

THE SCHOOL HOUSE

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Summer 2009



The Newsletter for
Junior and Senior
High School English
Educators in Japan

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From the Editor

In this Months issue ...

Welcome to this year's bumper, fun-packed, second issue of the Schoolhouse!! Hope that you all had a great summer and are feeling relaxed and ready to go for the new term! No less than five submissions in this issue so there should be something for everyone to get their teeth into.

We begin this issue with an article by **William Matheny** who, inspired by his attendance at the Tokai City Conversation Contest, mulls over the issues surrounding conversation contests in general and whether or not they are, in fact, a good idea. **Tomomi Nagamatsu** is next to the plate, looking back at her experience on the International Internship Program and the lessons learnt there. To round off our trio of features, **Colin Sloss** tells us about his experience right at the birth of the JET program, giving us all a shocking new perspective into the political history of this massive educational undertaking.

Two reviews in this issue. In the first, **Roger Pattimore** gives us an overview of the AJET handbook, Planet Eigo, and looks at how it might help solve some of the troubles faced by team teachers. **Albert McCann** finishes off with a report on Marshall Childs' presentation discussing problems faced by those teaching adolescents, providing educators with a measure of understanding and hope concerning this most difficult stage in a child's development.

So, wherever you are, whether it's with excitement or dread with which you face returning to school, take a moment to dive in, read at a leisurely pace, and think about the wide wide world of Junior and Senior high school English teaching.

All the best now

Jake Arnold

Editor of The School House

The Forum

Rants, Raves, Questions and Comments

Jake Arnold

All names have been randomly generated using Behind the Name at <<http://www.behindthename.com/random/>>. Please send your responses or new threads to the editor at <publications@juniorsseniorhighsig.org>. If you are responding then please mention the thread name or writer's name in your mail.

Teaching in English

It's all very well that Monkasho states that all English lessons should be in English - most teachers just don't do it, and won't do it. So now what? (Caitria)

We should force them. In my home country we have school inspectors who go to schools to make sure that government guidelines are being followed. If the school breaks the rules then it risks losing its right to exist. Enough Mr. Nice Guy! (Boleslav)

English club problems

I have to teach the English club at my school and don't know what to do with them. They don't seem to want to do anything. When I ask them what they want to do they just sit in silence. (Klava)

Yes. My English club is the same. What is it with students in English club? (Stefan)

Sound like all my students! (Marcelo)

Integrate foreign teachers

Monkasho must fully integrate foreign English teachers as full staff members of schools throughout the country. (Nicholas)

Many Japanese teachers I work with don't think I have any role to play in their school. They are against the idea of communicative English teaching and believe that their students do not need to learn to use English. Before I can be accepted into my school, they are going to have to change their minds (Pip)

I don't want to work that hard! (Bulgar)

Role Switching

At our high school, native-English-speaking teachers teach Oral Communication classes, and Japanese teachers teach reading, writing and grammar classes. I think it might be interesting if we switch roles from time to time. (Herminius)

Do the Japanese teachers teach a grammar based English course in Japanese? It might be difficult for the native-English speakers to do this even with a good Japanese ability. (Merla)

Examination Preparation

Is it true that the Yakudoku (Reading-Translation) method is the best way for students to prepare for the university entrance examinations? The answer to this question seems to be central in changing the way English is taught in high school. (Bal)

Articles

An English Conversation Contest?

William Matheny

Saya Junior High School & Eiwa Junior High School

The article reports on an "English Conversation Contest" organized by a municipal board of education (BoE) for elementary and junior high school students. Students interacted with and had their performance judged by assistant language teachers (ALTs) from "inner", "outer", and "expanding circle" countries. Despite the fact that a contest format permits only a small number of winners, the author suggests that a conversation contest may be an improvement over more traditional speech contests and may be closer in spirit to the hopes and aspirations expressed by the national education ministry.

Key Words: *elementary school, junior high school, conversation, ALT, oral performance, oral interaction, show and tell, discussion*

Introduction

Can conversation in a foreign language be the basis of a competitive performance event? People in Tokai City, Aichi Prefecture, apparently think so because for the past 5 years the city Board of Education (BoE) has sponsored an "English Conversation Contest" for elementary and junior high school students. An announcement about this year's contest was posted on an e-mail list to which I subscribe and it caught my eye because the person who posted the message was an acquaintance -- a former Japanese teacher of English (JTE) teaching partner who is now with the Tokai City BoE. In addition to publicizing the date, time, and location, the announcement indicated that Daniel Kahl, a Japanese-fluent American who appears on various television programs, would be on hand. Because I spent 3 years as an assistant language teacher (ALT) in Tokai City back in the late 90s, because of my acquaintance on the BoE, and because I was more than a little curious about Mr Kahl, I decided to go have a look at the "English Conversation Contest".

A semantic problem

Before reporting on the event, there is a thorny, cross-cultural semantic problem that I would like to consider and it concerns the word "conversation". The phrase "English Conversation Contest" used above is a translation of the Japanese 「英会話コンテスト」 used by the Tokai

City organizers. "English conversation" is a common translation for 「英会話」, but does it really mean the same thing? What is "conversation" anyway and how should we define it?

The applicable definition of "conversation" given by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary is: an exchange "of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas". Yes, conversation is an exchange, but one which does not ordinarily take place on a stage in front of a live audience nor is it observed and scored by a panel of judges. The Tokai City contest featured both judging and a live audience. Thus, it is fair to say that there were aspects of the contest well outside the usual concept of "conversation". And based on what I saw and heard at the event, I must conclude that the contest organizers accept a broader range of language use than the oral interaction most native English speakers refer to as "conversation". I will describe that range later in this report, but I think it is fair to say this: Within the context of the Tokai City contest, 「英会話」 refers not to conversation in the sense indicated above, but more broadly to "spoken" or "oral" English.

The conversation contest

The event was held at the Tokai City Culture Center on February 8 -- the second day of a two-day "Children's Festival" (子どもフェスティバル). A teacher from one of the town's elementary schools made opening remarks and served as master of ceremonies. Daniel Kahl was introduced and then the 12 Tokai City ALTs were brought on stage. Each of them introduced themselves and it was interesting that all of them did so in Japanese with varying degrees of proficiency. There was a time when ALTs weren't expected to function in Japanese, but those days appear to have passed. Another notable aspect of the 12 individuals was that only half of them came from "inner-circle" English-speaking countries (UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). Four were from the Philippines, one was from Slovakia, one came from Romania.

After the introductions, a keyboard was brought on stage and one of the ALTs provided accompaniment for everyone to sing "Top of the World". Then, the contest began.

The contest for elementary school students was divided into two sections. The first involved performance in a shopping situation. On stage, four areas with props were set up: a clothing shop, a stationary shop, a fresh produce shop, and a fast-food hamburger shop. Mr Kahl served as the service person at the hamburger shop which was at center stage and was equipped with a microphone for the student contestant. Kahl used a wireless headset microphone, so the interactions between him and one contestant were audible throughout the auditorium. Three of the ALTs served as clerks in the other shops and the remaining 9 ALTs sat at the rear of the stage to observe and score the student performers.

One by one, the student contestants received a card indicating details of the interaction they were to have. At the hamburger shop, the card appeared to indicate what the contestant was supposed to order. After the customer-contestant ordered, Kahl assembled the items, in some cases offering the contestants extra items that they hadn't ordered. He also tried to add a little comic spice by drastically overcharging some of the contestants. Some realized that the amount was too much while others merely handed over the amount -- at which point Kahl smiled broadly at the audience and said, "I love this job!"

The other elementary school section of the contest was titled "When you meet a foreigner". The premise was that contestants would initiate conversation on a pre-selected topic and interact as fully as possible within a time limit. Again, there were 4 areas for interaction on the stage and the one used by Kahl had a microphone for the contestant. The students opened the exchange with a greeting and then posed a question. Kahl or the ALT would answer and perhaps pose a new question. The onus was on the students to make maximum use of a limited amount of time.

The junior high school competition also was divided into two sections and all of the interaction involved Kahl. The first was "Show and Tell". Within a time limit, each student introduced a personal item and then responded to comments or questions from Kahl. One student brought her trumpet. Another presented a photo of a favorite actor. One or two of the students referred to written notes as they spoke and it was pretty clear that others had memorized parts of what they said. Despite the pressure of being on stage in front of an audience, most of the student contestants communicated successfully. However, some of the oral output on display was not extemporaneous in the sense that might be considered "conversation".

The other junior high school event was a debate-like discussion. Students presented opinions on both sides of the question: Should student use of cell phones be banned at school? Like the Show and Tell segment, some of the contestants referred to written notes as they spoke or had clearly memorized parts of what they said. From the students' standpoint, the topic was relevant and an issue in which they clearly have a stake. The earnestness of the students' speaking turns certainly reflected that.

As a spectator, I felt that the format for junior high school students was more satisfying than the event for elementary school students because there was one performance at a time and everything was audible. Like the elementary school section, the 12 ALTs functioned as judges for the junior high competition.

At the conclusion of the junior high discussion, Kahl provided an entertaining, 20-minute "Talk Show" while the judges compiled the contest results. The finale of the event was an awards ceremony with remarks by a school administrator and a few more comments from Kahl.

Impressions and analysis

As a person whose first language is English, I can only speculate on how Japanese people might perceive Tokai City's English Conversation Contest. Success at learning English and performing successfully in a contest setting may be viewed as highly valuable and commendable. Because success with English translates into very tangible rewards and benefits in Japan, demonstrating ability as an elementary or junior high school student would seem to bode well for a young person's future. That's the bright side.

What is unavoidable, however, is the fact that most of the children in the contest did not win. That also applies to students who participated in the preliminary rounds conducted at their schools. Amidst the joyful moments when contestants performed successfully, there was also this: the expression of anguish on an elementary schoolgirl's face as she struggled to perform and collided with her limitations -- in front of an audience. How will the contest experience impact her attitude toward learning English? That's a difficult question.

One impression I have of the Tokai City contest is that it is yet another example of the extremes people in Japan will go to in trying to induce and create tangible motivation for oral performance in English -- ie. overcome reluctance to oral output in English. I suppose one of the hunches on which the conversation contest is based is that it creates incentive for learning and is somehow going to enable more young people to achieve higher levels of ability with English. Whether or not that will happen is certainly a question worth investigating. The contest may also be an attempt by the organizers to more fully utilize, justify and publicize the employment of ALTs.

How did the ALT judges score performances in the contest? Was their judging fair and accurate? The criteria were explained at the beginning of the event and included more than verbal dexterity. Eye contact, for example was one of the items evaluated. Unlike a footrace with a clear and visible outcome, evaluating performance in a conversation contest seems to resemble the judging of figure skaters or gymnasts. There may be established criteria, but judges may be swayed by subjective factors and the order of performances. I know from my own experience at judging student performances in the classroom that the first performer in a sequence very often establishes a standard against which all the subsequent performances are evaluated. Thus, contestants who perform early in a competition may have less chance of winning.

Another question appears: Is an English Conversation Contest in line with the tenor of the national education ministry's goals for EFL education? I wonder. The ministry's position might be described as "English for all" -- the aim seems to be for everyone in the nation to possess some measure of communicative ability with English. Indeed, you can occasionally hear local EFL educators talk expansively about English as Japan's "second language". However, a

competitive event with winners and losers tends to reinforce the notion that not everyone can succeed. And for those who don't, the temptation to stop trying might be very strong.

Despite the downsides involved in a competitive event in which only a small number of participants emerge as successful, a contest innovation like the Tokai City event -- a competition based on ability with spoken English for interpersonal communication -- may be closer in spirit to ministry hopes and aspirations than the speech contests which used to be (or still are) the primary competitive performance format for EFL students here. In that sense, I think the conversation contest is a step forward.

Another question, however: Is a conversation-like contest the optimum way to provide motivation for oral performance and a sense of achievement to young EFL learners? For some learners, the answer may be yes. However, I have witnessed high motivation, outstanding oral performance, and a strong sense of accomplishment with drama-related activities. A play project is very different from a conversation contest, but there is certainly room for both and many others in an appropriately broad and necessarily eclectic EFL curriculum for young learners.

***William Matheny** has worked as an EFL instructor since 1990. He is an ALT for two public junior high schools in Aichi Prefecture and is currently serving as Program Chair for the JALT Junior-Senior High School SIG.*

IIPに参加して: What I've learnt through the IIP program in England

永松朋美

江東区立第三砂町中学校

In 2004 I took part in the IIP program and went to work in England for one year. In this article I look back on that experience and what I learnt from the program.

Key Words: IIPプログラム、休職制度、インターンシップ、現地校の実情、再発見

私が参加した国際ナショナル・インターンシップ・プログラム（IIP）についてご紹介させていただきます。私は現在、東京都の公立中学校で英語を教えています。2005年4月から2006年3月までの1年間、IIPのプログラムに参加してきました。東京都教育委員会には休職制度があり、このIIPも休職制度の対象プログラムになっています。私は幸運にも管理職や職場の皆さんの理解や協力を得られ、1年間仕事をお休みさせていただいて、研修することができました。

IIPでは、英語圏に限らず50カ国以上にインターンを派遣しています。私が選んだのはイングランドでした。他の国の場合は、派遣期間のまるまる1年間を現地の学校でインターンとして（無給で）働くことができます。しかし、イングランドは例外で、ビザの関係で前半の6ヶ月を現地の語学学校に通い、その後の6ヶ月を現地校で働くというものでした。正直に言うと、語学学校自体の内容はあまり有意義だったとは言えませんが、時間にゆとりがあったので、ボランティア活動に参加したり、現地での生活を楽しむことができました。

このプログラムに参加して良かったことが3つあります。1つ目は、現地の学校に入って「ありのままの姿」を見ることができたことです。2つ目は、外から日本を見る機会を得られたこと。最後に自分自身が教師という仕事が好きだということを再確認できたことです。

まず、「ありのままの姿」についてですが、外国からの視察というのではなく、職員の一人として受け入れてもらったので、飾らないいつものどおりの生徒や職員と交流することができました。私は、SEN(Special Educational Needs)という部署の所属として、特別支援の必要な生徒の補助に入る仕事をしていました。私の勤務した学校は、どちらかというと教育困難校で、教師の指示できちんと授業を受けるといえることができにくかったので、担当の生徒

以外への支援も必要でした。日本と大きく違うところは、ほとんどの授業が習熟度別で行われていて、一人一人時間割が違うということです。一応、ホームルームのようなものはあるのですが、朝の出席確認に会うだけなので、学級への帰属意識は高くないような印象を受けました。また、難民や移民など、母語が英語でない生徒たちの数も多く、E S Lの特別なプログラムが用意されてはいたのですが、受け入れ生徒の数が余りに多く、たった1週間で普通クラスに入らなければならないという過酷な状況でした。現在、日本でも外国からの子どもたちが増えてきているので、各学校でそういうプログラムを準備する必要が出てくるかもしれません。

つぎに、外から日本を見る機会を得られたということです。S E Nの仕事以外には、それぞれの教科の先生に頼まれて授業をすることもありました。英語の時間に日本の俳句を紹介したり、地理の時間に日本の地震のことについて話をしたり、家庭科の時間に日本の着物の紹介をしたり、美術の時間に折り紙や書道を教えたりしました。自分の国、日本のことを、なんとなくわかっているつもりでも、いざ教えるとなると、もう一度勉強しなおそう思うようになりました。また、日本にいるときには当たり前だと思っていたことを、素晴らしいなと再発見することができました。

最後に、1年間職場を離れてみて、私は教師という仕事が好きなんだな、と改めて実感できたことが最大の収穫でした。休職を決意する前は、仕事は大変だけど楽しい、けれど、このままで良いのか、という漠然とした不安がありました。でも、実際に職場を離れて、日本を離れて、イングランドで生活する中で、日本に帰ったらこんな授業をしたいな、とか、これを教えたいな、などと考える自分がいることに気がつきました。そして、なんだかんだ言っても、私はこの仕事が好きなんだな、という結論に達しました。もちろん、また現場に戻ってきて、楽しいことばかりではないし、苦労もありますが、あの1年間があるから、頑張れるような気がします。これからも生徒のために頑張れる教師でいたいです。

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Why the JET Program Failed

Colin Sloss
Seiryō University

Key Words: JET Program, team teaching, high school, foreign teachers, Japan, education

Introduction

“The JET Programme enables local authorities (prefectures, designated cities and other municipalities) to employ foreign youth for the purpose of foreign language education as well as promoting international exchange at the community level. By teaching foreign languages at schools nationwide and assisting with international exchange activities organized by local authorities, participants engage in international exchange on a variety of levels with local residents. In this way, the Programme is expected to increase cross-cultural understanding as well as contribute to internationalization efforts in Japan.” (Miyazato, 2009) In 2003 there were 6,226 participants. (Miyazato, 2009) Robert Juppe has called it, “...perhaps the greatest (certainly the biggest) education program in mankind's history...” (Juppe, 2000)

Argument

James Porcaro said the JET program had failed in its educational aims, since it has failed to raise the English ability of the Japanese people. (Porcaro, 2006) However, the JET Program always had two official aims. One was educational, the other was cultural. With young people in every corner of Japan, I believe it has partly succeeded in the aim to internationalize the people of Japan. In my title I refer to the JET Program failing. I mean that it failed to do what the originators hoped it would do.

In 1982 I came to Japan as a BET, (British English Teacher) . The BETs and the more numerous American MEFs, (Mombusho English Fellows) , were the immediate predecessors of the JETs. Now because I don't want to be sued, and my memory may not be as good as I suspect, I will not use real names or citations. We were given a presentation at our orientation in Tokyo by a Mr. X. He said he was called 'Drastic Changes X'. He explained that there were various factions in the Education Ministry, but at that time his faction, the liberal faction, was on top. As this was so, he hoped to introduce the JET

Program. He said he wanted to shake up the way English was taught in Japan. He said he hoped we would be a time bomb in the Japanese education system, that Japanese English teachers would not be able to cope with real English speakers and that English education in Japan would self-destruct!

Although sometimes, Japanese English Teachers could not cope with foreigners, the English education system did not explode. Why not? Most JET people were young in a foreign culture. I think that most ALTs (Assistant English Teachers / JET's) will agree that there is no place for them in the Japanese education system, but, in most cases, like me, they try to cope as best they can. Normal foreigners might not have been able to cope with the Japanese education system, but the foreigners on the JET Program were not normal foreigners. They were university educated young people who did not want to see the system self-destruct. The JET program therefore failed in its real objective; the breakdown of English education in Japan.

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Colin Sloss was a BET (British English Teacher) from 1982-84. He is a British national, born in 1958 and has worked at Kanazawa Seiryō University since 1989, holding the title of Professor for six years. He graduated from Sheffield University at both undergraduate and post graduate levels and holds a PGCE, Post Graduate Certificate of Education in TEFL. He has been a JSH SIG member since the organization was founded, and has held the position of program chair.

Reviews & Comments

Planet Eigo: Down to Earth Team Teaching

Reviewed by Roger Pattimore

JSHS SIG

Planet Eigo [AJET. National AJET Publications - Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching or AJET is an independent volunteer organization that supports exchange and teaching in Japan in cooperation with the JET program. 2007. pp. 294. ¥3000 (¥4000)]

Since the inception of the Japanese Exchange Teaching (JET) Program and other team-teaching initiatives, both Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and assistant language teachers (ALTs) have been concerned with the question of how to team teach. One perennial complaint by and about JTEs is the lack of time for them to adequately plan a team-taught lesson. Another problem for inexperienced JETs and some JTEs is what to teach in a team taught lesson. Finally, communication can be a difficulty for both JETs and JTEs. *Planet Eigo*, AJET's solution, is a guide to team teaching. It is both a training manual and resource. In my view, it helps to solve the problems set out above more than any other similar publication to date.

The book itself is a hefty volume. It weighs in at exactly one kilogram and is bound in the 30-ring A4 format with durable card covers sandwiching 147 sheets of heavy gauge paper. The pages are removable. I paid 4000 yen for it, but it is available to AJET members for 3000 yen. The book is divided up into 10 chapters and two appendixes. Everything is in both Japanese and English. Moreover, each of the 115 activities (Chapters 5 – 10) is explained with both languages on the same page. This should make it easier for both JTEs and ALTs to look at one book together and choose and discuss appropriate activities for a team-taught class.

The first four chapters, from pp. 10 to 75, attempt to make the ALT's entry into the Japanese school system as easy as possible. It covers quite a lot, including Japanese schools and society in general, child psychology as well as some basic learning theory, and teaching methodology.

Chapter 1, the team teaching chapter, aims to introduce JETs to the Japanese school system and Japanese society in general. It helps JETs to better understand the situation of JTEs and Japanese students.

Chapter 2 covers learning theory and psychology. It is clearly directed at those with no teacher training, no experience of teaching, or no experience with children or teens. It includes bits and pieces of general learning theory including Bloom's taxonomy, cognitive development, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, learning styles, and a piece on teaching non-English speakers. If I remember correctly, these took up quite a bit of my own teaching training. All are worthwhile reading on some level, but the selection seems inconsistent with the much more practical and concise approach of the rest of the volume. Most of pp. 28 – 40 could be condensed to just the main points necessary for the average new ALT. Also, these ideas may not be of much use to the JTE and even a little insulting in their Western bias. While there is a mini-psychology course included, there is a complete absence of any theories of language learning. These would seem much more relevant to the task of team teaching than, say, Gardner's multiple intelligences. Working with different language-learning theories (or no theory?) can not only be a flashpoint between team teachers, but may also lead to lessons that are merely a series of unrelated activities not to mention lessons that are unrelated to each other.

However, chapter 3 gets back on track and talks about planning including goals, long term planning, lesson planning, and assessment. In my experience, many teachers seemed to follow the motto that no plan is a good plan, and even the best teachers often subsumed lesson planning in a swirl of meetings and club activities. Chapter 3, again conveniently in both languages, and very official looking, could be shown to JTEs (or JETs) to get everyone on the right track.

Chapter 4 is a practical introduction to teaching at elementary school. The example lesson plans seemed very sensible and doable based on my own experience. I also thought the advice from ALTs experienced in teaching at elementary schools was spot on. Of particular note was the admonition not to let homeroom teachers withdraw from the lesson. They should be seen interacting with the ALT and, hopefully, using English. Early reinforcement of Japanese as users of English seems essential to me if English education is to succeed in Japan.

The bulk of the book from page 76 to 213 contains activity ideas. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 focus on the four skills, while chapter 9 is a special chapter for elementary school visits. Chapter 10 introduces some projects. To be precise and give users an idea of what to expect, the speaking section contains 25 activities, listening 20, writing 18, and reading 17. Each activity is clearly marked according to level such as JHS 1 or SHS 3. One question I had before reading the book was 'Will there be a balance of activities across all levels?' Of

the 25 speaking activities, most levels have four to six activities. However, SHS 2 seems somewhat under represented. That is not to say that listening, reading and writing activities might not balance these out. Nor can it be said that activities always have to be used at the suggested levels! I was familiar with many of the activities, but there were many new ones as well. They are well explained in both English and Japanese. Many of the activities contain variations, which is a good idea too. Also, many are backed up with photocopiable material. These should save time for both JTEs and ALTs.

Chapter 9 contains several activities for elementary school visits. I recognized some old standards like 'Color Basket' and 'karuta', but there are several other newer and more innovative activities as well. In all there are 21. Again, this seems like a useful start for a one-shot elementary school visit or, with a little ingenuity, they could be woven into a grander long-term plan.

Chapter 10 contains 11 project ideas. Many of these involve making something such as a school newspaper or a school tour video. The authors are careful to distinguish between a class activity and a club activity and whether funding and/or equipment is required or not.

Only a few other things need to be remarked on. Tabs at the edges of, but not protruding from, the pages make it easy to find things in the textbook and also to know what section you are currently in. There is a handy activity index at the back of the book which clearly shows at a glance all the relevant information such as name, page number, targeted skills, level, location of extra materials etc.

All in all, I think a lot of experience and careful thought has gone into the planning of this ambitious volume. Three of the main problems of team teaching are solved or ameliorated. An excellent starter selection of activities is in the book, as well as instruction and ideas on how to put them together. Everything in Japanese and English is at least a start to breaking down communication barriers. While I think it would be a useful addition to any personal library of teaching books, the best use that it could be put to is to make it part of every teacher's room across the country. I wish I had had the use of a copy when I was team teaching!

Can Adolescents Become Autonomous Language Learners?

Reviewed by Albert McCann
JSHS SIG

**Writers Note* This report captures only some of the key points of this presentation. It is by no means a complete record of a very complex topic.*

In the 1953 film, “The Wild One,” there is a famous scene which Marlon Brando’s character is asked, “What are you rebelling against”? Brando replies, “What d’ya got”? This scene perfectly captures the eternal struggle between adolescents and adults in my view.

As teachers in high schools, many of us contend with challenging behavior on a daily basis. Marshall Childs addressed this issue head on. Mr. Childs framed this question in the title of his presentation. Relying on recent brain research that focused on the pre-frontal cortex, the area of the brain that regulates self-control, Mr. Childs explained that this region was not fully developed until the age of 21. What does this mean for us as teachers?

In some cases, we are confronted by rebellious and indifferent students. Perhaps we expect too much of our students. Childs suggested that many teachers give students very difficult tasks which they are simply unable to handle. The results are usually frustration for both teachers and students. School becomes a battleground and learning suffers.

What are some of the challenges we face? Childs pointed out that the organization of secondary schools and the physiology of the adolescent brain do not give us much hope for widespread learner autonomy. For example, most schools control the location and schedule of students, resulting in passivity. Independent learning is discouraged and initiative taking by students is not welcomed by schools with a teacher centered approach. Adolescents are going through rapid changes, are flooded with hormones, and are constantly distracted. What can teachers realistically expect of students?

The good news, Childs reports, is that not all students are affected equally by the process of maturity. Some students mature much faster than others. The influence of peer pressure modifies student behavior to a great extent and can serve as a bridge to individual autonomy. One-on-one influences between teacher and student, chance encounters, and random events can also ignite individual autonomy in a learner.

What is the role of a teacher in language learning? Childs says that our role is to understand the changes that students are going through and to facilitate autonomy. Learner autonomy can never be mass-produced or regimented. It is our task to make learning a language attractive, to be positive role models, to encourage students as much as we can. In time, many students will mature and take a notion to learn for their own reasons. Above all, we need to be patient and understanding with ourselves and our students.

The Chalkboard

Shinshu JALT: Early Learning and Language Acquisition

Saturday, August 29th, 2009 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Luna International, MK Bldg 2F, 1-9-16 Motomachi, Matsumoto

<<http://jalt.org/events/shinshu-chapter/09-08-29>>

ETJ Chiba: Curriculum Design and Activities for Young Learners

Sunday, September 6th, 2009 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Chiba Shimin Kaikan (Chiba City Civic Hall) 1-1 Kaname-cho, Chuo-ku, Chiba-shi

<<http://www.eltcalendar.com/events/kanto/chiba/2009/sep/06>>

IAICS: 15th Intercultural Communication and Collaboration within and across Sociolinguistic Environments

Friday, September 18th-20th, 2009

Kumamoto Gakuen University, Kumamoto

<<http://www2.kumagaku.ac.jp/teacher/~judy/cgi/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=IAICS.IAICS>>

Okayama JALT: Do teacher beliefs really influence classroom practices?

Saturday, September 26th, 2009 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

4F Nishigawa Ai Plaza Library, 10-16 Saiwai-cho, Okayama

<<http://jalt.org/events/okayama-chapter/09-09-26>>

Kitakyushu JALT: What is Red?

Saturday, 26 September 2009 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Kitakyushu International Conference Centre, 3F, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka

<<http://jalt.org/events/kitakyushu-chapter/09-09-26>>

Nagasaki JALT: An Integrated Skills Approach to E-Learning Materials Development/ Textbook Writing and Publishing

Saturday, September 26th, 2009 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Dejima Koryu Kaikan, 4F, Nagasaki

<<http://www.kyushuelt.com/jalt/nagasaki.html>>

JALT Events Calendar <<http://jalt.org/events>> or **ELT Calendar** <<http://eltcalendar.com/>>

The School House Call for Papers

**All submissions and/or inquiries should be made to Jake Arnold at:
<publications@juniorseniorhighsig.org >**

Features

Featured articles should relate to junior high and high school English education in Japan. They should be well designed and researched.

The Plan

This segment is designed for teachers to present lesson **activities** that they have found to be successful in their junior high or high school EFL classes. Include reasons why the lesson activity was devised, observed results of the lesson activity, and if possible any information regarding EFL theory that applies to the activity.

Classroom Theory

How different areas of EFL theory can be applied to junior high and high school English pedagogy. Articles should be well designed and researched.

Connected Classroom

Articles that focus on different technologies incorporated into classroom lessons, such as PowerPoint presentations, web-sites, blogs, etc.

Conference Reviews

Reviews of conferences or individual presentations.

Book Reviews

Reviews of textbooks, teacher resource books, audio recourses, etc.

The Chalkboard

This segment provides information on conferences, speeches, workshops, and so on that our members are involved in or that pertains to junior high and high school EFL education.

***All submissions should include a short abstract of the submission, 5-10 keywords, a brief personal bio, and a recent photo.**