Let’s Play Cards. Grammar is Fun. (How and Why I Have Taught English to My Students)

Tomi Yukimune

School for International Training

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Abstract:
In Japan, most students have to memorize grammar rules to pass entrance examinations to high schools as well as universities. As speaking skills are not required in those exams, many students regard grammar as nothing but rote learning. However, grammar is not dried bones but a vivid creature, which can be formed by students. Grammar can be learned with the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), which is addressing diverse learning styles. It can be taught with stories, poems, plays, songs, games, puppets, picture books, and playing cards.

Once students learn the rules of grammar, they will be able to enjoy the process of learning grammar and will know how to put grammar into practice by using the rules. Once students get an idea what grammar is, they will surely be able to generalize and develop it. They will be able to retain the idea of grammar and use it as a tool to understand English.
LET’S PLAY CARDS. GRAMMAR IS FUN.

(HOW AND WHY I HAVE TAUGHT ENGLISH TO MY STUDENTS)

Submitted in Partial fulfillments of the requirement for the Master of Arts in Teaching Degree at the School for International Training Brattleboro, Vermont

By Tomi Yukimune

November 2003

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This project by Tomi Yukimune is accepted in its present form.

Date

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Acknowledgement
I would like to say thank Professor Thomas Santos who taught me how to make grammar teaching fun, Professor Paul Le Vasseur who showed me a strong belief to sow seeds in students' hearts, believing new shoots coming, and Professor Bonnie Menel who made me be aware of who I am.

I want to acknowledge and credit my students who created all of the cards and poems made in this IPP.
Abstract
In Japan, most students have to memorize grammar rules to pass entrance examinations to high schools as well as universities. As speaking skill is not required in those exams, many students regard grammar as nothing but rote learning. However, grammar is not dried bones but a vivid creature, which can be formed by students. Grammar can be learned with the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), which is addressing diverse learning styles. It can be taught with stories, poems, plays, songs, games, puppets, picture books, and playing cards. Once students learn the rules of grammar, they will be able to enjoy the process of learning grammar and will know how to put grammar into practice by using the rules. Once students get an idea what grammar is, they will surely be able to generalize and develop it. They will be able to retain the idea of grammar and use it as a tool to understand English.

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Second Language Learning
Class Activities
Creative Teaching
Cultural Awareness
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background information

I taught Japanese for twenty years in public schools in Tokyo. When I was forty, I quit my job and moved to Hokkaido with my husband, where we fulfilled our dream of becoming farmers. But after we started farming I realized how I missed my students, so I started a private tutoring school in my house. I wanted my students to be able to use English as a communication tool. I wished to show my students another world through English. But I had to face the reality. What they wanted was to be able to pass high school and university entrance examinations. So I tried to teach what is called “Japanese school English” and authentic English at the same time.

This IPP reflects what I have learned and created over the past fifteen years with my students. It consists of five chapters. The second chapter explains the card games that I have made with my students to help them understand what English grammar is. The third chapter focuses on pronunciation practice. It explains what I do to enable my students to recognize real English sounds. In the forth chapter, I write about the difficulties my students have understanding English grammar which is totally different from Japanese grammar. The last chapter describes the setting in which circumstances of my students and I. It also explains my thinking about teaching and learning.

What we (my students and I) have done

My classroom is full of books, games, and toys. There are beautiful posters, maps, and pictures on the walls. An enjoyable environment puts my students at ease. They like to come before classes and read books or play games.
I teach phonics to beginners. I use several textbooks for reference, but mainly I teach my own curriculum. I encourage my students to play, sing, speak, and think in English.

When my students go to junior high school, they encounter boring and incomprehensible school textbooks, and rigid “Japanese school English”. To bridge the big gulf between Japanese school English and authentic English, I build several bridges. You will see the examples of how I make these connections through several of my card games. I always add some sentences from Japanese school textbooks in the activities.

These card games start with base vocabularies, then go on to parts of speech, negation, question formation, five sentence patterns, tense, and so on. We have made all the cards over the fifteen years. I have had my school several of the card games were introduced by my students, while I have adapted others from traditional Japanese games.

For a while the game called “Uno” was very popular in my school.
Student made picture cards with numbers just like “Uno” cards to play with.

Currently the game called “The Poorest” which started only a few years ago is the most popular game in my class.

The cards used in my class are similar to the cards used in common card games. My cards come in four colored suits: red, blue, yellow, and green, instead of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades. Each suit has thirteen cards, numbered one to thirteen, but does not have an ace, a king, a queen, or a jack. Each card has a word or a sentence with a picture. They can be used for any kind of card game because they are the same as a normal deck of cards. Some other games such as (11) *Give or Take* (See page1) and (22) *Completion* (See page 29) are adapted from traditional Japanese card games.

**Why use card games for grammar?**

First of all, students love playing cards. We play a card game for five to ten minutes during the class just for fun. They like making cards as well. To make cards they create sentences, draw pictures, and sometimes they even create new games. Making cards builds community too. They share the different tasks to make the cards, cooperate with each other, and become more active, more engaged, and more positive.

Furthermore, the repetition of the language on the cards helps them remember what they learn. In public schools, students learn grammar following a strict calendar schedule. Students are pushed onto new tasks without having time to review. With my cards, students can use the same cards for any kind of card game. As a result they use the same cards many times, which helps them to make the knowledge stick without any special efforts.

In other words, making cards makes learning meaningful and playing cards serves as review. So my students do not need to memorize dry sentences in a school textbook and have no problem with high school English grammar classes.
CHAPTER TWO
HOW TO USE MY CARD GAMES

Here are the explanations how to play the games and how to make cards.

Types of Card games

1. Alphabet

(1) Capital Letters (Go Fish, Bingo, The Last One, Old Maid)

Example of Capital letter cards

From A to Z, there are four sets of 26 cards.

(2) Small Letters (Go Fish, Bingo, The Last One, Old Maid)

Example of small letter cards

From A to Z, there are four sets of 26 cards.
Explanation of games

Example of Go fish cards
Go fish
**Things to prepare:** Ten sets of the four cards (including picture cards and letter cards).

**Directions**
1) Shuffle the cards and deal five cards to each player. Place the rest of the deck face down on the table.
2) Player A examines her cards, chooses one and asks one other player if he has the same card. For example, if player A chooses a card with a cup on it, she says, “Player B, do you have a cup?”
3) If player B has a card with a cup on it, he must give that card to player A. A, then puts the two matching cards on the table, and continues her turn.
4) If B does not have the card A asked for, he says, “No, I don’t. Go fish.”
5) A takes a card from the top on the deck. Then, it is B’s turn. The player who has the most pairs at the end of the game is the winner.

---

**Bingo**

**Things to prepare:** 1 set of 16 cards and 10 marbles for each student, and a set of Picture cards.

**Directions**
1) Each student has one set of 16 cards and places his cards on the table in rows of four that becomes a Bingo grid.
2) The set of picture cards is placed face down in the center of the table.
3) The first player takes a card from the top of the deck and reads aloud what is on the card.
4) The other players look at their Bingo grids, find the card that matches what was read, and place a marble on the right card.
5) Players take turns reading the picture cards from the deck.
6) The first player to have four marbles in a row wins the game.

---

**The Last One**

**Things to prepare:** Ten sets of four cards (Irregular verbs set can be used too) and marbles. The number of the marbles used depends on the number of the players, minus one. For example, if there are four players, put three marbles on the table.

**Directions**
1) Shuffle the cards and deal all of them to the students.
2) Each student chooses one card to pass to the player to his left. Together, players will sing a familiar song, like ABC song, or Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.
On the last word of each line of the song, each player passes a card placing it face
down on the table. So the students take the card and add it to their hand.
5) Players continue singing and passing.
6) When a player notices he has a pair of matching cards, he takes a marble from the
center of the table. Other players try at the same time to get a marble.
7) The player who does not get a marble is “the last one”.

**Old Maid**

**Things to prepare:** Ten sets of four cards (Irregular verbs set can be used too) and a 
joker.

**Directions**
1) Shuffle the cards and deal an equal number to all of the students.
2) The students make as many pairs from their hands as possible, reading the words
or sentences aloud as they lay the cards down in front of them.
3) After the students have placed all the pairs from their hands on the table, the game
begins.
4) The first student picks a card from the student to her right. If she has a match,
she can put it down and say the word or sentence. If she does not have a match,
the next student takes a turn.
5) The student who places all of her cards on the table first is the winner.

**2 Pronunciation**

(3) Basic Vowel cards (Bingo, Go Fish, The Last One, Old Maid)

- [e] = bed, pen, leg, hen,
- [æ] = nut, bus, cup, the sun
- [I] = bag, bat, cat, hat
- [u] = dog, top, fox, box
- [u:] = the moon, food, roof, zoo
- [ɔ] = ball, hall, wall, chalk

(4) Magic E cards, (Bingo, Go Fish, The Last One, Old Maid)

- [ei] = name, cake, lake, face
- [ai] = five, nine, line, pipe
- [ou] = bone, nose, hole, rose
- [ju:] = tube, fuse, cube, mule

*All words have two picture cards and two letter cards

(5) Double Consonant cards—① (Go Fish, The Last One, Old Maid)
ʃ = sheep, ship, shell, fish  
[tʃ] = chime, cheek, check, chain  
[k] = sock, duck, back, rock  
[ŋ] = king, song, wing, ring  
[θ] = mouth, tooth, three, math  
[ð] = this, that, the sun, the moon  

Example
(5) Double Consonant cards—② (Bingo)
Example
(6) Diphthong cards, (Bingo, Go Fish, The Last One, Old Maid)

\[au\]=house, mouse, mouth, the south  \[oi\]=boy, toy, coin, boil

*All words have two picture cards and two letter cards.

(7) Basic Words (Bingo, The Poorest, Uno, The Last One, Sevens)

Fifty-three cards numbered from 1 to 13 in four colors (Red takes the place of Heart, Blue takes place of Spade, Yellow takes place of Diamond, Green takes place of Clubs) and a joker. There are several sets of Basic words.

Explanation of a game

**The Poorest**

**Things to prepare:** Fifty-three cards numbered from 1 to 13 in four colors and a joker.

(See page 14)

**Directions**

1) Shuffle the cards and deal an equal number to all students.
2) Number one is low, and number thirteen is high. The joker can be used for any number. The one who has the blue number one card starts the game.
3) The first player lays the card down in front of the others and reads aloud the word (or sentence).
4) The next player must lay down a higher numbered card. The numbers keep getting higher and higher.
5) If the player does not have a higher numbered card, he says, “Pass” and skips his or her turn.
6) The player who puts down the highest numbered card can start the next round.
7) If a player has several cards of the same number, he can put them all down at the same time. The following players must put down the same number of cards. For example if a player has a Red 4, a Green 4, and a Blue 4, he can lay them all down together. The followers must keep on playing three cards of the same number.
8) The first player to play all his/her cards wins the game.

**Sevens**

**Things to prepare:** Fifty-three cards numbered from 1 to 13 in four colors (red, blue, yellow, and green) and a joker. (See page 14)

**Directions**

1) Shuffle the cards and deal an equal number to all students.
2) The players who have sevens lay the cards at the center of the table.

3) The player who puts a red 7 must lay down consecutive higher or lower numbers in series to sevens, which means number 6 or number 8. The player must choose one card to lay down, 6, or 8. If he does not have 6 or 8, he skips his turn.

4) The numbers keep on going higher or lower in series. One player must lay down only one card at his turn. If he has a joker he can use it for any number.

5) The player who lays down all his/her cards wins the game.

Example
3 Words

(8) Basic Nouns (Three Questions)

Example of Three Questions
Three Questions

Direction

1) Each student thinks of a question and then writes three key words for the question and a picture of the answer.
2) They ask their questions to the group using their three key words. The student who answers the questions gets the card.

(9) Irregular Verbs  (The Poorest, The Last One, Go Fish, Old Maid, Sevens)

Example
(10) Comparison of Adjectives (The Poorest, Go Fish, Old Maid, Sevens)
Example

1. $8 + 8 = 16$
2. easy
3. different
4. deep
5. dark
6. dangerous
7. good
8. comfortable
9. cheerful
10. careful
11. cheap
12. busy
13. cool

1. $2 + 2 = 4$
2. easier
3. more different
4. deeper
5. darker
6. most dangerous
7. the best
8. the most comfortable
9. the most cheerful
10. the most careful

1. the simplest
2. the worst
3. differently
4. To dig deeply
5. the darkest
6. dangerously
7. well done
8. comfortably
9. cheerfully
10. Walking on

4 Sentences
Example of Give or Take
(11) Parts of speech (Give or Take)

Give or Take

Things to prepare: Ten cards of each of the parts of speech (Noun, Verb, Adjective, and Preposition).

Directions
1) Decide which role each set has. For instance, Nouns has role①, Adjectives has role②, Prepositions has role③, and Verbs has role④.
   ① To keep the card that the player takes
   ② To take all the cards on the table
   ③ To skip the next player.
   ④ To give all the cards to the one player who will be able to get all the cards according to the role②.
2) Shuffle the cards and place the deck face down in the center.
3) The first player takes a card, read it aloud, and follows the role selected for this part of speech.
4) The player in turn takes a card and follows the roles.
5) The one who gets the most cards wins the game.
※ The roles should not be fixed. It should be changed every time the game is played.

(12) Basic sentences (S+ V+ C: sentence making activity)

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>am</th>
<th>are</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>are</th>
<th>are</th>
<th>are</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>short</td>
<td>fine</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>tall</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>a king</td>
<td>big</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>football</td>
<td>players</td>
<td>rich</td>
<td>smart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Making sentences

Things to prepare: 39 cards and a joker.

Directions:
1) Shuffle the cards and deal an equal number to all students.
2) The first player should lay down a subject card.
3) The next player should lay down a verb card or another subject card.
4) The next player can lay a complement card, a verb card, or another subject card.
5) The player who has a joker can lay it anywhere.
6) The one who plays all the cards wins the game.

(13) Can (‘can you’ game= question asking activity)

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you skate?</th>
<th>Can you fly?</th>
<th>Can you eat a frog?</th>
<th>Can you play the piano?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you swim?</td>
<td>Can you jump?</td>
<td>Can you play Shogi?</td>
<td>Can you drive a car?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes, I can. No, I can’t.

‘Can you’ game

**Things to prepare:** Blank cards and colored pens

**Directions**

1) Each student makes five questions, and the answers using “can” and writes them down on the cards with a colored pen. Each student uses different colors so if there are five students there are five colors of cards.
2) Students walk around the classroom and ask each other questions using their cards.
3) After asking questions, they exchange cards.
4) Each student ends up with cards of all colors.

(14) Negative sentences (Old Maid)

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pandas live in China.</th>
<th>I am Yumi.</th>
<th>do not</th>
<th>not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is my pet snake.</td>
<td>It is eight o’clock.</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are bamboos.</td>
<td>Pandas eat bamboos</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aki is at home.</td>
<td>Ken washes the dishes.</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>doesn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is a police officer.</td>
<td>They go to school on Sunday.</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken and Aki watch TV.</td>
<td>You have a new bike.</td>
<td>do not</td>
<td>don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is hot today.</td>
<td>Joker.</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>doesn’t don’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(15) Questions (Old Maid)

(16) Question-making cards (Bingo)

**Things to prepare:** Students choose 16 question-making cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you hungry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is your birthday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you Japanese or Chinese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What color do you like?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions** are mentioned on page 7. When a student reads the question, the next person has to answer it.

(17) Tense of questions and Negations (Go Fish, Bingo, Old maid)

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I work very hard everyday.</th>
<th>I do not work hard everyday.</th>
<th>I worked hard yesterday.</th>
<th>I did not work hard yesterday.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ken washes the Dishes everyday.</td>
<td>He does not wash the dishes everyday.</td>
<td>Ken washed the dishes yesterday.</td>
<td>He did not wash the dishes yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aki and Ken</td>
<td>They do not like</td>
<td>They liked spinach</td>
<td>They did not like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like carrots.</td>
<td>Carrots.</td>
<td>Last year.</td>
<td>Spinach last year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We play soccer everyday.</td>
<td>We do not play soccer everyday.</td>
<td>We played soccer yesterday.</td>
<td>We did not play soccer yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You help your mother.</td>
<td>You don’t help your mother everyday.</td>
<td>You helped your mother yesterday.</td>
<td>You didn’t help your mother yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aki has a snowman.</td>
<td>Does Aki have a snowman?</td>
<td>Aki had a snowman in December.</td>
<td>Did she have a snowman in December?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aki and Ken enjoy skiing.</td>
<td>Do they enjoy skiing?</td>
<td>They enjoyed skiing last winter.</td>
<td>Did they enjoy skiing last winter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken goes to school everyday.</td>
<td>Does he go to school everyday?</td>
<td>Ken went to school yesterday.</td>
<td>Did he go to school yesterday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You write a letter to Aki.</td>
<td>Do you write a letter to Aki?</td>
<td>You wrote a letter to Aki.</td>
<td>Did you write a letter to Aki?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You write a letter to Aki.</td>
<td>Do you write a letter to Aki?</td>
<td>You wrote a letter to Aki.</td>
<td>Did you write a letter to Aki?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We study English everyday.</td>
<td>Do we study English everyday?</td>
<td>We studied English yesterday.</td>
<td>Did we study English yesterday?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(18) Review Sentence patterns (The Poorest, Sevens)  

**Example**
(19) Present perfect (Scrambled sentence activity)

Example
(20) Passive voice (scrambled sentence activity)
Things to prepare: Ten blank cards for each student

Directions

1) Write a subject and was/were on one card in green.  Ex.  Yumi’s cat was
2) Write a past particle on another card in red.        Ex.  chased
3) Write an agent “by ____” on a card in black.         Ex.   by Ken.
4) Write a location on a card in blue.                 Ex.   in the garden
5) Write a time on a card in purple.                  Ex.   yesterday.
6) Each student makes two sets of cards.
7) Shuffle the cards, deal out an equal number to each students.
8) The first player lays down a subject card in front of the others.
9) Each player lays down a card to make a sentence.  Anyone who has a subject
card can start the sentence.
10) Students can use any cards to form the sentences which allows them to make
humorous sentences.

Find the Second Half

Things to prepare: two long and narrow cards (Ex. 4cm x14cm) for each students.

Directions

1) Write the first part of the sentence with a relative pronoun on one card.
   Ex.  This is the house
2) Write the second part of the sentence on the other card.
   Ex.  that Jack built.
3) Collect all the cards and Shuffle them, and place the deck on the table.
4) Each student takes two cards from the deck and walks around the room to find the
   second half of their cards.  They cannot show their cards to each other.  They
   ask questions to find the matching card.

Example of Finding a Partner
(21) If clause (Finding a Partner)

Find the Partner
**Things to prepare:** Make two sets of cards.

**Directions**

1) Students walk around the classroom to find the partner who has a card that logically completes his clause.

   Ex. Card 1 = **if we make a hole in the bottom of a boat**
   Card 2 = **it sinks**

   Students cannot simply read what is written on their cards, but they must give their partners information by asking questions. For example, the student with card 1 might say, “Is there a boat in your picture?” or “Do you have a picture with a river in it?”

**Example of Completion cards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sushi is not only healthy</th>
<th>but also tasty.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aki does not know</td>
<td>whether Yumi is coming or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was so cold</td>
<td>that the river was frozen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The earth is the only planet,</td>
<td>that has air to breathe and water to drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A passenger pigeon is an American bird</td>
<td>that died more than eighty years ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are the people</td>
<td>who came from Tracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not understand</td>
<td>what you are saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a girl</td>
<td>whose name is Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you see the letter</td>
<td>which came this afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it good manners to hold your rice bowl</td>
<td>when you are eating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(22) Completion

**Things to prepare:** Completion card

Students make three sets of cards, 20 pair of cards for each team and one for the teacher.

**Directions**

1) The game is played with two teams, team A, and team B. Each team gets a set of cards. Each team places their cards in front of them, face up on the table. The teacher also has a set of the same cards.

2) The teacher reads a sentence card aloud. The players must find the card and the second half of the sentence, which are not read by the teacher. If one team is faster than the other, they can also take from the other team’s set of cards.
5) Then, the teacher gives the students the entire correct sentence. Students check for errors. If there is a mistake, students must put the cards back on the table. If the students have a correct sentence, they can keep the cards.

6) The team that collects the most cards wins the game.

**Examples of games without cards**

**Words game**

**Catch The Last**

Choose a category of words. For example, noun, verb, adjective, or adverb.
The first player (team) starts by saying a word that belongs to the selected category.
The second player (team) must use the last letter of the word by the previous player for the first letter of the new word. For example: tall—long—good

**Catch The Second**

The rule is the same as above. The second player must use the second letter of the word, for example: verb—enter—nod—order—read

**Catch The Sounds**

The first player starts a word that can be any parts of speech. The second player must use the last sound of the word, for example:

eye—I—ice—circus—sketch—cheese—zero—August

**Association game**

The first player says a word that comes to his mind, for example: apple.
The next player names something connected in their imagination with this object. For example: Newton.
The next player says something to connect with Newton. Students can continue to make these connections in their minds. This game can be played with sentences too.
For example: Newton watched the falling apples. — In autumn apples fall after a storm. — I made apple jam. — Jam is not a germ. — The name of the germ is Dirt—-. Mr. Dirt likes Dunking Doughnuts. — There is a big hole. — It is the black hole….
CHAPTER THREE
HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE SOUND

Breathing

First of all, I help my students recognize the difference between Japanese and English. Not only the sounds, but also the breathing method for speaking Japanese sounds and breathing methods are different from the ones used for speaking English. To pronounce English sounds, abdominal breathing is required, instead of the thoracic breathing, which is normally used by Japanese speakers. Compared to English speaking people, most Japanese breathe shallowly. In my first English class we start practicing abdominal breathing, which is beyond what most people expect to learn in English class. So if a little child were asked what he has learned in the first English class, he would answer like this. “I learned how to expand my tummy and how to pull in my tummy.”

Opening the mouth

After breathing, sounds come. Some sounds such as [ð, θ, æ, v, r] do not exist in Japanese. For most Japanese, [a, æ, ø] seem to be the same sounds, because there is only one [a] in Japanese. In my class, after practicing abdominal breathing, students learn how to open their mouths. I have tried many ways to help them open their mouths to pronounce [æ]. “Make a fist and bite it!” This is one of them. Boys can do this more easily than girls. It is hard for girls to open their mouths this way, for they have never done it before. When Japanese speakers speak, especially women, they do not open their mouth as wide as English speakers do, (women are not supposed to open their mouths as wide as men do). When I came to the USA for the first time, I was surprised that women laughed with wide-open mouths. I thought, “Women can laugh the same way men do! Indeed, men and women are equal in this country!” That was quite new and remarkable to me. In Japan only men can laugh wa-ha ‘ha with a wide open mouth.

Names and sounds

English letters have names and sounds, which is very difficult for Japanese students to understand. In Japanese, Hiragana and Katakana (Japanese phonetic alphabets) convey only sounds and a Kanji (a Chinese character, or pictograph) has
meaning and sounds. A Kanji is an ideogram (a picture or symbol used to represent a
ting or an idea), which looks like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, which is visual, not aural.
So most Japanese recognize letters visually not aurally. When they encounter English,
they have to accept a new idea that a letter can be recognized by aurally not as well as
visually.

Linking letters to the sounds is an especially difficult concept; some Japanese
students fail to get this idea and cannot understand English spelling methods. If a
student gets the idea at the beginning that English letters have only sounds and do not
have any meaning, it helps them to be aware of the difference.

Back to the letter A, I tell my students, A has a name [ei] and a sound [æ].
After they pronounce [æ] with a fist in their mouth, they practice how to pronounce
[ei], which is not easy either. The reason why it is not easy is that Japanese do not
like diphthongs. Whenever they encounter a diphthong, they tend to change it to a
long vowel. For instance, [ei] is changed to pronounce [ee]. In addition Japanese
do not notice for any difference between [ei] and [ee] because of Japanese notation.
For instance English is notated as EIGO with Hiragana, but people pronounce it [ee-go]
not [eigo].

In my class, I tell my students to make the Japanese fencing (Kendo) yelling
[ei] while making a movement of swinging down a bamboo sword. As it is a real
yelling sound, children love this movement and easily get the sound. Then I surprise
them by hitting them on the shoulder from behind. Of course they are surprised and
cry [a] which is not a Japanese word. It is just a cry of surprise. After that, they
learn there is one more [a] sound in English. Once they understand that English has
very active sounds, they can go forward to voiced consonants, which do not exist in
Japanese either.

Voiced and voiceless consonant

Using a piece of tissue paper is helpful to teach voiced and voiceless consonants.
If you have a piece of tissue paper in front of your mouth and pronounce voiceless
consonants such as [k, t, p, f, h, s, x] the paper will waver because of the air you use to
create the sounds. On the other hand, if you pronounce voiced consonants such as [d,
g, b, n, z, ӡ] the paper does not move. In my class, voiced consonants are colored
green and voiceless consonants are colored yellow. So the colors and a piece of paper
are the tools I use to distinguish the difference. As there is no voiceless consonant in
Japanese, a piece of paper and the colors help make my students aware of the
difference.
[θ] and [s]: Fricatives

Interdental sound [θ] takes time for my students to learn. I tell my students “Bite your tongue with your teeth.” Looking into the mirror, they try to make the sound [θ] by biting their tongues. Then they practice to find the difference between [θ] and [s].

To teach the difference between voiceless consonants and voiced consonants, I play a game called “Is it a mouse or mouth?” Several little stuffed mice are put on the table. When the teacher says a word including [s], the students hold their mice, and when she says a word including [θ], the students touch their mouths with their index fingers. When they are not sure which is which, they look around, and follow what the others are doing. So they do not need to feel any anxiety. After that, each student becomes a teacher, he or she pronounces the words written in cards, and the others continue the game.

[r] and [l]: Retroflex and Lateral

These two sounds are the most difficult sounds to find the difference for Japanese people to distinguish because there are no liquids sounds in Japanese. The Japanese [r] is similar to the English sound, but the tongue touches the hard palate when it is pronounced, and is not as slack as the English [l]. Actually in Japanese, there is only one sound that is neither [r] nor [l]. According to International Pronunciation Symbols, Dental Tap [ɾ] seems closer to the Japanese sound than the English [r].

How do I teach students to pronounce [r] and [l] in my class? Starting from with the back vowel [u] is my way. I teach this tense back vowel [u] first. Then tell my students to add to [u] before all the [r] sounds. When you want to say a rabbit, add [u] before it. [l] is the last and the most difficult sound for Japanese speakers. I tell them, “When something sticks to your front teeth, you try to take away with the tip of your tongue. Move your tongue like that and say [l]. Your tongue comes closer to your teeth compared to with [ɾ].” [l] is articulated at Alveolar ridge, while [ɾ] is articulated at the Hard Palate. My students try to move their tongues to the right position Alveolar ridge. But they have never used the Alveolar ridge to make the sound before. It takes time for them to make sure of the placement of the tongue.

To make [r] and [l] clear, I use cards. One is a picture of a crown, and the other is a picture of a clown. The students have their own cards and point to the cards when I pronounce the words, such as: loot and root, load and road, light and right, lock
and rock. Then one of the students reads the words and others point to the corresponding card.

[b] and [v]: Stop and Fricative

As the [b] sound exists in Japanese, my students only need to learn [v], which is not difficult. I tell them “Just touch your lower lip with your upper front teeth.” They can do this without any problem.

Consonant Blends: double consonants and triple consonants:

All Japanese words end with a vowel. This means all syllable structures consist of consonant+vowel. In some words, syllables consist of only vowels. On the contrary, almost all English words end with a consonant. That is the reason why many Japanese pronounce “Christmas” as [kurisumasu], “ice-cream” as [asuukuli:mu], and “spring” as [supulingu]. The problem is how to not put a vowel between consonants and after final consonants. For Japanese speakers, the English word “spring” has five syllables; they pronounce the word [su-pu-ri-n-gu] instead of [spriŋ]. To solve this problem, clapping their hands while they pronounce helps them to find the difference. At first they pronounce [su-pu-ri-n-gu] by clapping their hands. They notice that they clap their hands five times and realize there are five syllables in Japanese. Next, they learn the English pronunciation “spring” [spriŋ] by clapping their hands and are surprised there is only one syllable in spring.

In my opinion, learning Roma-ji (the Romanized Japanese syllabary: a systematic table of the Japanese) negatively affects English pronunciation. I call this an automatic converting system. Once children learn these Romanized Japanese phonetic symbols, they try to fit all the English sounds into this system. Of course there are some sounds that do not fit the Romanized Japanese system. But Japanese speakers manage to put the sound into the charts and do not notice the slight difference, for instance the difference between [æ] and [a]. Actually it is not a slight difference. It is HUGE. But once the automatic converting system was invented, which changed English sounds to Japanese sounds; students used this system and lost their ears for English.

According to this automatic converting system, many Japanese speak Japanese English that is hard for native English speakers to understand. One of my tasks is breaking this automatic converting system to let my students recognize real English sounds.
Rhythm, Intonation, and Accent

In The Four Skill ‘s class, Dr. Paul Le Vasseur gave our class lots of readings. Here is a quotation from one of them that speak to my beliefs concerning the teaching of pronunciation. A more realistic goal is ... understandable pronunciation with appropriate intonation and stress. (Scarcella 1993:156) I quite agree with this opinion because of Japanese pitch accent. For example, in Japanese, [ʰaʃi] means chopsticks, but [ʰaʃi] means a bridge. On the other hand, the length of a syllable is almost constant and there is no stress accent. That is the reason why many Japanese pronounce English flatly and monotonously. It is not easy to pronounce [a cup of tea] as one continuous stream of sounds. For many Japanese people, there are four different words to pronounce clearly.

In my class, the students recite poems while walking around as shown in the photo. 

This is one way I work on this ability to stream the sounds together in the rhythmic follow required by English. First the class repeats a poem after me line by line, and then we recite together. Students try to remember the poem with walking around. From the very beginning, I encourage my students to memorize short and simple rhymes and poems. In advanced class, we, my students and I, sing songs together, recite poems, and do readings of dramas.

Each language has its own beautiful peculiar musical sound that is a precious asset. I encourage my students to memorize not only English texts, but also Japanese ones. Every New Years, my classes have big tournaments where they
play a traditional Japanese card game based on one hundred well-known medieval poems of thirty-one syllables each. Anyone who can remember the poems wins the game. It is easy for the young to remember these one hundred short poems, which are all very graceful, beautiful poems compiled by Fujiwara-no Teika in 1235.

In my opinion, the second language cannot exceed the mother tongue. If one does not have an accurate, ample, and exquisite grasp of the mother tongue, how can one master a second language and love learning languages? I tell my students, “If you want to acquire English, polish up your Japanese, which should be very elegant and refined. The one who does not love his first language cannot love his second language either.”

The photo of a paper doll play “The Magic Broom” from “One more step”

CHAPTER FOUR
HOW TO MAKE GRAMMAR CLEAR AND FUN

1) Word order and Relative Pronouns

Word order is one of the tremendous differences between Japanese and other languages including English. Japanese is subject-object-verb language. This means the main verb of a sentence should be at the end of the sentence no matter how long the modifying clauses. When students learn a relative pronoun, they have a hard
time learning how to translate sentences with relative pronoun clauses. Here is an example from a school textbook.

*The earth is the only planet that has air to breathe and water to drink.*

In Japanese the word order of this sentence is as follows:

*breathe to air/and/ drink to water/has/ earth/ only planet/ is/**.

(*Since there is no article in Japanese, there is no [the] nor [a] in the line. *)

The main verb /is/ comes at the end of the sentence. In school, students learn to translate relative pronoun sentences from the end, because the main verb should come at the end in Japanese. They tend to say,

“English is a backward language. We have to translate sentences from the bottom.”

Classical Japanese has only a few relative pronouns. In “Genji·monogatari” (the Tale of Genji), there is a type of relative pronoun called an *apposition particle* /no/ as in the following sentence:

Shiroki (white) oogi (fan) –no (which) itou (very) kogashitaruwo (was burned incense)

However the *apposition particle* /no/ became old fashioned and went out of use. Its use was literary, not colloquial. Later only adjective clauses and adverb clauses could be used as modifiers or qualifiers.

As Japanese speakers do not have an understanding of relative pronouns, they find it difficult to translate. School textbooks and other grammar books explain how to translate the relative clause using an *antecedent*. At first students must find the antecedent of the relative clause. Then they translate the relative clause that is a modifier of the main clause. In the sentence,

*The earth is the only planet that has air to breathe and water to drink.*

/planet/ is the antecedent of the relative pronoun /that/. Students should start the Japanese from /the earth/, then /only planet/ comes with a modifying clause /that has air to breath and water to drink/. This modifying clause must come before the noun /planet/. So before the main verb /be/, all the words should be translated. The Japanese sentence would have a very long subject clause. In the example sentences below, the words in the boxes are the subjects of the two sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The earth</th>
<th>is the only planet that has air to breathe and water to drink.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>breathe to air/and/ drink to water/has/ earth/ only planet/ is/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally speaking, a long subject is not a good style in Japanese. So this type of “big head” sentence is called the “translated style” and is used mainly in translating Indo-European languages.

In my class I tell my student to translate the sentences from the head.
① Think about the sentence pattern and find the - S+V --the earth is a planet. -
   Chikyuu (the earth) wa (subjective participle) wakusei (a planet) des (is).
② Find the adjective clause starting with /that/ modifying the planet. Then
   think of the meaning of it.
   Wakusei (the planet) wa (subjective participle) kokyuusuru (breathe) tameno (to)
   kuuki (air) to (and) mizu (water) o (objective participle) motteiru (have)
③ Think about of the meaning of these two sentences, one is a main clause, and the
   other is a modifying clause.
   The earth is the only planet. (the main clause)
   The planet has air to breathe and water to drink (the modifying clause).
④ Translate the whole sentence in the school textbook way.
   / earth/air to breathe/and/ water to drink/has/ the only planet/ is/
Chikyuu (The earth) wa (subjective participle) kokyuusuru (breathe) tameno (to) kuuki
   (air) to (and) nomu (drink) tameno (to) mizu (water) o (objective participle) miotteiru
   (have) wakusei (the planet) des (is).
Although it seems like it would take extra time to translate this way, it does not
actually take much longer. My students can get the meaning of long complex
sentences without much difficulty after practicing this way.

In my class there are several relative pronoun games. One is “Guess
Who?” This is popular in the USA. On the game board there twenty pictures
of people with different appearances. Students will guess one of them using a relative
pronoun clause. For example,
“Do you have the men who have blue eyes?” or “Are there any girls who are wearing
hats?”

The other is called “Three Hints”. This is a card game for little children,
which has twelve kinds of animals. Each animal pictured four different ways. For
example: one penguin with a yellow cap wearing a blue T-shirt is on a swing, another
wearing a green T-shirt is on skates. In the game, a student makes sentences
describing the pictures, and the other students take the picture described. For
example,“Please take the picture of the penguin which is wearing a green T-shirt and
enjoying skating.” “The penguin which is wearing blues shoes is singing.” In games
students do not need to translate the sentence into Japanese.

Picture books and post cards can be used to work on description with relative
clauses too. Students choose one of the post cards and describe the scenery using
relative clauses.
2) Tense aspect: Present Perfect Tense

I have a pet fish. (Petto no sakana o katteiru.)
I have had a pet fish. (Petto no sakana o katteitakoto ga aru.)
I had a pet fish. (Petto no sakana o katteita.)
I had had a pet fish. (Petto no sakana o katteitakoto ga atta.)

It is possible to translate these sentences literally but the translation does not capture the differences precisely. In Japanese, a present tense can be used as future, a past tense can be used as present. Especially when people use an honorific expression, or a polite language, a past tense is used very frequently as present or even as future because, speaking in a round-about way expresses courtesy.

There are some dialects which use a past tense for polite expression. When I moved to Hokkaido, I misunderstood what a shop clerk said because of this past tense dialect.

“Was it good?” She asked.
“Well I am not sure, for I have not drunk this tea yet, though it seems good.” I answered.

Now I know that what the shop clerk meant was “Do you think this tea is good enough for you to buy?” and I should have just said “Yes” even though I did not know the taste of that tea.

Here is another example. Even though fifteen years have passed since I moved to this small town, I cannot say, “It was a good evening.” when I meet the people who were born here and will probably never leave this area till the end of their days. Of course this “It was a good evening.” is a polite way of saying “Good evening.”

Back to the main subject of, how students can understand a past perfect tense. To understand this tense aspect, it is important to find a real story. For instance, if someone has had a pet fish, we will talk about it.

Yumi got a gold fish at a shrine festival in August. She named it Peke and took care of it for three months. But unfortunately a neighbor’s cat killed it. Then my students can learn a perfect tense.

Yumi had a pet fish. She named it Peke. She loved it very much and Peke liked her too. But unfortunately, a cat killed Peke. The cat of the next door ate it. Since you know Peke and Yumi, you would say, “Yumi had had her dear fish for three months when it was killed by the next door’s cat.” The point is how the students find the link with the action that occurred before another past action.
After introducing the concept of the Present Perfect Tense, the students practice it with many ways, for instance, reading a poem. Here is an example

### Reading a poem

**Who has seen the wind?**

*By Christina Rossetti*

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing through
Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.

① Ask the question: “Have you ever seen the wind?”
At first the students say no. But gradually they think of the meaning of the question. One of them begins to answer “yes” and adds some words such as snow, or leaves. Then the others understand the meaning of the question and find their answers. The teacher and students write down the answers on their sheet of papers. Example of their answers (snow, leaves, a willow tree, a larch tree, falling cherry blossom flowers, cosmoses, flags, hair waving, moving clouds, a candle light, etc.)

② Hand out the poem and read it aloud to students.

③ Students read the poem aloud and think about the meaning.

④ Encourage students to memorize the poem. Students read the poem aloud to each other line-by-line.

⑤ Then students write their own poems in Japanese. Then they translate them into English. (The following examples were written by Sayaka Mutoo, Kei Ohomi, Rikako Akase, Takahiro Suzuki, Yoshitaka Sone, and Koohei Sorai)

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you
But when white and pink cosmoses are whispering each other
The wind is passing by
But when cherry blossoms shower on us
The wind joins dancing with pale pink petals

But when the snow blows up in the sky
The wind is sweeping

But when the kite is flying away
The wind is blowing

But when the balloon is sailing over the roof
The wind is passing by

But when the swing sways gently
The wind is breezing

But when the falling leaves are flying up into the sky
The wind is rising

But when the clouds travel over the sky
The wind is coming

But when the girl’s long hair sway
The wind is blowing

But when the flag is wavering
The wind is coming

But when the golden needles of the larch tree scatter
The wind is coming down from the mountains

But when the candle light is going out in front of the tomb stone
The wind is weeping

⑥ Students read their poems aloud to each other.
⑦ Students make sentences using the present perfect tense.

Examples of their sentences
I have heard the wind when the wind-bell is ringing.
I have heard the wind when the wind flames are rattling in the typhoon.
I have heard the wind when the dried fallen leaves on the ground are rustling.
I have felt the wind when my hat is blown off suddenly.
I have felt the wind when I am skiing down the hill.
I have felt the chilly wind when I am running early in the morning.
I have felt the wind when I am riding a bicycle.

3) Present Progressive form: My dog teaches

Present Progressive Form

Usually my dog likes to be with me during the classes. She helps me teaching present progressive form. Following my order, she sits, walks, lies down, and shakes hands. The students watch her and make sentences such as:

Choco (the name of my dog) is sitting.
She is standing now.
She is waiting, and she is shaking hands with Tomi.

After they learn the form of present progressive, one of them shows a gesture and others guess what he is doing. For instance, one rides a horse, the other flies in the sky, and another swims in the sea. They like this gesture game.

The basic form of Present Progressive is understandable for junior high school students. But in high school, this form has many transformations. It can be future, habitual, and repeated movement. They also learn that there are some stative verbs that cannot be used for progressive.

There is no accurate progressive form in Japanese. There is not a big difference between simple present and present progressive. In Japanese you can say, as follows.

(*The sentences written in Italic on the left side explain how the Japanese say in Japanese. The sentences are grammatically wrong.*)

*Peter is teaching English.* (This means Peter teaches English.)
*Mary is having a lot of money.* (This means Mary has a lot of money.)
*Yumi is coming over.* (This means Yumi has come over to visit.)
*“Are you reading a newspaper?”* (This means “Have you subscribed to a newspaper?”)

Seeing a fox run over by a car, *“The fox is dying.”* (This means the fox is dead.)
*Are you marrying?* (This means, are you married?)

Japanese progressive form is just a kind of colloquial style of simple present. Otherwise, it can be present perfect tense, or passive voice in English. On the other
hand, simple present, progressive present, and present perfect are different in English. So students must learn the concept of English progressive form.

**4) Conditionals:** What is the difference between “I could have danced all night.” and “Let’s dance all night.” or “I can dance all night.”

In the movie “My fair lady” the heroine Eliza sang this “I could have danced all night” with delight. After very intensive special training, she could pronounce English words correctly at last. She was so glad that she thought she could have danced all night if only he (Professor Higgins, her English tutor) had begun to dance with her. For English speaking people, the meaning of “I could have danced all night.” is clear. But in Japanese subtitles, it was translated “Odoriakasou” which means, “Let’s dance all night”. Because of a limit of space, it is hard to translate the whole sentence word for word, nevertheless I would say that the Japanese subtitles are not suitable. I show the movie to the class and ask my students the meaning of this “I could have danced all night.” They answer in the same way.

“It is a past perfect tense. She was so glad that she could have danced all night.”

I have never met any student, who said,

“It is a conditional sentence. She wished to dance all night but actually she did not dance all night.”

There are three reasons why my students could not come up with a conditional sentence. First, they need Japanese subtitles to understand the movie. It says, “Let’s dance all night”. They watch the same scene three to five times to answer my question, but they cannot listen to the whole song. Usually I hide the Japanese subtitles after the first time. But still the subtitles are a hindrance for them to think.

Secondly, the Japanese language does not have a strict difference between real conditionals and unreal conditionals.

**Conditions in English:** If I had wings I could fly to you.

**Conditions in Japanese way:** *If I have wings I can fly to you.*

**Conditions in English:** If it is fine tomorrow, we will be able to go on a picnic.

**Conditions in Japanese way:** *If it is fine tomorrow, we can go on a picnic.*

Here are some examples of common mistakes

(A) *If you get a ticket to the moon, what will you do?* (Though it is unreal, students used present tense.

(B) *If I am rich, I can travel all over the world.* (This is unreal too.)

(C) *If you left ten minutes earlier, you can catch the train.* (This is one of the most difficult tense aspects for them. They have to use past perfect in If clause, and past tense for the main clause, but they do not.)
Finally, the form in the movie is not a standard that they can understand. It should be “If professor Higgins had begun to dance with me, I could have danced all night.”

They learn unreal conditionals in a grammar textbook such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>should</th>
<th>have+ past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If+Subject₁+ had+ past participle + Subjec₂</td>
<td>would</td>
<td>past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>could</td>
<td>might</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you had arrived a minute earlier, you could have seen her.

The song is a kind of applied question to them. It is not easy for them but they enjoy this kind of question. They think they can put the grammar to practical use.

To help my students understand unreal conditionals, I use several methods. Here is an example of one.

**Action! story telling with picture cards, a play, a puppet show, a doll show, a paper doll play etc.**

1. Students read the story “My Most Favorite teacher” silently. It is a story of a little girl who was born with a cleft palate. She hated school because no one liked her. But in the second grade she met a teacher who loved her. During the hearing test, the teacher whispered to her ear “I wish you were my little girl.” They can use dictionaries to understand the story.

2. Students make pairs and plan the action of the play.

3. The point is how to express the meaning of the last sentence, “I wish you were my little girl.” Because this sentence changed the little girl completely.

   To perform their play, they can use anything in my house not only what is in the classroom. They can also bring anything they need from their house too. They have enough time to prepare. Some draw pictures, others write a script, and some others paint the face of dolls, and someone makes the stage setting.

4. A pair of students perform their play and others watch it. If there are eight students in the class, there are four shows.

5. After watching all the shows, students discuss which show expresses the feeling of the last sentence well.
They talk about the unreal conditionals and make several sentences with unreal conditionals. They see the difference between real conditionals and unreal conditionals.

An Example of a play “The Restaurant named WHITE HORSE” from a Chinese short funny story
5) Passive voice: Read a Japanese newspaper and find the passive voice

Making a passive voice sentence in Japanese is easy. You just add a passive auxiliary verb, which is a kind of suffix [rare] at the end of the verb.

Ex. The poor gold fish was eaten by that cat.  
\[ \text{tabe(eat)} \cdot \text{rare(passive voice auxiliary)} \cdot \text{ta(past tense auxiliary)} \]
That cat ate the poor gold fish.

But it is not easy to recognize the passive voice in Japanese. Before English and other European languages came to Japan after 1868, there were only a few inanimate subjects in Japanese sentences. Japanese say, “That house burnt.” but do not say “That house was burnt.” The sentence “That house was destroyed by fire.” is not a common usage.

Furthermore, Japanese do not use passive voice as often as English speakers do. I remember very well how I was shocked to learn the sentence, “I was born.” Thinking it was very candid expression, I said to myself,
“Well, it is true that my parents married, they made love, and they made me. But you do not need to explain that so openly. What an indecent language this English is!” In Japanese, the verb /umareru/ means / to be born/, but unlike the English verb, it is active, not passive. In Japan, flowers bloom, eggs hatch, and people /umareru/.

There are some other passive sentences that are not used in Japanese such as: be pleased with, be surprised at, and be interested in. When I was in junior high school I thought, “Of course, there is a reason to be pleased or to be surprised. Something or someone makes me surprised or pleased. It is true and reasonable. English likes to be logical.”

Many students need time to understand the sentence, “English is spoken in Canada” as a consequence of the Japanese voice concept. In Japanese, it is said, “*In Canada, English language speak.”

How do I help my students realize what passive voice is? I bring in a Japanese newspaper and tell them to find passive voice sentences. They soon find examples such as, was killed, were stolen, were destroyed, was run over, was kidnapped, was arrested, and so on. In Japanese, a passive auxiliary verb which is a kind of suffix, has three other meanings: what is potential, voluntarily or honorific. People discern the meaning from context. After the students find passive voice sentences, I ask them what have in common. After discussing this for a while, they find that all passive voice sentences are annoying and troublesome. They say to each other, “The important information is that it’s a little girl who was kidnapped” “We do not know who did such a cruel act, but we do hope he will be caught and the girl will be found safely.”

Then I ask them the difference between “Yumi’s poor goldfish was eaten by that cat” and “That cat ate the goldfish.” Now they think they feel sorry for the eaten goldfish but they do not like that cat. It was a tragedy from the view of the goldfish, but on the other hand, it was a lucky chance for the cat getting his lunch.

Next, I show them English passive sentences which are not expressed with the passive voice in Japanese.

Ex. English is spoken in Australia.
The school gate is opened at eight in the morning.
A large number of people are killed in traffic accidents in the Tokachi area.
The house was destroyed by fire.
I am interested in physics.

After this practice and explanation they understand what English passive voice is. Then they enjoy the game named “Making Nonsense Sentence of Passive Voice”.
There they practice the pattern of passive voice. Now they know how to use passive voice in English. Hopefully they find that Japanese and English use different ways of expression to say the same feeling.

6) **Articles: Islamabad is our life buoy**

A version of the Islamabad activity (originally developed by Earl Stivick) that Professor Santos taught us in his class became my students’ life buoy in the Article Ocean. Since there are no articles in Japanese, “a” and “the” cause a headache to my students and me. English grammar books explain that the article “a” is used for new information, and “the” is used for already given information. Then my students ask: “If articles determine whether the information is new or old, why do only singular countable nouns have a determiner? English must have another determiners for plurals and uncountable nouns.”

What is more, the concept of the difference between countable nouns and uncountable nouns is hard to understand for Japanese students. To begin with Japanese does not have the plural form. I know only a few plural suffixes (tachi, ra, domo) and plural forms: children [kodomotachi] and people [hitobito]. But even in this case, I can say this in a singular form too.

Plural form: children [kodomotachi]—sanninnno kodomotachi—three children

\[
\text{san( three) nin( counter suffix for person) no ( case particle) kodomo (child) tachi( suffix for person and pronoun)}
\]

Singular form: child [kodomo]—sanninnno kodomo—three child (= children)

\[
\text{san( three) nin( counter suffix for person) no ( case particle) kodomo (child)}
\]

In Japanese, when you see numbers in front of or behind the noun, it means plural. You don’t need any other information. Neither verbs nor nouns change the form. So you can guess how hard it is for Japanese students to understand articles.

Since I learned Islamabad, I stopped explaining in word and started playing the game with rods. Especially in high school students’ classes, we enjoy telling stories using the rods. Students use the rods to represent the objects, places, action, and characters (human and otherwise) in the story. Once they understand how to use the rods and know the game, they can try to tell a story they have read without looking at the book.

![The photo of a story telling using rods “A Strange Robbery” from” American English Today](attachment:image.jpg)
According to Dr. Ikegaya, using Procedure Memory (Non Statement Memory) is very effective in order to keep a learned memory for long time.

*This procedure memory has a very important function when you behave casually, such as walking, using chopsticks, typing, or dribble shooting.*

(Ikegaya Yuuji 2001:65)

Just like once you learn how to ride a bicycle you will never forget how even if you do not ride on for ten years. This is because of your procedure memory. When students learn articles through *Islamabad*, it can be a physical exercise like riding a bike. I am quite sure Professor Santos's grammar games and presumably my games in my class let the students use their procedure memories because of the physical exercise involved. When students get enthusiastic over games, they will remember what they have learned. So to make the class fun is very effective for learning.

7) Interference

Professor Santos gave me very practical instruction. One concept that was quite new to me was the idea of interference. *Interference largely occurs when items presented together are both unfamiliar, or when one is unfamiliar and the other poorly established.* (Nation 2000:9)

This is quite true. Students often say:
“Are you go to school?”
“Is he can play the piano?”
“Were they had classes?”
“Do you going to Obihiro today?”
“Did you are slept last night?”
“Are you who?”

When they write sentences, they do not make the above mentioned mistakes, because they know grammar rules. But in speaking, they cannot use all of them in a second. They often skip some rules. According to Paul Nation, *Learners need to know about interference, how to avoid it, and what to do when it occurs.* (Nation 2000:9) This is what my students need. I encourage them to find grammatical errors by themselves. Before SIT, I had corrected their mistakes directly. But now students correct each other’s mistakes. Student’s self-correction is much more effective than the teacher’s correction. They try to avoid making the same mistake again.

Actually as written about in “Learning Vocabulary in Lexical Sets” page nine, *these two items should be introduced at least several days apart.* (Nation 2000:9) I did introduce two related items at least several days apart and worked on one new item before the other new item was introduced. Yet, interference happened. Judging from my experience, students need time for digestion. Knowing a new piece of language and using it are different stages. When student A corrects the mistake of student B, B will say, “Oh, yes, I know that!” because she really understands the grammar rule, but she cannot use it in her speaking. My card games can help their digestion. Repeating activities helps understanding and making the knowledge stick in their minds.

CHAPTER FIVE
WHY I TEACH ENGLISH

STUDENTS ATTITUDES

In Japan, being good students means being silent and obedient. Before coming to my English class, my students felt learning in school was nothing but a
shower. When they got wet during the rain, they just endured the uncomfortable and damp situation until they dried all out. After that they would try to forget that uncomfortable feeling. They did not think of using a raincoat or an umbrella. So what they need is to change their idea of what it means to learn. I want to show them how to prepare for the rain, how to protect themselves from damp conditions. This is hard to do.

When the junior high school students first came to my English class, they spoke out only a little bit louder than mosquitoes. Now their voices have become louder like kittens mewing for their mothers. I want to change them into confident dogs calling to their masters when they locate the game they are both seeking.

Japanese people regard hesitation and modesty as virtues. Here is an example. When you go to a funeral, you should not speak clearly and should not finish the words. If you want to say “Please accepts my sincere condolence.” in Japanese, you have to say, “Ple..., acep... my condo...” If you pronounce all the syllables clearly, you are considered improper and heartless. Japanese actually say “At the time, very... grief...” which means, “At this time I am in deep grief over Mr. Z's passing away. Please accept my sincere condolences.”

According to this Japanese cultural norm, students often do not finish their sentences. So first they have to learn to finish their Japanese sentences when they speak to me. Then they learn not to skip the subject. In the beginning it is hard for them to distinguish the subject. I often ask them “Who did it?” to confirm the subject. They need quite a long time to realize English sentences need subjects except in the case of imperatives, and that they have to complete sentences. Speaking clearly at a suitable volume is a difficult task for the students that come to my class after becoming junior high school students. Even though their voices are not loud enough for me to hear, they do not like to be asked confirmation questions.

**STUDENT’S GOAL**

The most important goal for my students is to enter a university. Even if they can explain their thoughts in English, that skill cannot be a great assistance in passing university entrance exams. The interviews they have are in Japanese, not in English. Test problems are written in Japanese, many answers should be written in Japanese. I wish I could speak English at ever opportunity in my class, but I have no choice. I cannot change the whole school system of Japan.

They hope to go to universities so they can get a good job and gain status. They wish to speak English better. But most of them will not have many chances to
speak in English. Once a year Memoro has guests from its sister city Tracy, California, so people in the town have a chance to speak English, if they are a host family or go to parties. But most of my students will forget English sooner or later, because they will not hear English for many years. They will not read any English after graduation. In this small town, if a person can understand very basic English like “Do you like Sukiyaki?” others consider him to be good at English. If he goes shopping and buys something for a souvenir when he goes abroad on a package tour he can boast about his English, “I spoke English in America.” As a matter of fact, many students do not wish to study hard to acquire English conversation skills. Only a few of them, who have clear intentions to acquire English, do not mind taking time to improve their English conversation skills.

THE REAL CONDITIONS OF TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

I have taught English pronunciation to all my students for fifteen years. All of my students can pronounce quite well in the beginner class, but many lose their good pronunciation during their school years. Regrettably, they cannot retain their good English pronunciation. In school they are snickered at when they read a textbook aloud, because their pronunciation is different from others.

Here is an exceptional example. Mikako came to my class when she was seven. She was my student for more than twelve years. She got the first prize twice in Memuro’s speech contest, and was chosen to be one of the town members to visit Tracy California. When she entered a prestigious high school she was not chosen as a representative of the school in the annual English contest though she was the best in the second year high school class. So she found out about one of the biggest contests by herself through the Internet, went to Tokyo alone to take part in the contest, won the prize, and was chosen as one of the representatives of Japan to go to the USA. Only ten students were chosen from all over Japan. After she came back from the USA, she did an excellent presentation in the Memuro town hall in front of a large audience, but no teacher in her high school commented on any of her accomplishments, nor applauded her even after her article with her picture was in the local newspaper. Now she is one of the best students in a prestigious national university and enjoys her college life. Even the president knows her well because of her excellent English and French.

Mikako is an exception. I cannot encourage all my students to be a Mikako. It is hard for them. In Japanese society, adaptability and cooperation are norms.
People are supposed to be homogenous except if you are a genius. To be a Mikako requires very strong self-realization. She has the confidence to be independent from other students and the school system. She has enough strong beliefs not to be discouraged by being different from others. To be isolated from other classmates is very hard. Only a few can stand on their own feet. Only a few are as strong as a Mikako and have the will power and ability of a Mikako.

There are also other reasons why my students lose their good pronunciation inevitably. One of the reasons some students quit taking my class is the pronunciation practice we do. Accurate English pronunciation is not a priority for them. Their mothers say, “We are Japanese. Why should my boy speak English so accurately? What he needs is to get a good score in school and to be able to enter a university. Why would a teacher train students in pronunciation, but not teach the school textbooks or school grammar? Instead of teaching, they play games, sing songs, and read childish picture books. It is just a waste of time and money.”

Other students lose their desire to practice English pronunciation after they enter junior high school. Since they have to study hard to pass high school as well as university entrance exams, they prefer to learn how to solve the test questions. Once they lose their interest, it is no use teaching the sounds of English.

Additional common factor affecting their English pronunciation is their limited Japanese language understanding. They do not pay attention to the Japanese language or the world news. They live happily in their small cozy protected world and do not climb out into the world outside.

I want to break into their world, to show them a bird’s eye view of their own world. Acquiring a second language can break open their world and show them this bird’s eye view. Having another language enables them to distinguish what their first language and first culture are.

WHAT IS A SKIN COLOR?

“Where is the skin colored pencil?” Whenever a new class starts painting picture cards, students ask this question. In return I ask, “What color are the skin colored people?” and I show a poster of faces on the wall. Seeing many faces with various skin colors, students are puzzled. I know very well what they are murmuring under their breath. “But there is a skin color pencil in a colored pencil box. Why won’t Tomi give it to me?” They are used to calling the pale orange one the skin color pencil, since it is so called in their world, at home, and in school.

Japan is a monocultural country dominated by Japanese. Since Korean
people look the same as Japanese, and Ainu people, who were indigenous in the Hokkaido and Tohoku area, have almost lost their original feature because of intermarriage with Japanese, almost all people living in Japan have a similar yellowish pale orange skin.

“Look! How many skin colors are there in the poster?” I ask them. They look up the poster on the wall, begin to count and realize there are eighteen, for there are eighteen different faces. In this small monocultural town, my students start looking at another world from the simple naming of the skin colored pencil.

**TO BE DIFFERENT**

My students are annoyed when I ask them to call me Tomi, not Teacher Yukimune. They never call grown-ups by their first names. Generally it is very rude. Even children call each other by their family names. I tell them not to bow, not to say, “I thank you very much Teacher.” but just to say, ”See you!” When the first class is over, they think this teacher is very strange and different from any other teachers they have ever met. They do not understand they are taking the first step towards seeing another world.

To be strange and different from others is not recommended in this monocultural, monolingual country. The skin color thinking I spoke of above is symbolic Japanese simplistic short cut thinking. To be different means to be isolated in this homogeneous society.

The feeling of being different from others has been with me since I was in kindergarten. My mother told me she was embarrassed that I suddenly burst into tears when I saw a cage of animals in the zoo, while all the other children were enjoying kindergarten picnic. Now I can guess how I felt. I was so sad for the animals that would have to be in cages for a long time, maybe throughout their whole lives. But at that time I had no words to explain my feeling and just cried tears.

When I was a public school teacher, I believed that I could understand the feelings of students who could not join with the majority because I was one of them. I stayed away from teachers and away from other students in my school days.

When I became a teacher, I tried to talk with every student face to face. I did my best to make my class cozy and fun. I went to students’ homes often to convince them to come to school. There were many students who refused to come to school at that time.

Here is an example. Student A refused to go to school when he was eight years old and in the second grade. I heard that, his father was so furious that he tied his
son to a chair in the classroom of the elementary school. He became a member of my homeroom class in the third grade of junior high school, but he seldom came to school. I asked my homeroom class students and got the feeling that A stayed home on his Futon (Japanese bed), till late in the afternoon. As he liked baseball, he played catch with little children after school time.

“With little children?” I repeated.

“Who likes to play with A? Only little kids play with him.” one of my homeroom students answered.

Preparing my class for A’s coming back to school, I promised my class that if A could came to school, they would have a baseball game instead of the usual homeroom class. Of course they liked my plan and were waiting for A’s return.

I went to his house late in the morning. His mother did not like having the teacher’s visit and told me A would not see anyone. I talked with her for more than an hour. Finally she understood that I would not leave until I saw him. Unwillingly she permitted me to enter his room. Covered with dark colored curtains his room was gloomy. Nobody seemed to be in the room. There was a Futon bed. He could be underneath the comforter. I sat against the wall and said nothing. After sitting for twenty minutes or so, I looked around the room, and found a glove with a ball. I held the glove for a while then began to roll the ball against the wall. Fifteen minutes later, the Futon moved a little bit. I kept on rolling the ball. Little by little something was coming from under from the comforter. A black head emerged. I said to myself.

“This is fun.”

Finally a face appeared. A sat on the Futon and started watching me playing catch by myself. Then a voice came out of his mouth.

“Very bad” It was the first time that I heard his voice.

“Is that so? I don’t know how to play catch. Will you show me how?” Sitting on the Futon, A showed me how to use the glove and how to play catch. His words were choppy and incomplete. We played catch for a long time. Then A got out of the Futon, stood up, and threw the ball with full strength. I could not catch his ball well. His ball dropped from my gloved hand many times.

“Very bad” he said again looking at me.

“You are a great pitcher, aren’t you? Well, we have a baseball game this afternoon and B (the captain of our class team) needs a good pitcher urgently. Could you be a pitcher for our class?”

A said nothing but the ball he was throwing gained speed.

“You know, we have doughnuts for school lunch today. We do not have any lessons
this afternoon. We have practice games. I am hungry. I love doughnuts. Do you like them too?”

A held his glove and seemed to be searching for his school uniform.

“Well if you come with me, you do not need a school-bag. Bring your glove. That is all you need today.”

He began to change his clothes very reluctantly. Wearing the school uniform, A said “Toilet!” bluntly and then disappeared. After few minutes he came back and went down to the entrance. Before he put on his shoes, he said “Toilet” under his breath, and went back to the bathroom. After a while he came back and began to tie his shoelaces. Before finishing tying his shoes, he grumbled “Toilet” and went back again. When he came back he looked like he had made up his mind. Wearing his shoes, holding his glove to his chest, he went out of his house in broad daylight with a resolute step. From that day on he came to school occasionally.

To have isolated students, who remained aloof from any groups, and to have school refusal students in my homeroom were my own choice. My beliefs urged me to be a supporter of strays. I was singing a rooter’s song for them in my schoolteacher days.

EVERY STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE THE JOY OF UNDERSTANDING

This “Every student should have the joy of understanding.” was a public junior high school ideal. Since all people are created equal, all students have an equal right to learn and should have the joy of understanding and get 100 points. That is what I learned in a pedagogy class at my university. I tried to live up to this during my public school teacher days. After class, I taught Japanese, English and math to my homeroom class students believing in their abilities. Bit by bit, I came up against the wall. All people should have an equal right to learn but all people were not created equal in terms of academic potential. Some were quick to understand, but others were not. There is a proverb: A word to the wise is enough. But as a matter of fact, I had seen many students who needed a hundred words to understand only one small thing. At first, I blamed myself: I was too unskilled to deliver the ideal education. I thought there must be a way that I had yet to find.

I needed time to understand that the Japanese educational community’s concept that “all students should be equal” is wrong. The ideal and the reality are totally different. According to a virtual structure, all students are classified by their marks. And all students have an equal opportunity to get good marks. The ones who get the highest marks can go to prestigious high schools and universities. There
is a strict hierarchy among all students. Some of those who notice their lower positions in this huge triangle give up climbing the hard stairs and lose interest in learning. They come to realize their limits sooner or later.

I cannot forget student S who came to my Japanese class when he was in the third grade of junior high school. In the first Japanese class all students wrote a composition except him. He handed me a blank sheet of paper. After the class, I asked him why he did not write anything.

“I have never written a composition, and no teacher scolded me about that.” was his answer. His test score did show me that he got the lowest mark in the third grade, but this could not be the reason he did not write anything.

“If you do not like writing, you do not need to write an essay today. You will write one some day. Let’s learn how to write an essay together. At first you just talk about yourself. Tell me about yourself.”

I started teaching him after class every day. Soon he gave me his first essay. It started like this: “I am the biggest fool of the school.” I was shocked. Who had branded him that? Teachers! It is teachers who declare that all students are equal. It is teachers who claim that all students should have the same opportunity to learn. On the contrary, teachers sorted out the bad from the good. Though S was fourteen at that time, he could not subtract 50 from 100. How could he go shopping? Since finding this out, I carried many coins and bills to teach him how to count change. Finally he would be able to get a job after graduating. Actually I went to a factory with him and explained his abilities and his personality to the person in charge.

S taught me a self-contradiction of teachers. They had overt opinions and real intentions. I was ashamed to be one of them. S taught me that a teacher should find each student’s range of abilities and let him achieve to his full potential. S and I set up these goals: to be able to buy train tickets and any other necessities of life, to be able to do elementary arithmetic, to be able to understand newspapers, to be able to write post cards.

The Japanese educational system forces all students to have the same goal, and sorts them according to their abilities to reach the highest points. This is not fair because of the diversity of students. They have all sorts of abilities and individual differences. Students should be able to have their own goals that well enable them to attain their educational aims. Students should have equal opportunities to learning. But it does not mean they have equal academic potential.
HOMOGENIZED INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETY

In 1985, Dr. Shanta Varde, one of my Indian friends visited my high school, watched classes, and was impressed with the students’ homogeneity, which was a result of the Japanese high school hierarchy. As a matter of fact, the students of this school wanted to go to a more popular school, but could not enter any full time high schools because of their low marks. They had to come to this nighttime high school, being the lowest part of the triangle, whether they liked it or not. They would probably become factory workers and support this industrialized country from the base of the huge social triangle. She told me she had never met such well educated, docile, would—be blue-collar workers.

As she has seen the world, her words can be taken to be objective and true. A highly educated homogeneous labor force is essential to an industrial country. Lucky for the Japanese economy, this country can get diligent, placid, non-assertive, and non self-realized workers as a result of the vertical social structure. The public school system continuously produces them for the society.

In this vertical society, to be one of the majorities ensures a secure life. The students will be given lifetime employment, and live mediocre but secure lives. In Japan the percentage of people who have changed their jobs is quite low. On the other side, to be one of the minorities means, not living a secure life: this can be a hardship of Japanese life.

*                 *                   *

Coming back to my English class, students want to go to universities in order to get a good job. They wish to climb up higher in the triangle the same as the students did in my night high school. Compared to the night school students, my current English students are lucky to have supportive, good families, and will most likely be accepted into popular high schools due to their good marks. To tell the truth I want them to stand on their own two feet like Mikako and some others. That is why I am with them. I know it is not easy for them. But at least I want to let them be aware there are other ways to live life, there are other ways to view their own world, and there are other worlds worth seeing and knowing.

TO BE A LEARNER

What is good teaching? It is to be forgotten. Once a student retains what she has learned and keeps using it practically in daily life, she will forget she once had to
learn it and begin to think it is her own idea because she can use it effortless. This is my ideal goal. I want to be a well-walked path that my students go forward on and make into a wide road some day. I am a learner and a seeker after truth who goes on walking ahead of my students hoping they will catch up with me some day.

While I was a public schoolteacher, furtive bullying occurred frequently, though teachers remained unaware of this going on. By accident I caught sight of this bullying and went too far into its dark depths with some students. Both the bully and the victim of bullying had unpleasant memories of the dark past. Occasionally their daily lives were not fulfilled with familial love. They needed some one who would accept them without any conditions. Many grown-ups including teachers had forgotten their childhood feelings and became thick-skinned, and blinded. I do not think that the young are innocent angels. They can be devils sometimes because of their immaturity. They make many mistakes as part of growing up. So what guardians should do is to wait till they find their mistakes themselves and correct them. Unfortunately many grown-ups have lost the imagination and freedom of thought that is a part of a child process. Their withered sensitivity cannot touch the young's subtle feelings. I could not be a guardian for all my troubled students, but I tried to keep them company and to share their pent-up grievance, and the bitter grief, which were too heavy for them to carry. They really needed some one standing by them even though they were too shy or cynical to ask.

A word can be a drill bit or blessed rain without intending to do either. I wished for my students to notice the pain or the harm they sometimes caused. They had strong feeling when they were hurt but did not realize that they could hurt others with their words too. If they do not realize that, a bullied student might be a bully someday. In the most impressionable stage of their lives, I wanted them to have an understanding of the pain of harming others. I wanted to show them it is not good to force values on others precisely for the reason that they live in a society where people have a homogeneous sense of values. I wanted my students to feel the mental pain of domination that people are easily apt to forget. I wanted them to put themselves into others’ shoes.

**CONCLUSION**

As mentioned before, I want my students to be able to use English as a communication tool, and I want to show them other worlds through English. To make learning English easier, I have made my class fun. Card games came about as part of the process for helping my students to understand grammar rules. Without any guide,
I had to feel our way through the experiments.

This IPP reflects this process of trial and error. In it, I narrate what I have done in my English class for the last fifteen years and my previous years a public school teacher.

Having done everything that come to my mind during these years, I thought if there was another way that I had not tried yet, I had to find it. That is why I came to the School for International Training. At SIT, I have learned many skills and a thread of thought. Now I see I have a long way to go. I will keep refining my four skills and keep on brushing up my English so as to be a forerunner of my students.

I wish all the students that I have ever met to be good learners and to gain real knowledge of living cooperatively with people all over the world even those whom they have never met. Learning English can be a tool that enables them to communicate with different worlds. English can be a key which opens students’ eyes to the world.

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