**Thomas Santos holds a master`s in Language Education and Theatre. He taught in too many countries for me to remember sorry. However, he taught English. His degree in drama is incorporated into his style of teaching and presentation. However, now he is the Regional English Language Teacher based out of Seoul, Korea. Korea, Japan and Taiwan are in his jurisdiction** *(I hope this information is correct). I will try to make all of my comments or thoughts in italics.*

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Site with free downloads: <http://americanenglish.state.gov/>

**Though we were told in advance that the topic was task-based learning, Mr. Santos changed his gears a little because of the make-up of teachers that had participated in the workshop. He wanted to address speaking skills – the problems found in many Japanese classrooms:**

* **Self-confidence**
* **Afraid of making mistakes (fear of failure)**
* **Katakana sounds (identity)**
* **Standing out**
* **Not applicable in students life (to speak English – Japan doesn`t have boarders; like places in Europe where 2 languages are important)**
* **Classroom Culture \*\*\***
* **Opinion** (*collective type culture* – *like twin-speak*)

**Divide objectives into two parts with language learning –**

1. **Fluency – vocabulary, with modes of production: speaking and writing. This is the flow of language from thought to speech (like a muscle needing exercise).**
2. **Accuracy – Grammar, choosing the right words –** *I think this is more translating-like and that is why it is further from fluency.* **However, the example given was when a student is thinking subject, “I”, verb, “will go”, and so on…** *Basically sentence construction is defeating the process of communication (perhaps).*

**Students** (I think at our teaching level) **can not be fluent and accurate; they don`t use spontaneous speech.**

 **As teachers we need to ask ourselves – What am I doing (lesson-wise)? Be specific.** *I think this is basically the objectives you make when you are planning a lesson. What I have learned is the best objectives are those that can be measured in assessment. However, I think this is meant pretty loosely – Thomas was saying make sure you know what you want in the outcome for the students before you actually plan the lesson. Pick if you want to work on Fluency or accuracy, when writing your lesson plan.*

 **Thomas then showed us a great activity to work on Fluency. First, he asked us the topic. Someone yelled out “cats”, and another “summer vacation”. Thomas took summer vacation. Then we created an intermediate (HS) vocabulary list and wrote it on the board.**

**Summer Vacation vocabulary list:**

* **Reservation**
* **Sightseeing**
* **Flight attendant**
* **Bungee-jumping**
* **Itinerary**
* **Jetlag**
* **Transit**
* **Transportation**
* **Schedule**
* **Abroad**
* **Departure**
* **Paradise**

**He then asked for a volunteer and got one! He placed three colored cards on the table. Thomas and his volunteer are facing each other with the cards in between them on the table. There is a space for the cards to move close to him and a space for the cards in front of the volunteer. The game is two people having a conversation. There are no written lines only the words on the board. Thomas said to make it as natural as possible. When one player says a word that is on the board he/she can move the card toward them. The rule is that the opponent may not move the card when they repeat a word that the other player had just said, i.e. P1 says, “I went to a tropical paradise.“ While P2 says, “Oh, you went to a tropical paradise.” The card can only move once for that part of the conversation. Cards look like this:**

 P1 = player 1

P2 = player 2

**There is no winner, the game continues for as long as it can keep the interest of the students (10 minutes?). We then analyzed what the game did (***reflection***). This game focuses on fluency. This process will activate vocabulary instead of “lame role play”***(not my words!).*

**Another idea for younger kids is to have a picture of an animal, but most of the animal picture is covered with only a portion showing. The students have to say, “Is it a…” and guess by what they see.**

**Thomas then talked about reading. When do you have to read? He was asking us, the audience.** *I didn’t write it down but I think it was school and church, which are the only times you read aloud. I have a severely dyslexic daughter, I read aloud almost every night, but I understand that is not the case for everyone.*

**Thomas also mentioned affinity groups.** *This is a nice idea to have students that have a group they always go to, however, if it is done too much I personally feel this would diminish the classroom community that is built by switching group members a lot. He also mentioned how he would put groups of same level students together, again I have to disagree with this because there is a “target – language” and peer-teaching opportunity wasted on this type of grouping. Thomas admitted that he did not always do this, and that it was based on the classroom need. Which I can also see if the gap is so wide it is undoable. In science classes, I had those wide gaps. The way I fixed it was giving the groups a specific leader. I pulled the leaders aside and I would tell them that they would not carry the group. I would supply them with information on the strengths of individual members of their group, and what to pull out of them. This seemed to work really well. I even had a student come to me after the assignment was completed and tell me I was right about some certain student strength. However, again, this probably can not be done in a JET class because it is hard to gauge students when we only see them once a week or once every two weeks. I sometimes ask the JTE’s about specific students, or I give the students homework so I can assess different abilities.*

**The next activity was quite fun.**

* **The instructions were to brainstorm and write about something that you taught yourself. It could be an activity or topic. Thomas gave us four minutes and told us no one would see this paper (make a mess of it, the goal is to write down your thoughts).**
* **Turn your paper over so you can not read it, and tell your partner (we broke up into pairs) about what you taught yourself. We had a minute each (I think).**
* **After that we got into a larger group of four, and we had to tell the group what our partner had taught themselves.**

**Then we analyzed what we did. Think, pair, share activity:**

* **Think/write – first four minutes (vocabulary, sentences, organization) Writing gets stuff out of your head**
* **With a partner or in pairs, this portion of the activity provides safety and an opportunity to practice language.**
* **Larger group, share, this has a variety of elements that will be incorporated into the activity. First, there is a shift of direction in the language; the pronouns must be changed for understanding. This activity is an assessment to listening ability, for the teacher and student.**

*I think if my notes are correct this was a few questions but basically this was the end of the presentation.*

* *Please note that Thomas had an hour and 20 minutes, since we started late. We had to be out of the building by 8pm. There was probably a lot more he would have said, maybe even some of my thoughts on building classroom community, but his time was limited and I am grateful for him taking the time. It was nice.*
* *I think something that is a little more difficult for some of the JET`s is that we don`t know our students or the capability of them. I know every situation is different (which may add to the confusion) and please note I am not complaining. I love my job, my students, my classes and my purpose here in Japan. However, I counted my students – 490! There are 14 classes where I do the same thing over a period of two weeks. I may not see all of those students due to Japan Holidays, school events, and student absences. During the third semester, I had one class I saw one time in the whole semester!*