

Low-Stress High-Impact Materials for Fostering English Communication

Inspired by questions from NUF5 MA TESOL Students



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Happy Anniversary, MA TESOL NUFS

And thank you...

- Tim Murphey, Kazuyoshi Sato, HPU Colleagues
- Hanh Nguyen, Juanita Heighum, Chihaya Sugiura
- TESOL students at NUFS & HPU, past & present
- Hundreds of Japanese ELs (since 1986)
- Dozens of Korean English teachers (since 2008)
- The new coronavirus



Challenges of Action Research

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Workshop Plan

Starting Point—Focus on Fluency & why it is tough to address

- 9:## Begin workshop
- 9:55 Break #1 to admit HPU-affiliated participants
- 10:05 Begin fluency-building activities in Zoom Rooms
- 11:35 Break #2 to reflect, stretch, and formulate questions
- 11:45 Implementing fluency-building activities
- 12:00 Q & A, closing, and staying in touch
- 12:15 End



Focus on fluency & why it is tough to address

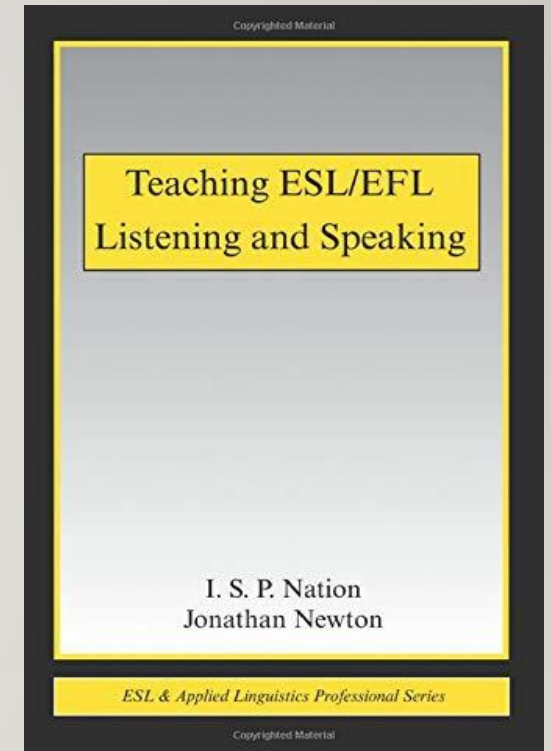
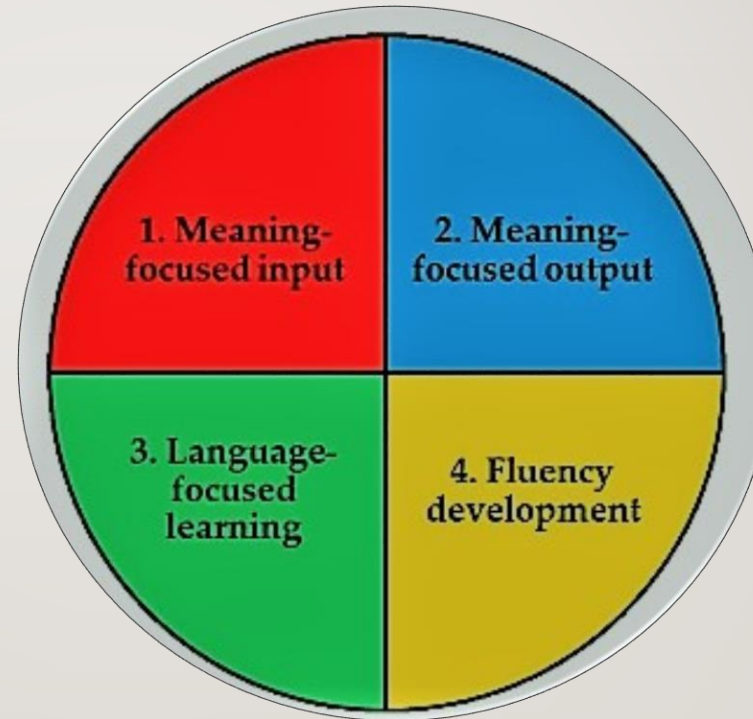
Two Nations & Four Strands

Nation—the person (Paul Nation)

- From his 1996 [article](#) until now
- Relatively equal time devoted to these four strands...

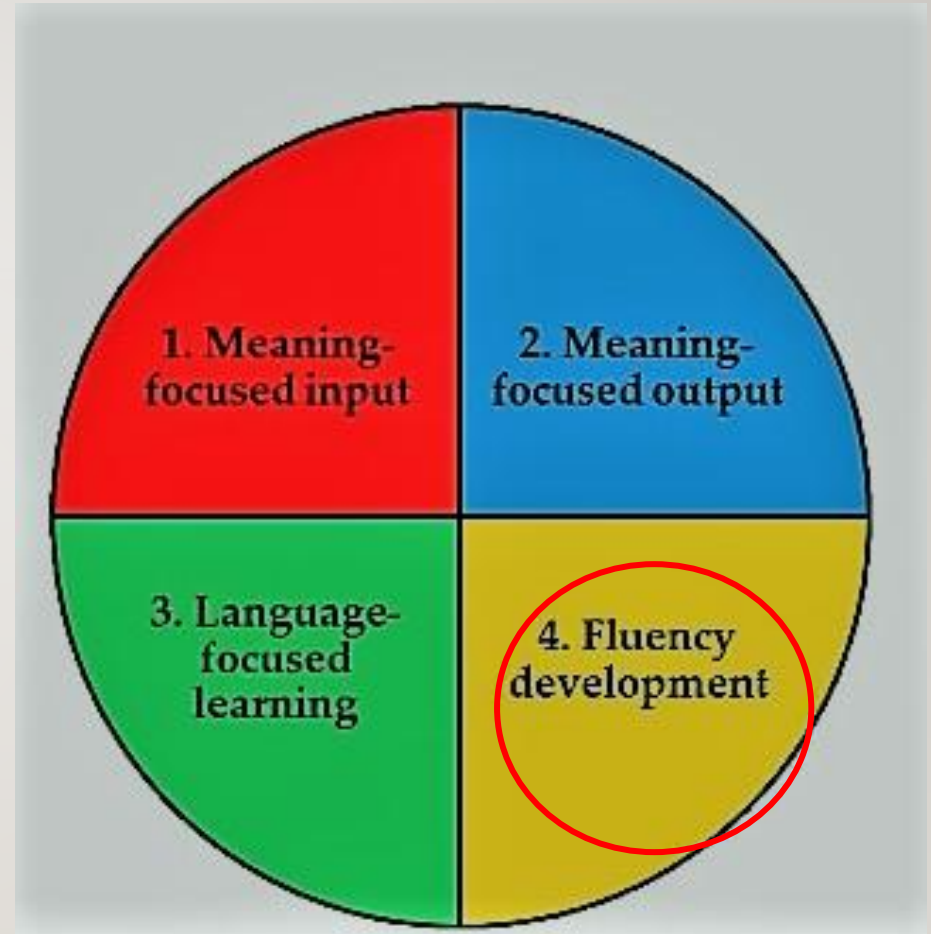
Nation—the country (Japan)

- Roughly same time period, began to emphasize CLT



Focus on fluency in English classes in Japan

- Among world leaders in Extensive Reading, for example
- More challenging for speaking
- **Why is that?**



Building Fluency & Playing Games

Think about it:

- Are they having fun?
- Are they making mistakes?
- Can they learn from their mistakes?
- Do they need a parent or teacher to witness and correct every mistake?
- Can you see the similarity between playing better and building fluency?

“Gamifying” English use



Game #1: Five Finger Fun



Zoom Room practice 10 minutes

Five Finger Fun

Language Learner & Teacher Benefits

- No space or special materials necessary
- Builds muscle memory
- Guided, but open-ended
 - ✓ Gently forces output but students retain control
 - ✓ “Tell me more” helps keep the conversation going.
- Suitable any time, anywhere, any level



HPU Participants—Welcome & Introductions

Conversation “games” in EFL classes

- Why “games” (with “ ”)
- Examining games
 - ✓ Low Stress—for teacher & students
 - ✓ Low cost and place-based (not only Japan)
 - ✓ High Impact—boost motivation & foster fluency
- Implementing games
 - ✓ Making space for the games
 - ✓ Finding time for them
- **Zoom Room Mixer—10 min. Use handout (HO) p. 1.**



Game #2: Special Day Conversations

Extending five-finger fun

- Fixed set of FAQs
- Reuse, review, recycle



Special Day Conversations

FAQs

1. What is the special day? (in J&E)
2. When is it?
3. Why is it on that day?
4. Is it a school holiday?
5. Is there special food?
6. Are there special events?
7. How does your family celebrate?
8. Tell me more.



Zoom Room Practice—10 min. Use p. 2 in your handout.

Special Day Conversations

Language Teaching & Learner Benefits

- Culturally relevant
- Fun & familiar (not foreign or distant)
- Frequent opportunity to review, reuse, and recycle the same FAQ phrases
- No special materials needed
- Authentic-like reason for speaking English:
Explain the special day to your host family, ALT, or sister school visitors.
- “Tell me more” keeps the conversation going.



Game #3: Culture in a Basket

From five fingers > fixed set of FAQs, > more flexible (and challenging) FAQs

Ex: Korean culture in a basket

**Zoom Room Practice—10 min.
Use p. 3 in your handout.**



Culture in a Basket

Language Learner & Teacher Benefits

- Culturally relevant
- Fun (tactile), familiar (not foreign) use of realia
- Review, reuse, and recycle phrases
- Authentic-like context for English: *Explain to your host family, ALT, or sister school visitors.*
- Students can build the collection.
- Once students know 5 Fingers, they can play/adapt Q&A to new content.
- “Tell me more” keeps the conversation going.



Game 4: Picture This Conversation Cards

Questions

1. Which games have teams?
2. Which games can be individual?
3. Which is easier to play? harder?
4. Which do you like to play? Why?
5. Which have you never played?
6. Stand up. Pretend you are playing one of the games. Let your partner guess which one it is.



Zoom Room Practice—10 min. Use p. 4 in your handout.

Picture This Conversation Cards

Language Learner & Teacher Benefits

- Still uses the Q & A scaffold, but more variation
- Common, universal topics but novel questions
- Downloadable and ready to use
- Accessible on digital devices



Game 5: Well-known Figure Cards



Zoom Room Practice—10 min. Use p. 5 in your handout.

Well-known Figure Cards

Language Teacher & Learner Benefits

- They fit all ages and levels.
- Students can build the card collection.
- Talking about others (a.k.a. gossip) is an engaging universal pastime.
- Biography is a bridge to academic reading and writing.



Japanese/Global Figures

- Artists & athletes
- Cultural icons
- Historic figures
- J-Pop & other entertainers
- Politicians
- Scientists

Or, think local...

- Shopkeepers
- Artisans
- School staff
- Town mascot

Wordless Prompts—Pictures

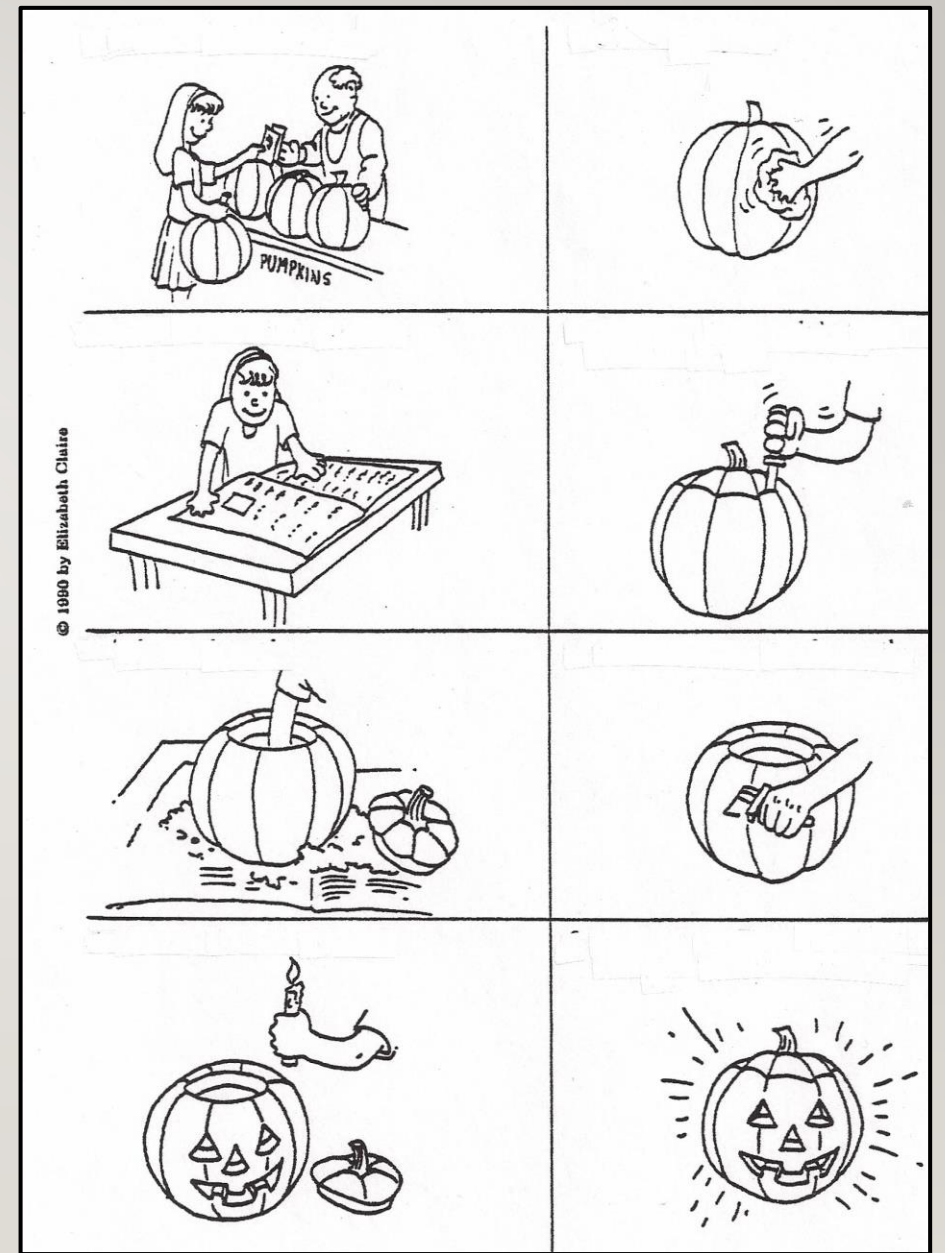
- Describe this image using your senses.
- Describe this moment as a news reporter—
What is happening?
- Tell what happened just before this moment.
- Tell what might happen next.
- What is she thinking? Looking at?
- What moment in your life does this image remind you of?

Have students build the picture collection.



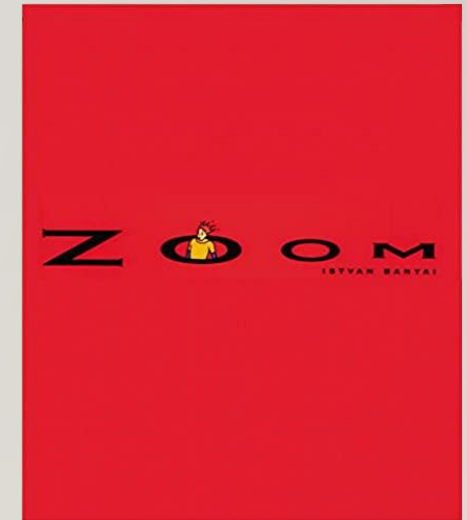
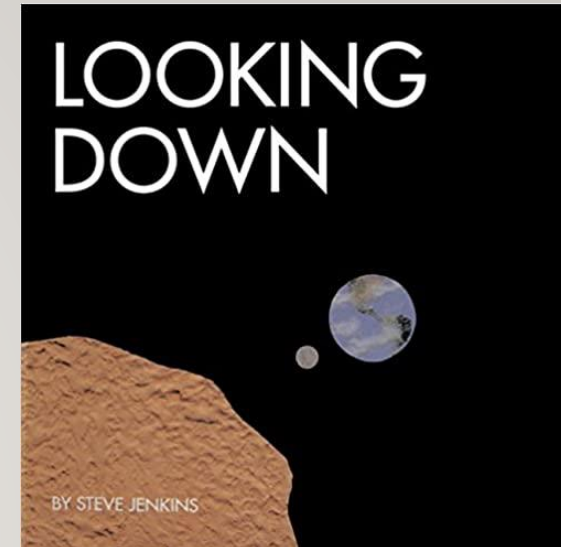
Wordless Prompts— Picture Stories

- Tell this story using the pictures as a guide
- Then write it.
- Give students extra credit, challenge, or privilege of drawing their own (more interesting) manga style picture stories.
- Collect them in a basket for classmates to practice retelling.

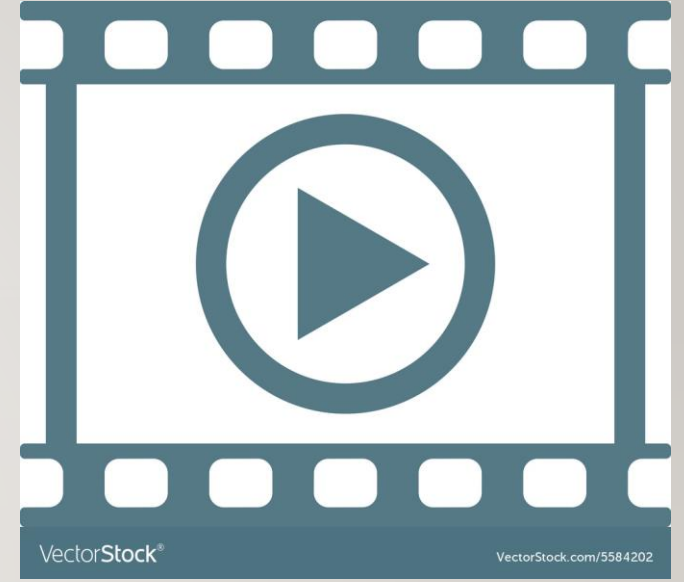


Wordless Prompts—Books

- Not free, so not high priority today
- Wide range of topics & subjects
- Look for cheap, used, recycled copies.
- Let me know if you are interested in book lists.



Wordless Prompts—Video



- Use clips of familiar videos, but with sound turned down.
- Use YouTube archives of old silent movies and cartoons.
- Use periodically for 5-minute warm-up or cool-down in class.
- Encourage students to find, choose, and share their favorites.

Wordless Pictures, Books, and Video

Language Learner Benefits

- **They work for all levels and all languages.**
- No words means no right/wrong way to tell story.
- Authentic (often fun) materials.
- Students are (gently) forced to tell the story in their own words and at their own level.
- Each re-telling and each new “story” builds confidence, competence, & fluency.

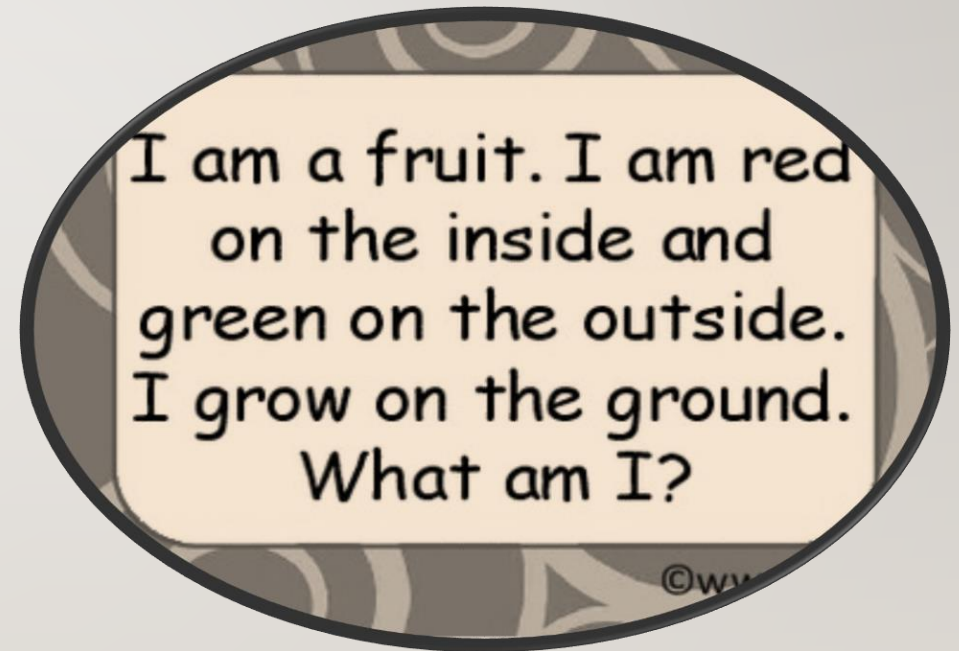
Using wordless picture books to promote second language learning



Riddles

Show students these examples. Ask them to write more. Use index cards.

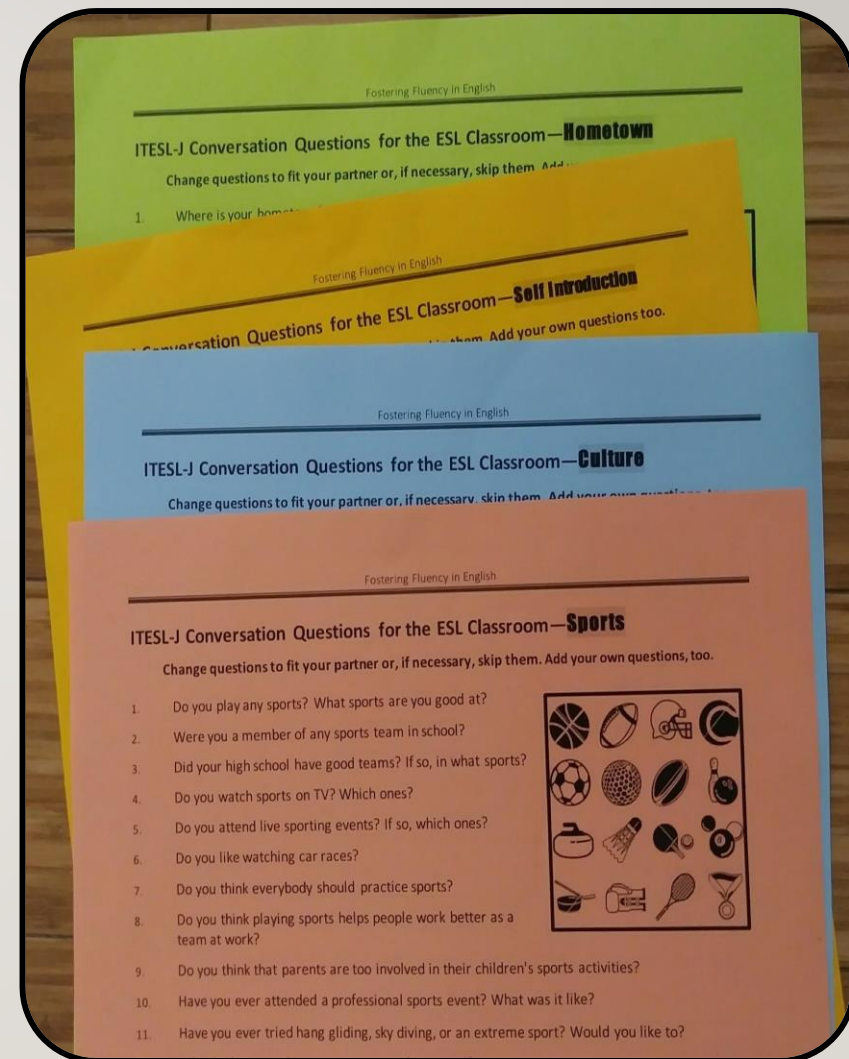
1. I am Japanese
2. I am famous in many countries.
3. I was born 45 years ago.
4. I live in the future.
5. I am a cat.
6. I am a teacher, too.
7. Nobita Nobi is my friend.
8. I was created by Fujio Fujiko.
9. Who am I?
10. Tell me more.



No time today for...

- More downloadable materials with Q & A scaffolds at ITESLJ.org > [Questions](#)
- Capitalizing on local lore and specialties, eg:
 - ✓ Sugihara Chiune (the “Japanese Shindler”)
 - ✓ Your local equivalent of Coco Farms in Tochigi
- “Games” for Nation’s other strands

Feel free to ask.



Implementation

Try the K.I.S.S. Principle

For teachers:

If it is complicated, time-consuming, or expensive, we may never try it.

For students:

If it is complex, strange, or required, they may not embrace it.



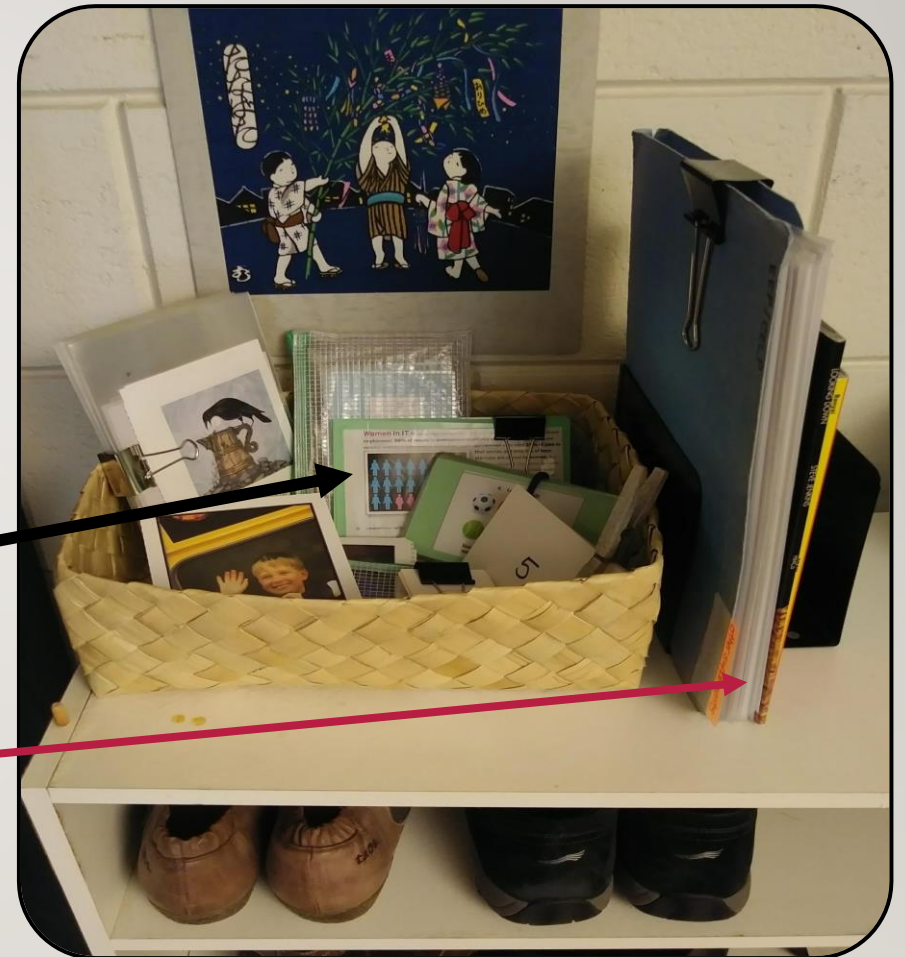
Getting/Preparing the materials

Description		What do I have to prepare?
1	Five Finger Fun	No special materials. Just prepare your first introductory example.
2	Special day conversations	Just use classroom calendar and post one set of FAQs.
3	Culture in a basket	Ask students to build the collection. Then, show them how to use it. Can be adapted for seasons or special events.
4	Picture This cards	Downloadable from American English website. Or, share link and let students play on their own time.
5	Wordless pictures, stories, and video	Students can collect, find, or make the materials.
6	Riddles	Ask advanced, highly-motivated, returnee students or ALT to write them. Use index cards so students can share the collection.
7	So many more!	

Making space for the materials

Making space

- A small space on/in shelf, box, or basket
- Always accessible to students
- Sets of cards
- Reusable pages in plastic sleeves



Making time for the games

- Suggest, rather than require, participation.
- Give students authorship & ownership.
- Use brief moments of instructional time to encourage play **during “free” time**.
 - ✓ Before and after school
 - ✓ During lunch
 - ✓ At the station or on the train
 - ✓ Between classes and during down time
 - ✓ When they finish work early



Otukaresama desu お疲れ様です

Ka ri mu magar gad rog (in Yapese)

