

ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
of  
WESTERN HARIMA



NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS!

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Welcome everyone to the August edition of the Western Harima English Teacher's Newsletter. It has been an unusually hot summer this year; I hope you all have managed to stay cool. Many new ALTs have arrived at their schools now, and are beginning to settle into their surroundings. It is a very exciting time for new ALTs, meeting lots of new people and having many exciting experiences. At times it can also

feel challenging not being able to complete simple tasks that were easy to complete back home. Just remembering to carry your Hanko can take some getting used to, and is a unique aspect of Japanese culture. For JTEs and re-contracting ALTs too, it is challenging to balance your work requirements with your desire to help the new ALT's. On behalf of all the new ALT's in Western Harima, thank you to

all the JTEs and re-contracting ALTs for helping us, the new ALTs, during this period of transition.

Soon now the summer holidays will come to a close and the new teaching semester will begin. Summer holidays are a wonderful time of year, with many festivals and firework displays to enjoy, and Obon festival to share with your family. I hope during the holidays you had some time to rest, and can return to school, feeling happy and refreshed.

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

In this month's newsletter, we have three brilliant articles for you to enjoy. Mr. Youhei Kondo at Himeji Bessho High School has presented a very interesting and knowledgeable article, emphasizing the importance of active learning for his English students. The article discusses a number of insightful, confidence building activities that will motivate students to use English purposefully. These include presentation projects and having students

do's stead.

Next, from Ms. Rachel Lagasse, a second year ALT at Himeji Minami High School, we have an exceptional article on establishing and maintaining effective communication between the ALT and the JTEs. Flexibility and open communication is the key to collaborating effectively between the ALTs and the JTEs, appreciating the different teaching styles and preferences of the individual teacher. The article discusses ways to prepare and review lessons to-

gether, taking into consideration the time constraints required of JTEs.

From Mr. Kishimoto again this month, we have a very funny and surprising short story from his childhood. It entails an adolescent boy's struggles dealing with bullying, and the hilarious way he found to deal with it. No doubt you wouldn't want to bully Mr. Kishimoto either, after reading his story.

We hope you find the articles thought-provoking and most enjoyable!



# THINKING OF ACTIVE LEARNING

## - Instructions by Students -

By Youhei Kondo

I have been working for Himeji-Bessho High School for 3 years. This year, I work as a third-year homeroom teacher. Now all third-year students are studying pretty hard to pass the examinations for admission to university or the entrance examinations for a firm. Most examinations in both universities and firms that our students will take have some interview tests, so I have thought that I want students to get used to speech in public. Also I think about active learning in my English classes, so I decided to get students to make a presentation in classes.



The presentation that I made a proposal of is that students give lessons to the class instead of me. It has two positive points. First, students who make a presentation will get used to talking with their confidences by making presentations in front of other students. Most students in this school don't like to answer the questions or do something in class because they don't have absolute confidence in themselves. Many students are not good at English and it is so difficult for them to understand or learn it. I want to change their minds. Actually, since many universities and firms have interview tests, students can't avoid making speeches in front of interviewers. Through the presentations in class, I get students to acquire confidence in themselves. Second, to make the presentations of each

lesson by students, they have to prepare for the presentations in an active manner. This is the key! In my opinion, lessons should be mainly conducted not by teachers but by students. Students can hardly learn lessons in a passive manner. We as teachers have to enhance students' motivation to study English. This is because I want students to make a presentation lesson and instructed themselves.

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# THINKING OF ACTIVE LEARNING

## - Instructions by Students -

By Youhei Kondo

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I gave students two rules, which are to make resumes and to have their resumes checked by me before making presentations. It is necessary for me to evaluate how students study each lesson and how good their attitudes are toward studying English. It is also important for students to gain confidence in their own ability to make their presentations. In addition, making resumes enabled students to realize what they didn't know, what they didn't understand. When they met words and grammatical points, they looked up the words in a dictionary and studied with a grammar book, and asked for me to teach things they didn't know. Making resumes made students more active. In fact, after the active presentation lessons instructed by students, their average score in exams was higher than passive lessons. Both the students and I felt satisfied with this result.



First of all, before making resumes, I gave students 20 parts that 4 sections in 1 unit were split into. And then, students paired off, and discussed allotting each parts to each other. Because the later presenters had to study and understand the former sections than the formers presented, the students tended to choose the beginning section. After the assignments were given to each group, students enjoyed studying English. Some students made questions about words, comprehensions of grammatical points, summaries, other made lists of derivational suffixes from new words in each section. Since they studied all things on their own initiative, all I had to do was to teach things that they asked.



There was a difficulty in practicing students' presentations. It was that students required 4 periods to finishing preparing for the presentations. However, they were able to make a presentations in loud voice in their confidence because they spent so much time to prepare them. For students, there is little chance to speak in public. So I will give them a opportunity to make a speech in front of others. I believe that this activity brings students a great confidence in the near future. Thank you very much.



# COLLABORATING WITH YOUR JTES

By Rachel Lagasse

Hello Everyone. My name is Rachel and I have been a Hyogo Prefectural Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) for the last 11 months. As I am wrapping up the last month of my first year as an ALT, I have had the opportunity to work with many different Japanese Teachers of English (JTE). There are many aspects to being an Assistant Language Teacher that are not all covered during our orientation, however, one of the most important aspects that is talked about is the relationship between the ALT and the JTEs that they work with. Hopefully sharing the excellent experiences I have had in the last year can help give some insight to other ALTs and JTEs.



Let me tell you a bit about the two schools I got to work at this year, Himeji Minami High School and Himeji Kita High School. Let's start with Himeji Minami, my base school, and where I get to teach four days a week. It is a mid-high level academic school that puts a lot of focus of students making the most of their high school experiences, both academically and socially. At Himeji Minami this year, I get to work with 7 JTEs regularly. We team teach all 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> years interested in additional English classes.

The other high school I got to work at is Himeji Kita, a night school for the Himeji area. I get to go to Himeji Kita about once a week. The students at Himeji Kita are at a lower academic level than Himeji Minami, however, many students at Kita enjoy trying to speak in English with both myself and other ALTs that they meet. I get to work with 4 different JTEs, on a bi-weekly rotating basis, with whom I get to work with all the 1<sup>st</sup> years.

Now that you know a bit more about the schools I get to work with, I can start to talk about the amazing JTEs I get to work with. Working at two schools means that the JTEs I get to work with are incredibly flexible with me. They are always willing to speak and discuss lessons with me at different times throughout the day. They are also very open about creating the lesson plans for the students. All of the JTEs I work with agreed that lessons with me will be the same for the all the students in that year. So I work with all the JTEs for that grade level to create one lesson plan for the week. With their willingness to work as a larger team for the ALT included lessons, and flexibility in meeting with me, means that the lessons we are able to teach every week are well-thought out.

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# COLLABORATING WITH YOUR JTES

By Rachel Lagasse

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Even though I work with 11 JTEs on a regular basis, I still communicate with the other JTEs at my schools about lessons and student interactions. Between my two schools, there are 15 JTEs in total. Even if I don't get to teach with all the JTEs, I still can ask them for their advice and expertise to make better lesson plans. It also good to know your JTEs teaching styles. Some teachers like to have a Japanese explanation with the class or some prefer to have the instructions purely in English. Some teachers want extra time for vocabulary review and some prefer to have the entire class under ALT instruction. All of the teachers also have their unique teaching styles that they have in and outside of the team teaching class. So it is not only important, but vital to communicate openly with all of the JTEs who will be team teaching your lesson with you.

Keeping communication open with your JTEs can seem overwhelming, even if you are only planning 3 lessons a week. One way to keep in contact with your JTEs is creating routines with them. What I do is on the first day of the week I talk with the head JTE of the grade I will be teaching to understand what topic or lesson plan they are looking for the following week. Will they want to follow the text book, or do they want to introduce broader English ideas? Do they want more writing or speaking in their classes the next week? Finding out the basic information for the following week helps me create my lesson plan ideas.

After I have my lesson plan ideas, it is time for me to check-in with my teachers. Starting with the head JTE of the year, I will go over the lesson plan idea and write down any changes the other teacher wants to take place. With my newly adapted lesson idea, I will check-in with the other teachers in the year, making sure the lesson plan idea sounds good to everyone who might be teaching it with me. Then comes the finished lesson plan including the timing of the lesson, the worksheets, and any additional materials I will need like PowerPoints or props. Then it is time for the second check-in. I will see if I can get my JTEs together for a quick meeting, even just 10 minutes to review the lesson. But JTEs are busy people so if they can't, I will just meet them at their desks when they have open time throughout the day. Excellent! My lesson plan for the following classes is completed!



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# COLLABORATING WITH YOUR JTES

By Rachel Lagasse

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Once all of your lesson plans for all your classes are done, you still have to create some routines for improving or changing the lesson plan as the week progresses. If it doesn't go well in one class, you want the next class to have a better lesson. One routine I use is an after class check-in. Right after the lesson, I try to walk back with my JTE and talk about what can be improved for the next lesson. It is not a very long walk or talk, but it allows me to make quick changes to the lesson plan that I might need later. On the other side, is walking to my classes I will talk with my JTE about the lesson plan and any changes that might be good to add to the upcoming lesson. It is easier to talk with your JTE in the teacher's room if you have time, but sometimes there is no time to have a quick meeting outside of walking to and from class. But I have found this small chat helps keep my JTEs and I on the same page for what will be expected in the class and allows the lesson to be constantly adjusted to be better.

Beyond communicating about your lesson plans with your teachers, you need a set of tools you can use when you are stressed or overwhelmed, to fall back on. Working with many different JTEs at different levels of English, means being ready to adapt and adjust on many levels. Not only do you need to adjust lessons to your JTEs, but also to the level your students are at, while keeping the core lesson goals in all of your lessons. Some students need simpler instructions. Some need more diagrams or picture examples. Some need lessons to be adapted to be simplified or made more complex, depending on their English abilities. This can seem like a daunting task. But these are some of the tools you can use to help yourself and the JTEs you work with.

Let's start with adjusting lessons. When you are adjusting your lesson plans, the changes don't need to be huge changes to how you are teaching. They can be small ways to help your students understand the activities that you want them to participate in. Do only some of your students understand the instruction? Have another student who does understand explain in Japanese. Do your students not participate in the activity fully? Add scripts and examples with your JTE to help give students additional references for their own conversations. Adjusting lessons usually means less about taking parts of your lesson away, and more about giving additional time or instructions to different parts of the lesson. Always remember to ask your JTEs if there are any adjustments that they can think of as well. They are with the students the most, so they will have additional insight into making your lessons better every time.

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Another tool you can have is creating a repertoire of short activities. Some 5-minute filler activities that make students work with speaking or writing can help when parts of your lesson are not going as planned. You can add these in at the end of class, if your students move quickly through their activities, or in-between activities in your lessons. If your lesson is not going smoothly, these activities can give you the chance to have a chat with your JTE about improving and adjusting the lesson for the remainder of class. Activities can be simple, like story builders and word association, or more complex, such as vocabulary review with sentences and opinion writing. Having these kinds of activities also allows your JTE to focus on helping refocus the class with you, rather than struggling to fill time or transition to the next activity.

After all of your preparing, adjusting, and working with your JTEs on your lesson plans, there is one more thing you can do to help make working together easier. Make time to get to know your JTEs outside of English class. We get told this at orientation and trainings, but it is very important to get to know your JTEs as people. They are the other side of your coin during classes. Your partner through which you can work to help improve your students English. But they are your co-workers and people, first and foremost. Chat when you both have open time, find some common interests, and grab some lunch if you have the chance. They will have bad days, just like you will. And the more you can connect with your partners, the easier it will be for you both to be effective for your students.



# THE ENGLISH TALES OF HAGA

## - Tit for Tat -

By Futamu Kishimoto

Just after the Second World War, the river was still so clean, clear, and free of pollution. When I was around the age of six or seven, I enjoyed swimming in the river near my house. I used to swim almost every day except for rainy days from morning to late in the afternoon. After swimming for a long time, my friends and I would often lie face down on a big rock by the riverside to warm ourselves. However, we had to stop swimming to attend funeral ceremonies for the war dead. Most of those dead were the fathers of my friends.

One day, I had fallen asleep, face down on the rock, when suddenly I woke up to warm rain on my back. "Damn! Go to hell!" I repeated those words many times in my head. I had to put up with this humiliation, since the boy that did it was much older, taller, and stronger than I. I had no older brother to assist me, so very often older boys bullied me.

One very cold and snowy day, one of the older boys was waiting for me in front of the school gate as usual, and I thought he would bully me, too. On the way home that day, I was lucky because the boy was walking just in front of me and right beside him ran a large irrigation ditch. Here was my chance!

I dashed toward him from behind and shoved him into the ditch. It was deep enough to sink him to his neck in water. I kicked him and stomped on his head several times. When I finally got control of myself, he was still struggling in the water. I ran home desperately.

That night, his grandfather came to my house and naturally my grandfather found out about everything. I had to spend the night alone in the dark and cold *kura* (storehouse).

It goes without saying that I had to be very cautious not to be attacked after that, as I might have been killed. As a precaution, I carried a stick with me. Strange to say, they stopped bullying me after that day.



*Since we started this project of publishing the newsletter in 2016, we have been introducing very interesting stories of Haga compiled in a book, "After the War" written by Mr. Futamu Kishimoto, a 78-year-old former English teacher in Shiso. Thanks to his kind cooperation, we will be able to keep on presenting some more exciting tales from the next month. Please enjoy reading the stories and try writing or translating your local Japanese tales for the benefit of your students and the people from foreign countries. Mr. Kishimoto's activities always tell us what an English teacher can do for our future.*

### NOTICE!

English Speech Contest    October 13th, Saturday  
Himeji City Culture Center  
General Assembly        October 25th, Thursday  
Himeji Commercial High School



Mr. Kishimoto and his book, "After the War."