<Article>Guidelines to Practical English Usage : A Series for Instructors and Students of English in Japan

2 Unless otherwise stated, I am assuming a class size of 50 students, with about 40 in attendance on any given day.

3 I have found that with advanced classes, no matter how difficult the phrase, it is guessed rapidly if students are allowed to call for vowels at will. Evidently the producers of the Wheel of Fortune game discovered this too. So I have borrowed an aspect of Wheel of Fortune to add to Hangman. Teams must "buy" vowels if they want to call for them. Each vowel costs 250 points. Teams add points by calling for consonants. Each consonant found in the phrase earns the team 200 points. Therefore, if Team A calls for a *p* in the phrase "paternalistic government", they receive 200 points, not enough to "buy" a vowel on their next turn. The team that calls *n*, however, gets 600 points (200 for each *n*) and can "buy" vowels on subsequent turns as long as they have at least 250 points. Each vowel "costs" 250 points, regardless of how often it appears in the phrase. It is necessary for the game to continue for seven or eight calls of letters, at least, so that all students, even the weaker ones, have time to try to figure out the phrase in their own minds.

4 The game gets its name from the traditional stick drawing made to indicate the number of used letters which were not in the phrase, as follows:
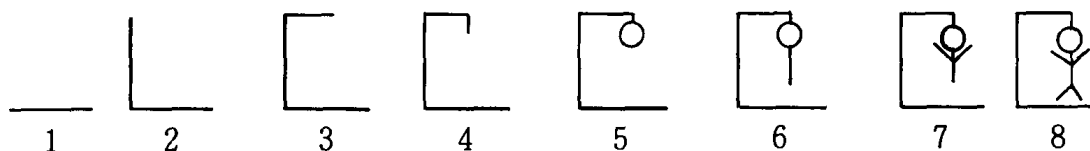
If the guesser does not come up with the phrase before the drawing of the hanged man is finished (8 used letters), he loses.

5 I have shamelessly appropriated the thrust of this game from the TV show of the same name, conceived and produced by Merv Griffin.

6 Each penalty point was assigned a letter: the first was "G", the second "H", and so on, until the player became a "GHOST" and "disappeared" from the game. Hence, the game's name.

to the common packet but should inform the students he has done this.

Sentence Shuffle allows the instructor great latitude in the type of item to be tested and the degree of freedom he wants to give the students in creating the sentences. The students must respond to the specific task at hand ——adding articles, prepositions or whatever ——and also make use of all their knowledge to produce meaningful, acceptable sentences.

The instructor can follow up on the game with a rapid question drill. Let's say the students make the sentence "There is a knife on the refrigerator in the kitchen." The instructor might ask: Where is the knife? Where is the refrigerator? Or he might ask the students to imagine what came before each sentence, to create a context:

A : "I can't untie this string."

B : "There is a knife on the refrigerator in the kitchen."

Conclusion

The type of game any instructor might introduce into his lesson is limited only by the creativity and imagination of the teacher. This article has presented the results of my experience with games in order to stimulate the reader's own ideas. To the instructor who thinks he cannot imagine himself leading a game in his class, I urge him to think again and try it once. The value of the game in promoting all four skills in the target language without the pressure of one-on-one question/response makes it one of many valuable tools to integrate into the foreign language lesson plan.

Footnotes

1 I will use masculine pronouns to refer back to "the student" or "the instructor" so as to avoid the awkward "he/she", "him/her", etc.

other words shuffled. A common packet containing an ample supply of the words *a, an* and *the* is available to all students. Teams line up and the lead-off member of each team opens his packet and tries to unscramble the words to make a sentence, adding words he deems necessary from the common packet. When a student feels he has completed a good sentence using all the given components, he tacks or tapes the index cards in the correct order to his team's section of the bulletin board or blackboard and the next member of the team opens his packet and proceeds with a new sentence in the same manner. At the point at which one team finishes all its sentences, play stops for a moment and that team is awarded the speed bonus. The other teams are then allowed to finish.

Then the second phase begins. All students look at all the sentences. Each of the #1 students reads his sentence. The teacher then announces if all are correct (they don't have to be identical, of course) or indicates how many are incorrect. The teacher may want to pinpoint the error, i. e. "Two are correct, one is incorrect. The one which is incorrect contains an error in word order."

Teams may now work together to change *only* their own sentence #1 or leave it as it is. After the changes are completed, the teacher announces which teams have produced a correct sentence and which have not and explains any errors which still remain. Continue in this manner until all sentences are completed.

Scoring is, as usual, up to the individual instructor. I usually give 10 points for a correct sentence on the first try and 5 points if the sentence is correct after a change. The speed bonus is 10 points.

Using index cards enables students to move around the elements in a sentence quickly and easily (avoiding erasures). In a more advanced class, the instructor may want to remove words belonging to several parts of speech (articles *and* prepositions for instance) and put them in the common packet. The instructor can add distractors

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added a word which is not part of a meaningful sentence, may chal-
lenge the opponent to complete the sentence as it stands meaning-
fully. If the opponent cannot complete a meaningful sentence, the
challenge is successful and the challenger's team wins. If the
opponent does in fact complete the sentence meaningfully, the chal-
lenge fails and the challenger's team loses. The instructor is the
final arbiter but should stay out of the game until a judge's decision
is necessary.

The instructor may want to review a specific structure using
this game. It's easy enough to do. For instance, to ensure that
students use the conditional, just write "If" on the board and let the
students take it from there. In any case, complex sentences will
result as students resort to subordinate clauses to avoid completing
the sentence for as long as possible.

As a follow-up, the instructor can analyze the sentence and excise
any non-meaningful words or grammatical errors that crept in
and were not challenged. Sentence Ghost reviews sentence struc-
ture, requires students to think ahead and be creative in the target
language.

V.   Sentence Shuffle

Sentence Shuffle is designed to be a flexible tool for the instruc-
tor to use occasionally for practice on a variety of items: vocabulary,
articles, prepositions, verb forms, or any other aspect of the target
language which can be broken down into individual words.

A small class of twelve or fifteen is divided into teams. The teacher
has prepared a packet of index cards for each team member. The
sets of packets are identical for all teams. Each card in the packet
has a word written on it. Together the words can form an English
sentence, except that words fitting the particular grammatical point
to be reviewed (articles, for instance) have been removed and the

game would have to be used in the summary. For a quick review of a lot of facts and practice in listening comprehension and formulating questions, Jeopardy is unbeatable.

IV. Sentence Ghost

When I was a child, to while away the time with family, I'd play a game called "Ghost". In this game the first player started a word by announcing a letter. The next player had a word in mind and added a second letter, and so on, until someone formed a word or could no longer add a letter that made any sense. The person who completed the word was the loser(!) and got a penalty point[6].

This is a good party game and even better to play on a long trip in a car or train. But in class we cannot afford to expend so much time and effort for one word. Still, the mental gymnastics of thinking ahead in the target language necessary to playing this game intrigued me. I adapted it as follows.

Instead of building on letters to make an ever-longer word, the student builds an ever-longer sentence by adding one word at a time, always trying to avoid completing the sentence (or putting his teammate in a position to complete it), while keeping the fragment meaningful. This game stresses the student's ability to manipulate sentence structure and hones his skill at anticipating where a sentence is going (or might go) before it is complete. Anticipating is a valuable skill in keeping up with a conversation.

This game is most successfully used in a small class of 12 or so. Form two or three teams. The instructor asks a member of the first team to begin the sentence. Teams then alternate, different members adding a word to the sentence on each turn, always trying to avoid completing the sentence while keeping it meaningful. At the point at which a complete sentence is formed, the team doing so loses. Moreover, any team member who believes that an opponent

Columbus first land in America?" or words to that effect ——his team receives points equal to the value of the question. The correct questioner chooses the next category and amount but may not pose the next question. Thus more students have a chance to participate. If the questioner is wrong, he and his team lose their turn on that question and a member of another team may try. If no team can provide the correct question, the teacher does, and makes a note that that point must be reviewed at the end of the game. The last person to give a correct question always chooses the next category and amount. To keep the game moving, the teacher should wait only a pre-established limited length of time for hands to go up and for responses to be completed.

The teacher should be strict about requiring the questions to be relevant to the category. If the 50-point Columbus answer is "Queen Isabella", "Who was Queen of Spain?" is *not* an acceptable question, for the student has not made the connection to Columbus.

On the other hand, depending on the linguistic skills of the class, the teacher should exercise some degree of leniency in giving a student with correct content but faulty grammar a second or third chance to formulate the question correctly before counting him wrong.

While answers based on reading passage or dialogue content will produce the widest variety of questions, all kinds of categories can be used. Why not have one called "Past Tense Forms"? The answers might be: brought; taught; caught; fought; sought. The questions would all begin: "What is the past tense form of ···?", (and this is a drawback of this kind of category,) but the game provides a relatively painless way to review these forms.

As a follow up, the teacher might choose one of the categories and ask the students to use the information already mentioned and write a short summary of the material, "Columbus' Voyages", or something of the sort. All five of the facts recalled during the

and recall key phrases and the ideas behind them.

III. Jeopardy[5]

The crux of this game is that the teacher provides answers while the students respond with questions. It does triple duty: listening comprehension, forming questions and review of content.

Again the teacher divides the class into two or three teams. One student is appointed judge and scorekeeper. The teacher has prepared a number of categories which fit the content of the material he is reviewing, and has a list of five answers to fit each category, usually some facts about the subject matter. Let's imagine that this class has read about Christopher Columbus. My five answers might be: 1492; Genoa, Italy; to find a shorter route to India; San Salvador; Queen Isabella.

The blackboard is then set up like this:

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	SCORE	
			Team A	Team B
10	10	10		
20	20	20		
30	30	30		
40	40	40		
50	50	50		

Teams choose who will go first and the teacher picks one member of that team at random to choose the fitst "category and amount". The student announces his choice: "I'd like Christopher Columbus for 10 points." The scorekeeper erases the "10" from under the Columbus category to show that the answer has been used and the teacher reads the 10-point answer: "The answer is 1492." Any student may then raise his hand to attempt to pose a relevant question. The teacher calls on the student who raised his hand first (the judge can help decide), who must immediately begin his question. If the questioner asks the correct question —— "When did

wrong, the game continues until one of the guessers comes up with the correct phrase. In addition, the whole class is playing against the teacher. For if the class as a whole calls for a total of eight letters which are not in the phrase before the phrase is guessed, the teacher wins[4]. This is an added incentive to all class members to try to guess the phrase and not simply call out random letters.

Let's go back to our sample game to see how it looks in play. Let's say a member of Team A calls for the letter *n*. The teacher adds the 3 *n*'s in "paternalistic government" to the puzzle and moves to a Team B member, who calls for a *t*. The three *t*'s are added. A Team C member asks for a *d*. The teacher announces that there is no *d* and adds that letter to the Used Letter List. Now the board looks like this:

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        T     N          T
__  __  __  __  __  __  __  __  __  __        Used Letters

               N      N T
       __  __  __  __  __  __  __  __  __        D
```

Play continues until one of the guessers says "paternalistic government" or the Used Letter box contains eight letters. (Rarely does the teacher win.)

In any case, the follow-up to the game is extremely important. Once the phrase is revealed, the instructor should ask what the phrase means and why it is significant. He should involve as many students as possible, letting each contribute a little. If, after leading the students through the subject matter in this manner, the instructor feels some relevant point about the reading passage or other material has been left out, he should fill in the ideas to make sure students comprehend and can express the main concepts. At this point he might mention or review (if it has already been part of the course) the root *pat(e)r*, noting words like *patriarch, patriot, expatriate.*

In this game students think about spelling, prefixes and suffixes,

because it contains a word with a Latin root rich in related words in English : *pat (e)r.* So, "paternalistic government" becomes the unknown phrase the students will try to guess.

To begin, the class is divided into two or three teams, roughly the same size and the instructor chooses one member of each team to come forward to represent his teammates as a guesser. The instructor should choose these guessers carefully, attempting to match students of fairly equal ability so that all teams are competitive. The teacher then writes an appropriate number of blanks on the board, each blank representing a letter in the phrase, like so:

— — — — — — — — — — — — —

— — — — — — — — —

Each of the three guessers will try to determine what the phrase is with help from their teammates who will call out letters they believe might be in the phrase. This is the only way teams may help their guessers. The teacher asks a member of Team A (at random) which letter he would like. If the letter is somewhere in the phrase, the teacher writes it in the appropriate blank. If not, the teacher announces that it is not there and writes it in an area on the board reserved for used letters. The teacher moves on to a Team B member and so on. At first, students will pick letters at random, but as letters accumulate in the puzzle and they scour their minds for phrases or words that they remember from the text (textbooks must be closed during the game, of course), team members can choose letters more accurately to complete the phrase. Students also learn rather quickly that *s, t, r, n,* and *l* are the most frequently used consonants in English and *e* and *a,* the most frequent vowels[3].

When any of the guessers (no matter which team member has most recently called for a letter) thinks he knows the phrase, he raises his hand, is recognized by the teacher, and announces his guess.

If he is correct, the round ends and his team gets a point. If he is

either correct one of his own team's words or "steal" a word from another team by correcting it with his team's chalk. At this time I let other team members coach. The scene sometimes turns into a rather wild free-for-all for a few minutes, with students forgetting they are in a classroom, and producing English, even one word at a time, anything but shyly and slowly.

After the last nine students have finished, it's time to total up the scores. Each teacher may want to score differently. I usually give 10 points for a word written correctly on the first try, 5 points for each incorrect spelling corrected by a member of the same team and 10 points for each "stolen" word, as described above. The speed bonus in a class of forty is 20 points. Highest score wins.

Finally, the students are seated and I follow up the game by noting any word which remains misspelled. I explain the appropriate spelling rule if there is one, list other words of the same pattern, and ask the students to repeat these words chorally. The whole game takes fifteen or twenty minutes.

II. Hangman Plus

The purpose of this game is to review important phrases already presented in the course. Secondarily, it reinforces correct spelling. It can be used at the end of the chapter or before a test to bring the main points back to mind.

The game is based on the traditional word game Hangman, while some features of its off-spring, the American television game show, Wheel of Fortune, can be added. In preparation, the teacher chooses several phrases crucial to the understanding of the material to be reviewed. For instance, in a reading about American Indians one might come across the phrase "paternalistic government". It's a crucial phrase in the passage because it sums up the attitude of the American government towards the Indians for 60 or 70 years and

same spelling problems. For instance, if the Red team's list contains the word *deceive*, the Yellow might have *receive* and White *perceive*, thus reviewing the spelling bugbear of [iy] following the letter *c*. Or one might make the task more difficult with *weird, siege* and *seize*. The word lists should be drawn, first and foremost, from words already seen in the course, and secondarily from vocabulary with which every university student can be expected to be familiar. For instance, in the first example above, *deceive* and *perceive* might be new words introduced in the course. It is reasonable to expect that every student has seen *receive* before entering the university. Therefore, if a third —*ceive* word is needed, *receive* would be preferable to the possibly unfamiliar *conceive*. (After the game the teacher may want to provide a list of other words ending in —*ceive*.)

After the students are lined up and ready to proceed, the teacher gives the lead-off member of each team a piece of chalk, a different color for each. Students are told that they are simply to write what they hear, doing so as quickly as possible, since there is a bonus to the team that finishes first. Then, the first word on each list is read to the lead-off members of the respective teams, who go to the board and write. Coaching by other team members, except for exhortations to hurry up, should not be allowed at this point. This prevents the strongest members from dominating and forces every student to make his best effort. As one member finishes writing, he passes the chalk to the person behind him and retires to the end of the line. The instructor reads the next word on that team's list. This continues until one team has used up all its members save three. That team gets the speed bonus. The other teams continue until they too have three members who have not yet participated.

Then the next phase of the game begins: each of the last three members , the best spellers, gets a chance to take his team's chalk and correct any one misspelling he sees on the board. He may

dents to use English actively in a diverting environment does fulfill its basic raison d'etre but how much better the game which does all this *plus* reinforces the material in the textbook or the teacher's explanations. What follows then are some examples of classroom-tested FL games with specific pedagogical purposes.

I. The Spelling Bee

This is the simplest and most straightforward game of the five to be presented here. It's purpose is to review words which are difficult to spell and to increase the speed with which students produce English on paper. Japanese students are lamentably weak in spelling English words, even those for which they know the meaning. It's true that Americans themselves are notoriously bad spellers and the English language is a monstrous collection of ancient spelling rules with numerous exceptions. While an occasional spelling mistake shows a bit of laziness or sloppiness on the part of the writer and detracts from the overall impression the reader receives, it usually does not hamper communication. A page of text dotted with spelling errors, however, and particularly one in which an error creates another word than the one intended, not only casts doubt on the writer's seriousness of purpose but may confuse the reader or at least set up a temporary roadblock to smooth communication of even the simplest ideas. Compare:

I played with my friend behind the church yesterday.

I prayed with my friend behind the church yesterday.

How is the Spelling Bee organized? Divide the class into three groups of equal size[2]. Have each group form a line facing the blackboard in an aisle of the classroom. Tell the students to put their best spellers at the end of the line. (The reason will become clear later.) The teacher has already prepared three sets of words, one set for each team, of approximately equal difficulty and reflecting the

remains open to them. The remainder of this article will deal on a practical level with one of these options: games.

The purpose of using games is to encourage and facilitate among the largest number of students the active use of the target language and to overcome the shyness prevalent among Japanese students, by putting them into a situation in which their minds are distracted from the fact that they are performing in a classroom: in other words, to change the classroom atmosphere, to make the classroom into an unintimidating world. Students perceive game time as a time which is less serious, less pressure-packed, even though the teacher has constructed the game with a serious purpose in mind and may put the students under various time constraints. Since everyone gets a chance to participate as members of teams, no one is singled out. Cooperation is required, and to this, Japanese students are well suited. To borrow from Mary Poppins, "Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." Finally, games should be just one part of the teacher's repertoire of activities designed to inject the unexpected into each class meeting. Since students either do not attend or quickly jettison their attention in classes which are predictable, games themselves should not be used in every class meeting or even every other meeting, but rather appear as one of the many changes of pace the instructor employs to keep the class on its toes.

The instructor who may want to introduce games into his teaching now faces the difficult task of creating games which integrate into the lesson plan and enhance it. The game is a tool, not an end in itself. Games which do not fulfill the goals of the day's lesson may amuse, but in the end they are hollow, like the empty calories in junk food. Junk food provides necessary calories in a tasty way, all right, but how much better is the food which combines calories, good taste *and* nutrition. Similarly, the game which enables stu-

in their English-speaking partners, since both are obstacles rather than reinforcements to communication.

I realize full well that these claims fly in the face of the hierarchical structure of Japanese society and reflect the passion for directness and equality (or at least the opportunity to be equal) in English-speaking countries. I do not propose that the appropriate use of Japanese be undermined. But the appropriate use of English should be supported too. Students, when they leave the university, must be prepared to be active participants in conversation, correspondence, or even reading literature, for this is what the native English speaker or writer expects of his partner in communications.

If the goal of the FL teacher is student competence in the active use of the FL, then several points follow logically. The students must have the chance to practice the language and there must be interactive use of the language. Students can interact with each other or the teacher. Achieving these aims is a formidable task in a Japanese university. Classes tend to be too large for students to get many chances to use the FL in a single class meeting or even in a whole year of class meetings, consisting of only 40 contact hours.

In addition, while most students profess a serious desire to apply their knowledge of the FL more actively, they have all kinds of negative feelings about practicing the FL in class, with the attendant certainty that they will make mistakes in front of their peers.

Whereas the American student's greatest fear is that he[1] will have no response to offer in the class and appear to be either unprepared or brainless, clearly, keeping silent is a far less embarrassing option to the Japanese student than making an error in public.

How then can we surmount these barriers and at least work in the right direction, given that class size is unlikely to drop significantly and Japanese student embarrassment over public mistakes is not completely erasable? The options are legion to the teacher who

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by Loring Ivanick

II. Gamesmanship

In the first article of this series, I considered a specific point of expression —— reasons and causes —— and presented an overview of the choices available to the student, as well as exercises that the instructor could use in class and as homework. That article was intended to be used by students as well as instructors, and I did use it to supplement the textbook in a writing class last year.

While this article is certainly not to be concealed from students, it is primarily geared towards instructors. It deals with classroom methodology and is part and parcel of an eclectic method which rejects the notion that students can learn a foreign language by hearing about it via lecture or grammatical explanations given in their native language. It should not be inferred that a strong grammatical background is not required for effective communication in the foreign language (FL), nor that grammar for its own sake is not a fascinating field of study for many people. Rather, I contend that two-way communication in English requires *active* knowledge of that language. Students must become transmitters as well as receivers of English before they leave the university. Passivity in communicating in English leads to a condition in which the person with whom you are communicating feels either bewildered (not knowing what you are thinking) or dominant (getting no critical feedback). Those are not responses we should train our students to generate