

# Fujieigo Journal

Volume 1

Issue 1

2023



Welcome to the Fujiieigo Journal. The Fujiieigo Journal will be a triyearly publication exploring topics within the realm of teaching EFL studies. Focusing on teacher education and development with the goal of supporting ALTs, this publication will feature a mixture of theory, real life experiences and practical information that can be implemented by ALTs and English teachers in their class.

This first volume explores topics that were covered during spring training workshops. It's expected that ALTs are already familiar with the topics being discussed. These are introductory concepts to help assist ALTs in the upcoming academic year. The focus is on elementary learning, though these theories and concepts apply to all levels of EFL.

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### Motivation

Motivation can affect how and why we learn. Self-Determination Theory, known as SDT (Deci and Ryan, 1985) explores and distinguishes between the various types of motivation, with internal and external being the most basic. In simple terms and focusing on students:

Internal motivation is where a student is driven to do something because they want to do it.

External motivation is where a student does something because they are told to do it.

SDT does not view motivation as a single concept. It considers what motivates people (and therefore students) at any given moment. Within the realm of ELT, that means motivation can be impacted in a variety of ways ranging from the classroom environment, relationship with the ALT, the English that is studied, the games and activities that are played as well as the structure of the lesson itself. These are things ALTs can influence to varying degrees.

### Motivation and English Study

When students perform a task they are externally motivated to complete, they can do so with disinterest or be unwilling and resentful of having to complete the task. They can, however, also be willing to try and do so with a positive attitude with effort and support from their teachers.

Learning English can be a stressful and scary undertaking for a student, especially as they progress through their school career. As they move from elementary level to junior high and beyond, they will face the realities of both increasingly complex grammatical structures that differ from their native language but also the rigid testing structures, teaching styles and expectations regarding testing and assessment.

### What Can We Do?

Finding ways make different forms of external motivation interesting, engaging and fun are essential to increasing students' motivation and enjoyment of English study.

As ALTs we can impact positive change and increase motivation by considering a variety of different concepts and ideas. These include: how we plan our lessons, the games and activities we choose, how we assess our students – or even, if we should – and how we interact with them.

At the basic level, knowing how we can make positive change is the first step to actually making it.

Arguably, students in elementary school have the most “fun” when it comes to studying English. They are not burdened by tests or assessments, and they study through games. These two factors alone can increase their motivation to study English. At junior high level, there is an increasing sense of rigidity, focus on test results and English study is geared more towards writing and reading rather than learning communicative English through engaging and fun games. It is important to help students establish an interest and passion for English study at elementary level, as the power and influence of extrinsic motivation increases as they progress through schools and grades. Setting our students up for success starts at elementary level.

How Much Information Can Students Retain?

“The Magical Number: Seven, Plus or Minus Two” - this is both the title of a paper written by George Miller (1956) and the answer to the above question.

Miller’s work suggests that the amount of vocabulary/ information a human can hold and remember in their short term memory is between five and nine pieces.

This number (seven, plus or minus two) is commonly referred to as *Miller’s Magic Number* and it has a big impact on how we should teach.



Impact on Teachers.

When we plan our lessons we should remember this number.

When we introduce new vocabulary or review, we should not teach more than nine words/phrases. We do not want to overload students. In introducing students to more than nine new vocabulary items, we run the risk of pushing students past their limits, impacting their motivation in the process.

Small Steps and Supporting Students

The idea of not overloading students fits in with the work of Rosenshine. We apply a lot of Rosenshine’s methods when we teach thanks to his popular study, “Principles of Instruction: Research Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know” (Rosenshine, 2012).

The second of these principles is that educators should, “present new material in small steps with student practice after each step: Only present small amounts of new material at any time, and then assist students as they practice this material” (Rosenshine, 2012, p.13].



Rosenshine’s “Principles of Instruction: Research Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know” can be accessed online.



Supporting Students through Games and Activities

We have a huge amount of games, activities and resources to choose from when we plan our lessons. We want students to enjoy their classes and so we want the games/activities they play to be engaging and fun. If students can enjoy their English class, it will increase their motivation to study. The games must also, however, be meaningful. When we chose a game/activity we should consider some key points:

- 1) What stage of the lesson is it?  
Introduction of new English, a review, practice or the final goal in which they independently produce the language. These are distinct stages of a class and differ greatly in terms of expectation and ability.
- 2) What is the goal?  
In the class, what do we want students to achieve? How will playing the game/activity lead students to meet that goal?
- 3) How are they playing?  
Are students working in groups, pairs or are they working solo? The way in which students are expected to play will have an effect on the game you choose.



### Types of Games and Activities

Games and activities can be split into three categories. These are:

- 1) Input games/activities
- 2) Output games/activities
- 3) Production games/activities

### Input Games

These are games used to “input” information into the students’ brains. When a student plays an input game, the goal is to ensure that the only thing they need to do is look, listen and repeat.

We do not want students looking down or away from the ALT/HRT and the flashcards on the board.

Variations of the timer game are excellent input games as they retain the competitive element students like but place winning down to luck rather than skill, while keeping their attention on the new English being repeated. Currently, *fujieigo.com* has a comprehensive list of timer games and the many variations of it, such as the “touch game”. Input games are in a constant of evolution and so it is important to keep up to date with what other ALTs are doing in their classes and where they are succeeding.

### Output Games

These games solidify the students’ knowledge and retention of the target English.

Via output games, students produce the language they have learned during the input stage but still have scaffolding to support them. Games such as the order memory game or the card matching game are considered output games.

### Production Games

These games and activities are used in the final stage in a student’s class. Students, through production games/activities are expected to freely produce the target English and also understand their peers.

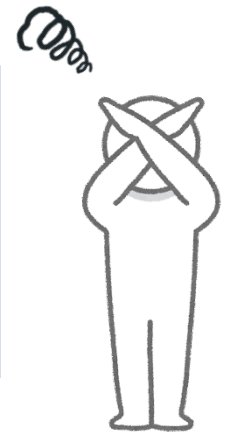
Games are changing and the way we understand them have evolved.

In the past, the “go game” was considered an input game. However, it is inappropriate for the input stage of a class. In this game students are always looking down at their marker, waiting for the word “go!” – it’s a race rather than an input game. The same can be said for the traditional version of the “ohajiki game” or even the “keyword” game. Often, at the end of the game students are not able to match the English words they were repeating to the respective flashcard. The game might have been fun but it was a failure as the students did not input the information.

We should always take time and care when choosing games and activities.







### Demotivation.

We know about the importance of motivation when it comes to our students and their English study. While we do our best to actively support them, there are many ways we can unintentionally demotivate our students. Teachers and ALTs need to recognize situations in which students can become demotivated in order to prevent them from happening.

### Holding Students to the Same Standard

A classroom contains students with different personalities and also abilities. There are introverts and extroverts. Some students study English outside of school and have achieved varying levels of fluency, some have never studied English before.

In class, all the students have the same goal but their starting places are different. We must always teach to the weakest students and reward focus on students' effort.

If we always praise for success and results, students with previous exposure to English will benefit over those without.

### Lack of Visual Aids

For each stage of the lesson, there should be appropriate and useful visual aids for the students to refer to. We should not overload students with visual aids just as we would not overload them with vocabulary but visual aids are a helpful form of scaffolding.

Without the support of visual aids, students may struggle and lose their motivation.

ALTs might lack control in the classroom environment, especially at junior high school and therefore have no say over visual aids and their use.

However, even something as simple as having the day and date on the board is incredibly useful for students when it comes to the greeting.

These can be brought to class by the ALT without disrupting the HRT/JTE's plans and is a small but effective way to support students.

### The Wrong Games

While all games and activities are useful and have their place in English class, there is a right and a wrong way to use them.

The games we chose can have a huge impact on the motivation of students. We should always consider the goal and stage of the lesson when choosing our activities.

If we play the "what's missing?" game as the first game in the first lesson, only the extroverted or so-called "juku" students who have studied outside of school will have the chance to succeed. Not only will it demotivate students who are shy or studying English for the first time, it can actually kill any interest they may have had in the subject.

### High Pressure Situations

High pressure situations can have an incredibly negative impact on the motivation of students. These can be times in which they're expected to volunteer or are called upon, for example.

Volunteer yourself or directly ask the HRT/JTE to clarify something. Ask the class if there are any questions and specify that asking in Japanese is OK. If you feel like students are unsure, ask yourself. Put yourself out there so your students don't have to.



When a student is talking with you about something they know or like but you don't know, tell them you don't know. We encourage them to tell us when they don't know something, so we can mirror it in turn. Tell them you're going to "Google" it, do so and then make a memo! Even if the result is just a passing comment about your feelings on the subject, you've made a connection.

### Connecting With Students

As ALTs we have limited information about our students. We are not homeroom teachers, we do not spend a great deal of time with them outside of English class and so our chance to connect is limited to one classroom period a week. Some might consider this to be enough, however there are many good reasons to strive for a greater connection to our students. To meet their needs, we need to understand our students, their personalities, their likes and dislikes. Further, we aim to foster a positive environment where students are comfortable making mistakes in their efforts to learn English. We encourage students to "challenge" themselves and encourage "peer support" in the classroom but if students do not trust us as teachers, if they do not feel comfortable with us, they will not feel safe and therefore not engage fully – or at all – in the class. To summarize:

- 1) Connections help us remove barriers:  
Making a connection means we can engage with our students and have meaningful, real conversation thereby increasing their motivation to study and speak English.
- 2) Connections help foster a positive atmosphere:  
Students will feel comfortable with us and therefore be more willing to try, make mistakes and ask for help.

### How Can We Connect?

Connecting with our students isn't about staying late, working through your lunchbreak or attending their clubs. Of course watching their club activities and engaging with our students about them (or even asking to join if you're genuinely interested) are great ways to connect, it really can be incredibly simple. You do not have to be a huge extrovert to engage with your students.

- 1) Be yourself, not a character.  
You do not have to share your life story but share some information about yourself, your likes and dislikes. Remember when your students share something about themselves, too. If you're genuine, it's easier to make genuine connections.
- 2) Be willing to engage.  
Relate your hobbies, likes and dislikes to your students and be willing to actively chat about them.
- 3) Learn their names.  
If your students wear name tags in their class, you can be one of the ones helping to hand them out.
- 4) Check your body language.  
If you don't look happy to be in class, your students will pick up on it.
- 5) Be available.  
If a student wants to talk to you between classes, try and give them the time and engage.
- 6) Walk the school.  
Between classes, when students are moving to their next classes, take a walk and say hello or have a quick, surface-level chat. "How are you?" "Wow, it's cold today!" – any sort of interaction is positive!
- 7) Learn with them.  
If you don't know something, acknowledge it. Be a learning partner.

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### Special Thanks:

Miller, W. who discussed the topic of connecting with students and suggested we not be characters.

Hilsendeger, T. for starting ALT workshops and encouraging us to consider the theories behind teaching.