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drop-outs and wonder why they have to learn English.

Mr. Shirai first outlined the program at his school and the problems it entails.

- (a) In the third year students' conversation class at his junior high school, most of the class time is devoted to repetition practice. The students can repeat the sentences almost perfectly but it is questionable whether they really understand them.
- (b) In grammar classes his teaching method is, basically, to explain the grammatical rules in Japanese and then make the students translate sample sentences into Japanese. This one-way teaching method is, he is afraid, not exciting and does not attract their attention.
- (c) In reading classes the students tend to translate English sentences into awkward, unclear, unnatural Japanese — but they don't care about that.

To overcome some of these problems, he has developed a novel and interesting idea. He gives his students sample translations in the Kansai dialect — which they use at home and with their friends — and encourages them to use it when translating colloquial English. What he tries to do is to bring, in a very real sense, English closer to home for his students. To test whether they can apply what they have studied, they are given a short dialog which provides a clear context with one or two blanks. The dialogs are carefully constructed so that only one answer is suitable for the situation.

One interesting point mentioned several times was that lack of knowledge of their own language — Japanese — was felt to be at the root of students' problems with English. Perhaps a more accurate way of saying this is that high school students are asked to do things in another language, and this applies especially to the writing of compositions, which they have little or no experience with in their own language.

After the panelists' presentations and a break, a lively bilingual discussion ended the meeting. It is a pity so few non-Japanese teachers attended. For them to know where their students are at, they should know where they have been. This series of meetings offers an excellent opportunity to find out.

(reviewed by Haruyuki Kato)

## CONSIDERATIONS IN SPEECH

### COMMUNICATION

Although the title of the presentation given by Wesley Richard (Hokusei University) to the JALT/Hokkaido Summer Workshop on July 26 implied that it would deal with public speaking, that made up only a small part of the lecture. The major aim was to delineate the cross-cultural differences in speech habits between the West and Japan that act as obstacles for the Japanese language learner.

Although the Japanese speaker of English does have considerable knowledge, s/he does not always know how to use it appropriately. Mr. Richard feels that this is largely due to the different ways in which Westerners and Japanese look at languages and the tension that exists because of this.

Americans, in particular, value the content of an expression whereas Japanese place more value on the form. An American must insert a personal comment into his speech and there are not always forms for each occasion. The emphasis in America is on avoiding clichés, but in Japan there is not the pressure to say things in a new way. Thus, when speaking English, the Japanese — rather than using a form — is faced with the difficulty of reflecting on what to say in each situation.

Americans also hold the attitude that anything can be expressed through language, while the saying "no word conveys sorrow; you must look at the color of the eyes" is indicative of the Japanese emphasis on non-verbal communication. In Japan the use of words becomes a ritual and is not taken at face value.

A different value is also placed on silence. Silence is avoided in America — there is tension in the air if there is silence. In Japan silence is pregnant and is much more appreciated. This difference in the attitude toward silence may account for the lack of spontaneity by Japanese speakers of English — they must overcome the habit of silence.

Mr. Richard also stressed the effect of television on both the West and Japan, in relation to communication. Although Westerners are word-oriented they are becoming more passive communicators — listening and not speaking. He feels that it is also influencing the values of silence and non-verbal communication in Japan.

It is important for speakers of second languages to have some knowledge of the strategies of communication. If Japanese could gain a better understanding of the strategies and differences in communication, the learning and use of the English language may be improved.

(reviewed by David Waterbury)

## STORY SQUARES

Phillip L. (Lance) Knowles, director of the Language Institute of Japan, co-authored a book entitled "*Story Squares: Fluency in English as a Second Language*" aimed primarily at intermediate students. In his presentation on June 8 in Kyoto for the East Kansai Chapter, he was not trying to sell his book. He did give valuable advice on making picture squares that help students build skills in structure, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. Suit the picture size to the size of the class. Start simply and gain confidence as you use and develop your own techniques.



Starting with "fluency squares" basic skills are practiced. Examples of simple charts with four problems were demonstrated, though Mr. Knowles cautioned that ideally for beginners only two problems were better. Next to pictures of a frog named Lucy and a girl named Ruthie there were pictures of a bowl of rice and of some lice. It is clear that, merely to describe accurately who likes what, two pairs of sounds have to be produced correctly: [r]/[l] and [s]/[ʃ]. The teacher can increase the complexity or length of the sentences as the students' mastery progresses. Specific grammar and pronunciation problems can be designed into each square.

These kinds of picture squares de-emphasize memorization which leads students to fear forgetting. Instead, they have to concentrate on communication. Another important consideration is to reduce the students' fear of failure. Mr. Knowles suggested an effective technique to lessen the teacher's involvement in correcting a student: write "good" and "try again" on the board and simply point to the appropriate word without particularly looking at the student who is reciting. These picture squares also lend themselves easily to written reinforcement in the form of home assignments.

After the basic pronunciation skills have been mastered with the fluency squares, advanced students go on to "story squares" which require them to practice the typical logic and speculative language we use when connecting ideas in real conversation and communication. Students must discover relationships in the picture stories by answering and asking "Wh" and yes/no questions, integrating a variety of language skills. The stories are suggested by a series of three pictures showing the activities of one character; several of these series are then dealt with together so that the student has to distinguish between, say, Ru's and Lou's activities by hearing and producing sounds correctly.

Mr. Knowles concluded his presentation with a few words about verb tenses and how to teach them. He feels it is best to do this in a way that contrasts the contexts in which the verb occurs. By placing two or more patterns together, students can more easily grasp concepts of time in English. (For a fuller treatment of this, see *JALT Newsletter*, June 1, 1980, p. 29: "Verb Markers: Form and Meaning").

The clock forced Mr. Knowles to end his presentation, though he could well have gone on much longer to an appreciative audience. His book, containing dictations, tests, explanations, etc. as well as carefully structured picture stories, can be ordered from Winthrop Publishers Inc., 17 Dunster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. Also soon available in Japan at Prentice-Hall of Japan Inc., Akasaka Mansion Room 405, 12-23 Akasaka 2-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107, Tel.(03) 583-2591.

(reviewed by Karen Walker and Connie Kimos)

## CLASSROOM TESTING

Fred Allen gave an informative and well-organized presentation on "Testing for the Classroom Teacher" at the July Kanto Chapter meeting. He began by comparing the Discrete Point (DP) and Pragmatic approaches to testing. DP tests are based on the theory that language is analyzable into parts and these parts can be isolated, taught and tested. The test items most familiar to language teachers and students are usually DP based, i.e. unrelated sentences where students are asked to write the correct form of the verb or the different kinds of multiple choice items used to test "reading", "vocabulary", etc. on achievement tests. The greatest advantage of the DP test items are that they are easy to score. The disadvantages include the difficulty of writing good test items, the time it takes to evaluate the items, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that theoretically they are weak. Statistically they have been shown to be invalid and they really do not reflect the students' ability to use the language. In contrast, Pragmatic theorists view language as being integrative and communicative. Though language can be broken down into parts, these parts cannot be isolated for teaching or testing purposes. True Cloze tests and dictation tests fit the Pragmatic criteria for tests:

- a) the language must be natural
- b) it must respond to certain constraints, linguistic and non-linguistic.

There are areas of agreement between the DP and Pragmatic theorists. The DP integrative or global tests, and the emphasis on contextualization are the two major points of agreement. The Cloze test procedure is common to both, though they differ in how the results are interpreted, with DP theorists counting the number of prepositions, nouns, etc. to analyze the results, while the Pragmatic theorists would look at the test results as a whole.

After presenting the theories behind tests, Fred had the participants go over samples of various test items to look at how the items were constructed. He gave guidelines on writing good test items and ways to look more carefully at what is included in an item and what is actually being tested. At the end, he gave simple definitions and formulas for statistically analyzing test items to help the teacher evaluate them.

The material presented and the discussions which centered around the various test items was valuable and useful for teachers who make or administer tests. As a note, Fred is planning on giving a presentation at JALT '80 also.

(reviewed by Gwen Joy)

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