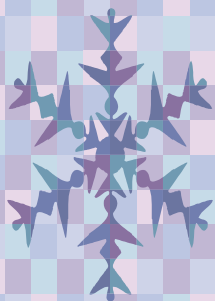


Winter
2010



Teaching and Learning Winter 2010 Newsletter

Not only teaching a different language, but also giving a different point of view of the world

Author: Masae Yasuda, MA, Special Lecturer of Japanese, Dept. of Modern Languages & Literatures

In 1990, I was presented with the opportunity to temporarily move to Michigan along with my husband and our two young children. Since I was born and raised in Japan, the prospect of moving to America was both exciting and daunting. Somewhere along the way, that temporary move became a permanent life filled with new experiences I could only have gained here. The education system here was very different from what I had been accustomed to in Japan. As I watched my children experience the American education scene, I found myself drawn in as well. I started out just testing the academic waters as a tutor, but I gradually gained teaching experience at a middle school, a high school, and a community college before I found my way to Oakland University. Through my experiences at these institutions I have come to believe that an instructor should be a teacher, an educator and a facilitator. This is one of the main teaching philosophies that I developed over my long academic journey. I would like to discuss how I try to fill these roles for my students in the classroom.

To be a Facilitator: When I teach JPN 114 (Introduction to Japanese Language and Culture) in the Fall semester, there are two things that I always keep in mind: First, that many students in JPN 114 class are freshmen and have just started their University careers. I try to remember that they are in the middle of a transition period to their new environment. I see that some of them are very nervous in the classroom, so I try my best to provide them with a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere in my class. I truly believe that students need to first feel safe, and then feel comfortable, before they can concentrate on their studies and become academically successful. Secondly, I believe one of my roles as a JPN 114 teacher is to “open the door” to Japanese language and culture to interested students. Japanese is a totally different language from Indo-European Languages like English, French, German, and Spanish. Students are challenged to study not only different sentence structures and grammars, but are also required to memorize 46 basic letters, 46 secondary basic letters, and 43 Chinese characters. Because of these difficulties, I feel that it is my responsibility to help facilitate the class in a way that makes these obstacles seem less daunting. To this end, I try to be available during office hours and through e-mail, and I give students a second chance to take a quiz if they need to. As a facilitator, I believe it is important to be patient with students, and to wait (to a certain extent!) for certain students to catch up. I believe it is a facilitator’s job, in the end, to make sure that no student has the door to learning shut in their face.

To be an Educator: As an educator, I try to give my students positive feedback. I believe in, and do in fact see, the effect of positive feedback on students’ attitudes and aspirations. I believe that connecting with the students as a positive educator brings out their potential in the classroom, and makes them feel more confident about themselves. To help them build confidence in the classroom, I also encourage students to speak up and tell them not to be afraid of making mistakes in class. Mistakes are welcomed in my class, and I believe that much can be learned from mistakes.

As an educator, I also try to make my class activities fun. This is because I believe that when learning is fun, students excel. When students enjoy learning, the knowledge stays longer in their mind. I believe that Japanese should not just be an academic subject, but should be conveyed to students as a real means to communicate with people. Students are told to exchange e-mails, write postcards from vacation places, and write journals about their lives in Japanese, so that they will experience how the language they are learning can be applied in real life. As an educator, I also challenge my students to observe, analyze, think and predict the situations and the appropriate sentences using the knowledge of their mother tongue. By doing so, I believe they deepen their insight about their mother tongue. This is important to me, as I hope that by comparing these things to Japanese, they will be able to see things from a more global point of view. I know from my own life that seeing the world through a new perspective can be a downright thrilling experience, and *that* is the “fun” that I want my students to experience. I love seeing the “Eureka!” moment in my students’ faces.

To be a Teacher: As a teacher of Japanese language at Oakland University, where students experience “Japanese in a foreign language context”, I try to include real life context in the class. My teaching is based on Proficiency Oriented Instruction, in which the context and function of language are important. For example, when “shopping expressions” are introduced in JPN 114, I bring real menus to class, and have students perform real restaurant dialogues in pairs. By performing this task, everything they learned in class (Japanese currency unit, counting big numbers, pointing items using appropriate pronouns, asking the price) is integrated in a simulated “real-life” context. This activity also has the benefit of imparting some Japanese culture on the students: All the dishes on the menus are Japanese dishes. I believe this also stimulates their interest in Japanese food, which is an important facet of the culture. After this activity, I often encourage my students to try going to a real Japanese restaurant and to try ordering in Japanese. As a teacher, I also believe in the importance of spending time getting students oriented with the culture that lies behind the language. Certain expressions and wordings cannot be understood without understanding their cultural backgrounds. My students also need to be aware of what kinds of behavior are appropriate in Japan. By learning about a different culture, I believe students learn the different values of the cultures. They are encouraged to compare and contrast their own country’s culture to that in Japan. Understanding these differences and similarities, I believe, helps people to come to respect each other.

I believe that I am a teacher, an educator, and a facilitator when I stand before my students. I see all of my students holistically, and try to show my respect for them every class period. I believe that I am teaching not only the language, but also the culture and the way of life behind the language. It has been a long journey for me from Japan to Rochester, Michigan. I hope that in my career as an instructor, I will be able to pass on to my students some of the things I picked up on this journey, however small or large an impact it may make.

2010 Educational Development Grants: Call for Proposals

The Senate charge to the Teaching and Learning Committee is “to promote the teaching and the learning process.” In accordance with this charge, the Committee invites the Oakland University faculty and staff to apply for grants in educational development. Funding may be requested for projects whose primary purpose involves one or more of the following:

- Development and/or use of new teaching techniques.
- Development of a new instructional approach.
- Faculty development related to curricular responsibilities.
- Investigation of a teaching/learning problem.
- Evaluation of a method of teaching.

Individual awards will not normally exceed \$750. Student labor in conjunction with preparation of teaching materials may be funded. The Committee will not fund preparation for accreditation or program reviews nor will it fund faculty salaries or travel costs. The cost of food, food services and photocopies will not be funded. The grant is not intended to support the purchase of software or hardware unless it is incidental to the development of the educational process.

The deadline for applications is 5:00 P.M. on Friday, March 12, 2010.

Completed applications should be emailed to Debatoosh Debnath (debnath@oakland.edu). The form should be downloaded from the Teaching & Learning Committee website, filled out electronically and sent as an attachment.

Additionally, the electronic version must be followed by an identical, signed hard copy sent via campus mail to Debatoosh Debnath, School of Engineering & Computer Science, 112 DHE. This hard copy of the application requires the signature of the department or unit head. The due date for the signed, hard copy is also 5:00 PM, Friday, March 12, 2010.

Each award recipient must file a final report at the conclusion of the project describing its purpose, activities and outcomes. The reports are due by March 1, 2011. Questions and comments may be directed to Jennifer Law-Sullivan at x2080 or via email (law@oakland.edu).



<http://www2.oakland.edu/tlcommittee/educationaldevelopmentgrant.cfm>

Upcoming Events

February

5th — Assessment Workshop: “Using the Grading Process as an Effective Tool for Learning and Assessment”, Lake Superior Room B, Oakland Center, 10:00-2:00. *RSVP: palmer@oakland.edu or call extension 2387.*

16th — Teaching & Learning Workshop: “Responding Effectively to Student Writing”, Heritage Room, Oakland Center, 11:30-1:00. *RSVP: Fred Hoffman at hoffman@oakland.edu or x4978.*

16th — Academic Skills Center, Open House for Faculty, 11:00-1:00, North Foundation Hall.

March

16th — Teaching Excellence Awards Nominee Luncheon, Banquet Room A, Oakland Center, 11:30-1:00. *For more information contact Jennifer Law-Sullivan at x2080 or law@oakland.edu.*

21st-23rd — Equity Within the Classroom Conference, Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort, Mt. Pleasant, MI. <http://www2.oakland.edu/provost/equity/pages/index.cfm>. Travel funding will be provided to the first five faculty to register. *For more information contact Scott Crabill at x3229 or slcrabil@oakland.edu.*

April

5th — Academic Service Learning Workshop, Gold Rooms B & C, Oakland Center, 11:30-1:00. *RSVP: Tiffany Sims at x4338 or asl@oakland.edu.*

May

19th-20th — Fourth Annual Conference on Teaching & Learning: Student Engagement, Oakland Center. <http://cleo.uwindsor.ca/oakland/index.php>. *For more information contact Scott Crabill at x3229 or slcrabil@oakland.edu.*



Can Twitter be used to Teach Critical Thinking?

Author: Catheryn Cheal, PhD., Assistant Vice President of e-Learning and Instructional Support

Twitter is a cross between texting (phone-to-phone text messaging) and blogging. Twitter is sometimes referred to as microblogging, because posts are limited to 140 characters. Twitter's brief messages make it similar to texting, but these "tweets" are sent to a crowd of subscribers and posted on a website open to the general public, while texting sends each message privately to a single individual.

Twitter is probably the most vilified social media system by academics, largely because the 140-character limit seemingly makes it antithetical to extended logical arguments and reasoning, lengthy evaluations, and authenticated and unbiased research information. Indeed, Peer Analytics, a market research company, scanned 200 U.S. tweets over a two-week period in 2009 and determined that just 3.6% of them contained news while 40.55% were just "pointless babble."

Nevertheless, Twitter is an enormously popular new medium of communication, and I have found ways that it can be useful for teaching in spite of, or perhaps even because of, its limitations. For example, consider breaking a critical thinking paper assignment into a series of steps or small assignments. Loosely using Bloom's taxonomy, I consider five such steps that may be enhanced by the use of twitter:

Step 1. Define your topic question for a written paper.

Step 2. Consider your prejudices, assumptions, and biases.

Step 3. Research and gather information, eliminating others' and your biases, and assessing and reviewing the information.

Step 4. Organize information into a logical sequence of evidence or connected patterns and make judgments, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.

Step 5. Come to a conclusion and present it in a persuasive manner.

There are many parts of a critical thinking assignment that should be brief — the topic question, the thesis, the conclusion, a single bit of evidence, etc. The main advantage of the 140-character limit is that no filler is possible. Students must find a way to narrow their focus in order to be able to tweet it. Conciseness, concentration on correct word choice, and quick editing are all positive characteristics that Twitter can reinforce. In addition, because it is so simple, Twitter's training needs are minimal.

Step 1 and Step 2 in the above assignment could both benefit by class chatter/discussion in Twitter. A class of students could make unique accounts in Twitter dedicated to a single course, a posting list could be set up

by the instructor, and all students would follow tweets on the list. My students in WRT 150 used a Moodle forum for discussing their topics and generally the replies were quite short but helpful. Another advantage of Twitter is that it is easy to do from a phone, so students can brainstorm and comment at any time. Consider the following example of tweets about a student's project topic:

*Final Presentation by Rebecca-Monday, 9 November 2009, 09:05 PM My theme for my final project presentation is going to be "are kids challenged enough in middle school and high school to prepare them for college?"

*Re: Final Presentation by Alexandra- Tuesday, 17 November 2009, 09:55 PM Maybe you should do a little research on attendance in schools and the percentage of kids that skip. i know i wasnt pushed and didnt care so i missed alot of school

*Re: Final Presentation by Amir- Thursday, 19 November 2009, 03:56 AM That's great, make sure you use a number of the test scores. That should be a key part in your project."

Continued on page 4

Faculty Learning Communities

Author: Scott L. Crabill, Ph.D., Director of Integrative Studies

Oakland University is entering its third year in sponsoring faculty learning communities. This year the office of Undergraduate Education and the office of Grants, Contracts, and Sponsored Research funded three faculty learning communities for the academic year. This year's topics include Integrative Case Studies for Basic Sciences, Best Practices of Teaching Research, Graduate Student

Supervision, Surveillance Privacy and Security, Women Faculty Navigating Tenure, and Student Understanding by Design. These learning communities are focused on colleagues sharing expertise with each other to enhance knowledge and improve the learning for students. The goals of these learning communities are designed to build collaboration and fellowship amongst faculty, and to create an interesting envi-

ronment for exploring new knowledge. All faculty (full-time and part-time) are encouraged to participate. For more information about FLCs and to apply for one of the six learning communities visit the Faculty Learning Community website at <http://www2.oakland.edu/flc/index.cfm>.

THE SENATE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

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Susan Awbrey, Senior Associate Provost

Debatosh Debnath, School of Engineering & Computer Science

Fred Hoffman, School of Business Administration

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Lisa Levinson, CAS, Linguistics

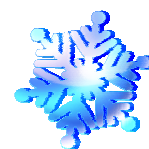
Krista Malley, Academic Skills Center

Fritz McDonald, CAS, Philosophy

Sunwoo Shin, School of Education & Human Services

Students: Madison McClintock, Matthew Thomas, Matthew Ugorowski, Hawra Abogilal

Support Staff: Scott Crabill, Integrative Studies



<http://www2.oakland.edu/tlcommittee/index.cfm>

Twitter & Critical Thinking

Continued from page 3

While gathering information in Step 3, Twitter is limited both because it is not possible to just follow a specific topic, and because the search engine in Twitter does not always yield useful Twitter responses. However, Twitter can be useful for following a specific organization or expert in a given subject area. Consider the following informative tweets from an expert in instructional technology, rayschroeder:

*Children who blog, text, use social networking websites more confident writers: National Literacy Trust <http://ow.ly/TWNZ#edtech#elearning> 8:15 AM Dec 9th from [HootSuite](#)

*A group of US students has created an entire orchestra out of separate iPhone applications ~ <http://ow.ly/IWFY#edtech#elearning> 8:10 AM Dec 8th from [HootSuite](#)

In step 4, we generally teach students to organize information into a logical sequence of evidence in paper assignments. Instead of one person constructing the long logical arguments needed, the entire class could do it successively in Twitter. One author would start a discussion, with a bit of evidence about their topic and create a tag at the end, #retention in the example below, so the thread could be isolated from the general conversation. Other classmates would chime in, adding evidence and conclusions, after having been taught how to build on each other's statements:

*Beth. Greater retention in higher education is not caused by greater number of courses taken per semester. #retention

*Cody. Right. Greater retention is only correlated with a greater number of courses taken. #retention

*George. So maybe students who have the luxury of support to take more courses will continue. #retention

*Sally. The implication for advising is to let the student take the lead on how many courses to take. #retention

Finally, Twitter can be used to hone a paper's conclusion in the same way that it is used to narrow the focus of the research question at the beginning of a project. In each of these steps, it may take some innovative thought and courage to try out a new social medium, like Twitter, in the classroom. Instructors may find that the 140-character limit, which is often seen as Twitter's main weakness for sustained intellectual exchange, may be its key feature for enhancing the overall efficiency and usefulness of discussions about certain academic tasks that benefit both from feedback from multiple peers and a quick exchange of ideas.

Resources in Academic Services

Author: Krista Malley, PhD, Director, Academic Skills Center

Have you ever wondered which office you could go to for assistance with a student who is having difficulties in your class, or whom you believe might need some help in deciding a major, or a student who may need some extra assistance? Read on to learn more about these five Academic Services available free of charge to all registered Oakland University students.

Advising Resource Center (ARC), www.oakland.edu/arc/

Refer a student to the ARC when they say:

- ◆ I'm struggling to choose a major.
- ◆ Can I take a "test" to help me learn about career options that might be a good fit for me?
- ◆ I'm an undecided student and I need help selecting my courses.
- ◆ I want to change my major, but I don't know what to change it to.
- ◆ What can I do with a major in...?
- ◆ What are the possibilities for major/minor combinations at OU?
- ◆ Are there any career exploration workshops or groups I can attend?

OU Writing Center, www.oakland.edu/ouw/

Little-known facts about the writing center:

- ◆ The writing center is not a "fix-up" shop. Its primary goal is to help students review their drafts for assignment adherence targets, such as audience awareness, purpose clarity, organization, coher-

ence, and claim support. While consultants address grammar, punctuation, and usage concerns during each session, we do so by acknowledging error patterns that interfere with meaning, which we also help student writers to address.

◆ Many writing consultations never involve drafts. Your students often visit to examine the assignment and to draft a writing plan. This discussion is much richer when you have provided students with a written assignment that clearly indicates your expectations in terms of genre, outside sources, documentation style, etc.

◆ The writing center serves graduate students, faculty, and staff, too. Its faculty and graduate consultants regularly help graduate writers with theses and dissertations, particularly with literature review construction. We also help faculty members with their tenure review materials and with assignment construction.

Academic Skills Center (ASC), www.oakland.edu/asc/

Open House for FACULTY on Tuesday, February 16th from 11a.m. to 1p.m.

Hiring requirements of Peer Tutors and Supplemental Instruction Leaders:

- ◆ Students must submit letters of recommendation from faculty in the discipline they wish to be a Peer Tutor/ Supplemental Instruction Leaders.
- ◆ Students must earn a minimum 3.0 in the subject they wish to be a Peer Tutor/ Supplemental Instruction Leaders

◆ Students are required to attend trainings for either Peer Tutor/ Supplemental Instruction Leaders

Disability Support Services (DSS), www.oakland.edu/dss/

Ways faculty can collaborate with DSS:

- ◆ encourage early disclosure by including friendly language in syllabi.
- ◆ be aware that students are not entitled to unlimited time on exams.
- ◆ contact DSS if mediation assistance is needed or desired.

Center for Multicultural Initiatives (CMI), www.oakland.edu/cmi/

Students are assisted in the following ways by CMI:

- ◆ **Book Loans and Student Retention Fund**—are available for students with a minimum of 24 credits earned and a 2.5 or higher GPA.
- ◆ **Diversity Training** is offered for students, faculty and staff to help the OU community embrace and value diversity.
- ◆ **Students First Program - Academic Guidance** is an OU program that puts freshmen students at the top of their academic game.
- ◆ **Circle of Sisterhood** is a CMI group whose main goal is to support young women on campus and provide them with the resources they need to make it through college and lead a successful life, including a solid support group, connections to faculty and on campus leaders, and experiences that will help them gain a greater sense of self and responsibility.
- ◆ All CMI services are open to all OU students.