

JALT Newsletter 4:5

May 1, 1980

One solution I've found is to use children's literature often read by adults in America. *The Animal Family* by Randall Jarrell captures the adult as much as the child reader, but it fails to answer students' desires to learn about real culture and real personal relationships. Several of Hemingway's stories are very short and good, but I've found that he quickly bores Japanese students. One workable solution, which I'm putting into practice now at LIQJ, is to select short passages from longer works which contain a complete event or conversation. By this way, writers who would be otherwise too lengthy or difficult -- Fitzgerald, Katherine Mansfield, James Baldwin, D.H. Lawrence, William Carlos Williams, etc. -- can be taught, but not in a literary way. As in the case of teaching poetry, I strongly recommend having students read for the central event, emotion, or core of a conversation, and not having them go through any selection with a fine toothed comb. The idea is to get them talking comfortably about something they've found themselves, whether it be in a poem or piece of prose, not to try to make critics of them.

Silent Way Materials

Presented by Kathleen Graves and Don Freeman

Reviewed by Alice Hines

Those of you who have worked with the Silent Way before, know how integrated the Silent Way materials are with the method itself. It is necessary to have an understanding of some fundamental concepts of the Silent Way in order to explore the numerous ways in which the materials can be used in the classroom.

Although the all participants in Graves and Freeman's workshop had some background in the Silent Way philosophy, it was inevitable that those experiences would differ in their range and depth according to each individual. With this in mind, both leaders made it clear at the outset, that the information each person gained from the three-hour workshop, would relate directly to the extent of his/her knowledge and understanding of the method.

LANGUAGE AND METHODOLOGY WORKSHOP for JAPANESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

JULY 28 to AUGUST 15, 1980

Sponsored by the Master of Arts in Teaching Languages Program of the School for International Training (the academic arm of The Experiment in International Living). The workshop will take place at our West Coast site in San Rafael, California, 17 miles north of San Francisco.

- Mornings: recent advances in language teaching methodology
- Afternoons: advanced English language studies
- Observation of ESL classes
- Professional contact with American ESL teachers
- Optional homestay with an American family

Tuition: \$500

Room and Board: \$285

For further information on this program or for information about other methodology workshops being held at our Vermont campus, write to Michael Jerald, Summer Institute Program — Room J, School for International Training, Brattleboro, VT 05301 USA.



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My own experience during those three hours, though a very intense and meaningful one for me, was quite personal. Consequently, in this report, I have chosen to describe the activities as they were presented, rather than relate what actually happened to me, and my own revelations concerning the Silent Way. In this manner, the reader will be able to make his/her own conclusions about what went on during the workshop.

What do we teach our students? What is it in our teaching that frees our students to learn? What do our students bring with them in learning a new language? What do these students need to preceive in order to learn? These were the questions raised by Graves and Freeman in the first segment of their workshop. As ideas were thrown out by the participants, the leaders carefully understood individual comments and thoughts, using those statements to introduce further questions. The discussion was an intense, concentrated sharing of one another's perceptions.

Following that introductory discussion, we divided up into groups of three or four persons each to begin working with some of the materials. Starting with the rods, each group was given one aspect of the language (i.e. "one", "another", "the other") and asked to talk about what we knew about the language, and to consider how to present that with the rods. We were told explicitly that this was not to be a demonstration of what we knew about the language, but rather, we were to focus on the situation, so that it conveyed the language effectively.

Afterwards, reconvening in our original large group, we embarked on a feedback session. Individual participants talked about what had happened in their small groups. We focussed on various things that had come up in the process of going from what we had known about the language to trying to make it clear and perceptible. During the course of this feedback session, points which had been raised in our opening talk came up again, this time with greater clarity and understanding. There was a general feeling of excitement as people shared common insights, and the next activity, again with the rods, was approached with a certain curiosity engendered in this last discussion.

This time, while working with the rods again, we found that Graves and Freeman had shifted the focus by asking us to take five rods of the same color or five rods of different colors, and consider what aspects of the language we might present using only those rods. Having worked with the rods in the last activity and having gained new insights in the feedback session, the participants plunged into this second exercise with great animation and tried to integrate their new perceptions with the task at hand.

As after the last activity, we came back together again for a feedback session and discussed how this last activity had differed from the first one. Comments people had made before were expanded and strengthened by this last activity.

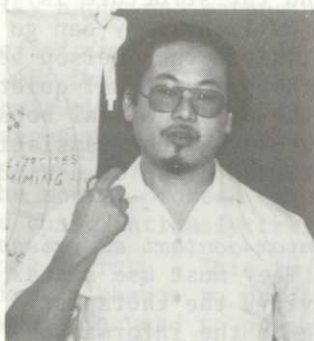
Finishing our work with the rods, we moved on to the Word Charts. Again in small groups of three or four participants, we were given a choice of three tasks: 1) How many words on the charts can be used as verbs, and what other words can they be used with? 2) Take one word and consider how many different ways you can use it, using only the vocabulary on the charts. 3) What clusters, structures, aspects of the language can you find on this chart? The various charts were put up at intervals of five or ten minutes, and with each new chart, the possibilities increased. We worked together for about thirty minutes, and it was obvious that the activity could have continued longer. In our feedback session which followed this activity, participants expressed amazement at the infinite possibilities, and how the addition of another chart expanded what had been gotten from the previous charts.

At the conclusion of the workshop, we came together to share what we had learned about the Silent Way and the materials that morning. We were asked to consider how our understanding of the language had changed during that time, and to think about what role the materials had played in changing our perceptions and awareness.

In the ensuing discussion, participants were able to connect comments made during the feedback sessions with concepts they had become aware of while working with the materials. As a result the participants left with a greater understanding of the Silent Way philosophy as well as a stronger notion of how to use the materials more effectively in conjunction with their new awareness.

Therapeutical Language Learning

Presented by Toyotaro Kitamura



Japanese adult English students who learned English at school in the past often try to re-learn conversation again and fail once more. Mr. Kitamura suggests a different approach: therapeutical language learning. Those who didn't master the communicative aspect of language can be called patients. The teacher, by analogy, is a therapist. By establishing a new relationship similar to that between a patient and a therapist, therapeutical learning tries to create a healthy atmosphere for more productive lessons.

A therapist must understand a patient's cultural, psychological and educational roots thoroughly. Culturally, Japan is a so-called "wordless" society. Psychologically, there is a tremendous mental complexity in the learning process. Educationally, grammar perfectionism and translation habits are stumbling blocks to free expression. Therapeutical language learning calls this the "English-learning disease", a sort of autistic relationship in the formality of the classroom. The goals of this presentation were, 1) analyze the patients' background (diagnosis), and 2) demonstrate specific techniques, drills and games (therapies) the therapist can use to relax the students. VTR tapes illustrated these points.

In Japan, the patients/students are trained to be quiet in the classroom. Communication is a one-way street from teacher to student. But, Mr. Kitamura pointed out, the communicative aspect of English requires give-and-take from both sides. How can the therapist arrange lessons in such a way as to avoid the traditional formal classroom atmosphere and let the patients speak out freely? The speaker suggested two ways. One is for the therapist to keep silent until the patients try to approach him/her from their side. This is the most direct and radical approach. It might be successful if the patients start admitting they came to the class to learn how to speak and they may as well get started. On the other hand, the teacher might be labelled an incapable, silent individual.

Another way is for the therapist to show understanding and sympathy for the patients' past educational training and to try techniques/therapies that will draw them out. Mr. Kitamura went on to describe and practice several of them. One is *syntax miming therapy*. A student stands up and performs with gestures in front of the others, involving everyone in the group (large or small classes):