. The workshop was wonderful. I have learned a lot. I hope I can attend your class/workshop someday again! **Perhaps HPU can sponsor such a workshop next**

time.

9. Thank you for your productive workshop! It was amazing that I got to participate in a workshop taken place in Hawaii while I was still in Japan! It was so nice to interact with the students and faculty members from HPU as well. Thank you for the great opportunity to learn the useful teaching methods with the hardworking participants from Hawaii. Thanks to our “need” to go virtual, we can now envision more such opportunities than we could before.
10. As a comment, in my active research I've been interested in improving my students follow up question skills and this has given me a lot to think about to apply there. Maybe “tell me more” will be helpful!
11. I'm not sure if there was a mention of a website that has other games listed. I would like to know the name of the website. Below is that summary slide, expanded to answer your concern (I hope).

	Description	Materials	Where can I get them?
1	Five Finger Fun	Nothing special—realia	In your pocket, bag, desk
2		Realia	Probably on hand already
3	Culture in a basket	Realia	Probably on hand already
4	“Picture This” cards	Ready-to-use cards	American English website
5	Famous people cards	Pictures and index cards	Show students the example. Ask them to make more.
6	Sequence picture stories	My example is from here . Show it to your students and ask them to make their own.	
7	Wordless picture books		Good Japanese (used) bookstores/sites. See attached list of wordless book titles.
8	Riddles	Nothing special	Show students the examples. Ask them to make more.
9	Topic-based Qs (slide 23)	I-TESL-J lists	Use Slide 23 for ideas. See attached ITESL-J file.
10	ER conversations (not in the slide show)	Fiction and nonfiction Question cards	See attached extensive reading conversation cards.

12. It is common for teachers to handle learning gaps between students. Could you give any classroom activities or suggestions? In teacher-directed activities, yes. If students are working independently with open-ended activities that they have chosen to use, they will be better equipped to negotiate their way around those gaps. And when they can't, they will ask you for help.
13. Which finger is who, when, what, where, how? I couldn't follow your guidance then. It doesn't matter. Do what feels right or natural to you. To Japanese people, I think "itsu dokode darega nanio doushita" is very popular way to explain 4W1H. So I use it, but I want to know the formal way to use Five Finger for interrogative.

There is no formal way. I showed you my way. Please use what feels easy for you..

14. **Materials are increasing year by year in my room. It seems you organize them very well. Your picture "Making spaces for the materials" is my ideal. Could you tell me the tips to make a selection?** I'm sorry that I do not understand this question well. My suggestion is that you (a) gradually, briefly, simply demonstrate an activity, (b) show students that you are adding them to your game collection, (c) (if relevant) ask students to help you make more, and (d) then let students choose and use them when they can/want.
15. **I wonder, how do you navigate the basket activity or the five-finger fun game in classes where students are too quiet?** Please see the suggestions on slide #27. I believe student quietness and reluctance to talk is partly caused by teacher presence. If the activities are used out-side of class time when teacher is not around, they are less quiet. Alternatively, give students some time during class but free choice about what game to play or materials to use, and leave them alone to try on their own. You can be available if they have questions but try hard not to guide/control.
16. **Do you have any suggestions for further reading?** Certainly, but please tell me what topic(s) or questions you are interested in. If you write me at jkirschenmann@hpu.edu, I'll be happy to reply.

Finally, I frequently use the word "games" to describe these activities because they are fun and student-centered. I recognize that some people will not consider them true games because they lack strict rules, points, winners, losers, etc. You can call them activities or whatever fits your classroom discourse.

Workshop in October (AR Discussion)

Date: October 10, 13:00-15:00

Title: Group discussion on action research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

The number of participants: 11



Next workshop will be held on November 7th.

Detailed information is on our web site:

<https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/>