# Passion, flow, and content-based instruction

Tim Murphey Kanda University of International Studies Brad Deacon Mathew White Patricia Gage Nanzan University

#### **Reference Data:**

Murphey, T., Deacon, B., White, M., & Gage, P. (2007). Passion, flow, and content-based instruction. In K. Bradford Watts, T. Muller, & M. Swanson (Eds.), *JALT2007 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Content-based instruction (CBI) has grown in popularity for over 20 years and is increasing in EFL environments. The four presenters have coordinated content-based instruction (CBI) programs at universities in Japan and taken turns coordinating one program for a fifteen-year span at Nanzan University from 1992-2007. In this paper, we look at coordinator, teacher, and student views over time, suggesting ways to create and sustain CBI programs, with passionate teachers and tasks that attempt optimal learning experiences (flow).

この20年の間、内容中心教授法 (CBI) は外国語としての英語教育(EFL)の中で目覚ましく発展してきている。4名の発表者は日本のいくつかの大 学でCBIプログラムを実施しており、南山大学では発表者たちによって交互にコーディネイトされた同一のプログラムが1992年から2007年までの 15年間の期間にわたり実施されている。本論では、コーディネーター、教師、学生からの各視点に着目し、CBIプログラムの効果的な構築と維持を考察 すると共に、さまざまな利点や潜在的な可能性について示唆する。



ach of the authors has coordinated content-based instruction (CBI) programs at universities in Japan and taken turns coordinating one program for a fifteen-year span at Nanzan University from 1992-2007. This paper will provide coordinator, teacher, and student views over time, suggesting ways to create and sustain CBI programs, as well as noting the advantages and potential challenges with CBI programs. After a short overview by Tim Murphey, Brad Deacon looks at some important challenges that are part of the territory. Then Mathew White and Patti Gage look at two sample courses and a variety of activities that have been useful to many teachers. While we do look at some of the problems with CBI, we are admittedly smitten with our classes and think such programs would benefit Japanese English education greatly were they to become more numerous.

# Introducing passion into curriculum reform (Tim Murphey)

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Sheltered CBI instruction grew in popularity in ESL environments about 20 years ago (Brinton, et al. 1989; Met, 1991; Mohan, 1986) based in part on the success of immersion programs in Canada (Swain & Johnson, 1997) and is still slowly catching on in EFL environments (Sekiya, 2005; Snow et al. 1997). CBI programs for students especially in their first few years at Japanese universities provide much needed exposure to language learning through content learning (Murphey, 1997a and 1997b; Wringer, 1998; Yamaura & Murphey, 2008). From the many surveys and observations that the presenters have done in these courses, we can say that both students and teachers are very positive about the courses. Many administrators are admittedly reticent at first. Strategies for convincing them to give it a try are often necessary, such as gathering first-year student voices that proclaim that university classes are "unfortunately not much different from high school classes," a strategy used at Dokkyo University in 2005 to convince deciders that all first year students needed something different.

In 1992, Nanzan University invited me to create "something different" for native English speaking teachers with the course hours originally devoted to reading-translation classes. I chose CBI in the form of half semester courses. We called these courses Workshops because we wanted students to be active participants and experientially involved with the content. I looked for passionate teachers that loved a topic so much that they wanted others to enjoy it (which would ensure that they adjusted enough to have students enjoy it). We wanted what Csikszentmihalyi (1997) calls Flow: "Flow experiences provide the flashes of intense living....When goals are clear, feedback relevant, and challenges and skills are in balance, attention becomes ordered and fully invested. Because of the total demand on psychic energy, a person in flow is completely focused" (p. 31). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) provides eight features of tasks that cultivate flow below (note also the correlation with task-based teaching and the emphasis on students doing things, i.e. experiential learning):

- 1. Tasks must have a reasonable chance of being completed.
- 2. Concentration on the task must be possible.
- 3. The task has clear goals.
- 4. The task provides immediate feedback.
- 5. Involvement in the task precludes worries and frustration from ordinary life.
- 6. The person is able to exercise a sense of control over his/her actions.

7. A concern for self disappears.

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8. A sense of duration of time is altered. (p. 49)

When students say things like, "Wow, that class went fast!" and "I was too busy talking to worry about mistakes!" it indicates that they are in a state of flow and most probably learning efficiently. Unfortunately, teachers often do not know what emotional states their students are in, and this is one of the main reasons that all of the teachers in this program included action logging (Murphey, 1992, 1993, 1997c) as a core component of their classes. Basically, action logging asks students to evaluate all the parts of the class and to give feedback to the teacher after every class. This feedback is crucial to teachers who want to improve their classes so they can produce more experiences of flow in their students (see Mathew and Patricia's descriptions below).

"Mitchell (1993) [reported that]... Holding of interest was associated with . . . content development that reflected the principle of meaningfulness (students could appreciate the content's applications to their lives outside of school) and instructional methods that reflected the principle of involvement (students spent most of their time engaged in active learning and application activities, not just watching and listening)" (Brophy, 1999, p.83). This holding of interest and meaningfulness is crucial to effective learning and the fact is that many teachers simply have no idea what parts of their classes students find meaningful and enjoyable. Action logging takes some of the guesswork out of teaching and allows us to teach with more confidence and flow. A second advantage is that the feedback tells us what materials and activities are working well and how we can improve or eliminate them, since we will be teaching the short course

four times a year. For several teachers these materials, adjusted through multiple feedback from many groups, have grown into booklets, books and articles.

Over the years, selection of the content areas was determined mostly on finding teachers who were passionate about specific areas. The role of the coordinator was mainly to recruit teachers who were passionate enough about a topic that they would be willing and able to design a half-semester course. Orientation procedures centered on structuring ways to get feedback so that teachers could quickly adjust their teaching to get more flow (see examples below). Courses have spanned from language-focused courses (English in Japan) to those related more broadly to language education (psychology of learning, T.V. commercials, drama, history of the US through song) and on to non-language focused courses (gender studies, Africa, health and fitness, environmental concerns, human rights). Passion was the only criteria placed on the teachers for selecting their topics. As noted in the next section, there is a tension between focusing on language and content that exists in any course, whether it is explicitly about language or not. The crucial element comes back to one of *passionately* wanting to enthuse others with one's subject area such that teachers communicate their excitement in many ways and adjust to make things comprehensible.

# Challenges within the workshop program (Brad Deacon)

While the authors concur with present and former teachers that this workshop program was very professionally rewarding it has also not been problem-free. Numerous

challenges surface, as they do in any program, which requires careful consideration for the sustained maintenance and subsequent success of the program. Here I present some of these challenges accordingly in the 'I, Thou, and It' framework (see David Hawkins' The Elements of Teaching as cited in Graves, p. 33) and from the respective main roles of: 1) the teacher and 2) the coordinator. This dual framing (teacher and coordinator) should offer richer insight into the kinds of challenges that have arisen on both platforms. Moreover, the challenges listed below are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather to highlight some of the diverse issues that have transpired over time. Now let us visit some of these specific challenges as they are situated within the engi following frameworks.

#### 1) The teacher's viewpoint: 'I, Thou, and It'

From the teacher's viewpoint (see Figure 1) 'I, Thou, and It' correspond accordingly to the perspectives of: a) the teacher (self), b) student (other), and c) subject matter.

# a) I (the teacher)

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Perhaps the greatest challenge in retrospect for me early on in teaching the workshop was to determine to what extent I should focus on the content AND the language. Once when being observed, I remember my graduate school supervisor's biting comment: "Where was the work with the language?" As a novice teacher, and certainly one who didn't have much prior experience in traditional content-based teaching, I quickly noticed that there was much to learn about this new kind of teaching. Admittedly, I struggled at times with

this new identity as a "CBI teacher" and thereafter strived to achieve a balance between both language and content in order to address the diverse needs of the students.

# b) Thou (the students)

Student feedback in the form of regular action log comments for each class and end-of-year quantitative surveys has shed light on many diverse issues. Students have raised various concerns including: the inordinate amount of homework assigned by each teacher (from "almost none to a tonne" in the words of one former student); desire to have more opportunities to practice oral output in some teacher's classes; an over-focus on female gender-related content in some courses (from some of the male minority in our program); and finally some students have raised issues about unmotivated teachers.

# c) It (the subject matter)

Carefully selecting and sequencing material that will both appeal and be useful to the students on the one hand and likewise planning appropriate language learning activities (e.g., vocabulary, structures, and so on) on the other is one challenge that all teachers faced. Furthermore, determining what specific content is most appropriate for the program is another issue that has garnered ongoing attention.

# 2) Coordinator's viewpoint: 'I, Thou, and It'

The coordinator's viewpoint (see Figure 2) links 'I, Thou, and It' to: a) the coordinator (self-view), b) teachers within the program (view of others), and c) the course or program itself. As above, all elements here are inter-connected and separating each is to merely allow for a clearer focus on the ways that these challenges have been manifested accordingly.

# a) I (the coordinator)

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In much the same way that Bailey et al. (1996) talk about the limitations of novice teachers who rely mostly on teaching according to how they were taught in school, most of us (outside of Tim) had precious little professional experience and/or training prior to assuming the coordinator role (note: the workshop coordinator role has traditionally been passed down to short term-contract teachers mainly based on their one or two year experience within the program). Consequently, we too tended to just coordinate in ways that we were coordinated. Likewise few of us had any formal training in CBI methodology either. Certainly we performed to the best of our ability; nonetheless, in retrospect we admit that with a better base of training we may have been able to then more effectively offer teacher development training to the other teachers within the program and to provide a more coherent and improved program during our respective tenures.

# b) Thou (the workshop teachers)

Student numbers have increased dramatically from 15 years ago with classes originally ranging from the upper 30s to some now in the 50s. This has placed a significant burden in particular on the part-time teachers to mark student action logs and also manage their time to prepare adequately and in ways that they feel are meeting the needs of the students. The increase in student numbers has also meant a further divide in student levels and many teachers are noticing a greater challenge in delivering their content at the 'right' level – neither too easy, nor too high. Furthermore, more teacher training needs to be conducted in ways that can enhance the skills of all teachers to deliver a more coherent program as detailed below.

# c) It (the program)

As the student comments within this section have alluded to there could be more of a tighter focus in the program as a whole including: the course objectives and goals, consistent homework requirements, consistent balance of the four skills taught (including clearer guidelines and following of guidelines in particular for average teacher and students speaking time per class), strategies taught, systematic evaluation, and so on. Furthermore, a clearer link needs to be established between the first year workshop program, the second year program, and the role of these programs within the entire four-year program as a whole. In other words, do these CBI courses lead to students understanding their content courses better in the last two years of college (if indeed they have content courses in English)? Although this section has focused on some of the challenges that have emerged within the workshop it is still worth mentioning that the overwhelming majority of student and teacher feedback has been positive. It is thus from a spirit of growth and responsibility that each teacher and coordinator has tried to meet those challenges accordingly.

#### Human Rights course (Mathew White)

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As of 2007 each workshop class consisted of approximately 48 students. The author of this section taught a workshop on human rights.

As noted previously, one common element that has been used by all the teachers of these workshops has been Action Logging. Originally, the Action Log was either an A4 or B5 size notebook in which students kept their notes and wrote feedback about class activities and content. In the past, the Action Logs were submitted either weekly or bi-weekly. This allowed teachers to see how much of the content the students understood, gave students voices about which activities and what content was the most useful, and provided a chance to address additional questions students might have.

As the number of students increased, the action log folders became extremely cumbersome. In addition, a drawback to collecting the Action Logs was that students were unable to review their notes in the folders while the teachers had them to read through the Action Log comments. One solution was to provide students with separate action log sheets that could be completed and submitted separately from the class folders. In addition, as teachers continued to refine their materials over the years as they continued to teach the same courses, they put their materials together as booklets which they distributed to the class, some of which have action log sheets in the back that can be, completed, torn off of the packet, and submitted following each class.

In the Human Rights course, the booklets came in four different types. Through distributing four different booklets containing different information and tasks as homework assignments, students were automatically provided with information gap activities to complete together in class. For example, on the first day, each of the four booklets has a copy of a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each of the booklets has three rights listed in its declaration that are not listed in the others. Students have to work in groups of four, exchanging the information on the human rights in order to obtain the full list of human rights. In this way, the teacher of this course was adhering to the philosophy of the content-based instruction program at Nanzan University, as it was originally described by Murphey (1997b). The basic principle that students were expected to interact with each other the majority of the time was being maintained. Ten years after its original implementation, teachers continued to design lessons so that their roles were mainly to give information for short intervals from time to time, and to clarify or correct any misunderstandings that students may have had about the materials.

In the Human Rights course and some of the other courses in the program, another element that was well received by the students was the Action Log Newsletter. The Action Log Newsletter is an extremely efficient way for teachers to acknowledge students' comments and questions and to provide feedback to all students. Teachers read through the comments and questions submitted in students' action logs or action log sheets and selected some of the comments to put in a newsletter. Each student received a copy of the newsletter in the next class, and time was allotted in class for the students to read it. After reading, the students engaged in discussions springing from the comments on the newsletter. Action log Newsletters assisted students in reviewing vocabulary, deepening understanding of the main points

of the course, and increasing familiarity with the various experiences and perspectives of other students. Another useful approach was to place contrasting opinions from students next to each other on the Action Log Newsletter in Assump order to highlight different attitudes or perspectives. Here are two comments that were placed next to each other in a recent Action Log Newsletter:

- "I really enjoyed the refugee simulation game. It was a fun way to learn about the terrible experiences that many of them go through."
- "I didn't like the refugee simulation game. Two ٠ of my classmates died when they stepped on landmines. It was scary."

Students often wrote positive comments about the Action Log newsletters and the new information or appreciation for their classmates' contributions that the newsletters provided.

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Teachers have also noted the value of guizzes in many of the content-based courses. In the Human Rights course, students took guizzes on the content from the previous weeks at the beginning of each class. These helped students refocus their attention on the class. The guizzes consisted of between 10 to 15 items, and students corrected each other's in class, minimizing the workload of the teacher and maximizing the opportunities for learning for the students. Many students commented that because of the guizzes, they became more motivated to review their class notes, and that they felt a sense of accomplishment when their scores improved. From the teacher's perspective, the quizzes also provided an easy way of taking attendance and helped in making the grading for the course more objective.

Some of the courses in the program also had homework assignments requiring the viewing of video material kept in the audio-visual library. Such assignments were valuable as springboards for discussions in the following class, and since students had the booklets containing all homework, even those students who were absent were expected to complete the following week's homework assignment.

Teachers in the program also made use of various types of games in order to engage the students and maximize the interaction among the students. In the Human Rights course, students played a refugee simulation game provided free of charge by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Students played this game in groups of three or four. The game began with each student individually listing 10 items they would take with them if they were forced to leave their homes. Each group pretended to be a family of refugees. Each student in the group had roll a dice and move their marker along a board, and then follow the instructions on the board or on the chance cards they were instructed to draw. Such role-plays and additional activities encouraged students to consider the issues from various perspectives.

Many of the workshops also turned the learners into "experts" on certain materials. In the final class of the human rights course, students gave individual 10-minute presentations on a human rights organization or topic. The presentations were conducted in groups of four, and were assessed by fellow students. The teacher's role during presentations was to announce the starting and ending time for presenters, make general notes about student preparation, eye contact, etc., and instruct audience members when it was time to fill out their peer assessment sheets of the other students' presentations.

The descriptions above on the Human Rights course may give readers the inaccurate impression that topics for the courses in this program are all extremely heavy or focus on a particular set of themes. However, as mentioned previously, the topics for the courses were left completely up to the teachers, allowing them a great deal of latitude in terms of content and activities. In the following section, one of the co-authors will describe a course on drama scene analysis, which after the description of the course on human rights should illustrate the degree of variety in the courses, which the students experienced. Both the Human Rights course and the Drama Scene Analysis course were completed by the Challengin same group of students in the same semester.

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# Drama Scene Analysis workshop (Patricia Gage)

"The fact-laden lecture is probably the least desirable way to get the facts across. Not only are students easily overwhelmed by all the data, but are likely to get the facts wrong to boot" (Palmer, 1990).

If the above statement is true, how can workshop teachers teach a content course without lecturing? This was a question I had when I first started teaching the workshop (Drama Scene Analysis) at Nanzan University. In the Drama Scene Analysis course, it was important that the students were able to analyze a scene from a play, find out about the background of the play and the playwright, and learn about the basics of acting and directing with a final presentation that culminated all these things. In creating this workshop it was apparent that the students would not be able to understand some of the

abstract concepts that they were learning, such as acting with purpose instead of acting with emotion. A major concern was to teach these concepts that many native English speakers are unable to grasp. One way to engrain these abstract ideas was to get the students to practice what they were learning. By first modeling an activity that would demonstrate the teaching point and then having the students practice it, students were able to understand what was meant by acting with purpose rather than just acting with emotions.

Drama Scene Analysis (see Appendix A) was a workshop course that met once a week for seven weeks with 48 students in one workshop. In this course, students analyzed a scene from an authentic playscript, and the class was divided into small groups consisting of four to six students. The students worked in these same groups for the entire seven weeks, and each group had a different scene to analyze. For 2007, the students analyzed A Christmas Carol because it was a play that was being directed for The Nagoya Players (an international amateur acting group), and, therefore, the students had the opportunity to see a live production of the play that they were actually learning about in class. Each class began with warm up activities that had several purposes, one of which was to build teamwork and trust within the group. These warm ups were essential to the entire workshop because it helped reduce students' anxiety about having to perform in front of their peers. The following is a comment from one student's action log about doing warm up activities: "Warm ups were very important activity for us. We could feel relaxed doing these activities. And the mood of our group got better!"

Another important component to Drama Scene Analysis is that each member of the group must contribute to everyone's overall understanding of the materials. For instance, each group member was required to do research about a topic that was related to the play. In the case of *A Christmas Carol*, students researched about poverty and child labor in the Victorian period, Dickens's London, the author/playwright, and the theme of *A Christmas Carol*. In the following class, students shared what they had learned from their research, and this was followed up with a mini-lecture highlighting the main points about each of the topics.

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The overall feedback of this workshop from the students was quite positive. At first many students felt anxious about having to perform in front of their peers, but by the end of the seven weeks most students felt a great sense of achievement. The following statements were taken from students' most recent action logs:

- "I was really excited in this class. It was the first time to be a director, so I was nervous and upset at first. I thought I couldn't teach how to read the lines and how to move on stage to actors. And I wondered we can understand two things, about Christmas Carol and about acting. But it was fun to research about Christmas Carol and Charles Dickens, and I learned a lot of things about them."
- "Although the main activity is acting, we could learn a lot of important things besides acting. For homework, we could deepen our knowledge of the time of Dickens. Then we learned the importance of trusting the other members of the group. Each of the members of our group worked each role seriously, and I was impressed by them. After final performance, I felt a sense of achievement

and very happy because many people praised our play."

#### From a coordinator's perspective

The coordinator's job has been ill defined as long as nothing seriously goes wrong. It is basically to bring a group of teachers together who are excited about teaching and give them the license to explore how they can communicate this excitement to their students. This does not, in fact, sound very academic nor is it based on an established curriculum theory. It stems from humanism and does have its distracters. The coordinator attempts to set up a diverse group of topics for each group of students, and see to it that teachers take their courses seriously and report grades on time. The coordinator is also somewhat of a trouble-shooter, problem solver, and bureaucrat.

Although not consistently completed throughout all years of the program, for the past few years, the coordinators of the workshop classes at Nanzan University have returned to the administering of students surveys to assess how students feel about learning English through content-based instruction. The most recent survey (see Appendix B) was distributed to the second-year workshop students at the end of the spring semester in 2007. Overall, the feedback was quite positive and informative. On average, in classes of 38 to 44 students surveyed, around 95 percent felt that they had learned a lot of English, and the majority of them felt that the workshops were relevant to what they were studying. In addition, many students commented that the teaching was helpful and understandable. However, it is also worth mentioning, that of the four second-year workshop instructors, only one received unfavorable results. In the comment box on the surveys, some students stated that one teacher did not have much passion for his topic, and as a result students did not gain much from his workshop. As mentioned above, when the workshop courses first began, teachers were chosen by the coordinator based on the teacher's enthusiasm for teaching. However, recently coordinators have not had much influence over the selection of teachers for the workshop courses, and as a result some instructors are less enthusiastic about teaching these content courses.

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The authors strongly suggest to coordinators of similar programs that they provide all teachers with a written orientation describing any items, such as action logs, etc. that are considered integral components. Students and teachers should be provided with a written explanation of the philosophy behind content-based courses. Finally, coordinators, teachers, students, and institutions, have much to gain from the use of overall course evaluations to compare the student perceptions of the workload for each course, as well as their beliefs about how much each course is contributing to their language development.

**Tim Murphey** created CBI programs at Nanzan University (11 years) and Dokkyo University (5 years) and will be teaching from April 2008 at Kanda University of International Studies, which has had CBI since 1989. <mits@kanda.kuis.ac.jp>

**Brad Deacon** is a former teacher and coordinator in the Nanzan University CBI program and after a short two-year absence has now returned to Nanzan as a program and teacher development coordinator in NEPAS (Nanzan English Program at Seto). <br/>
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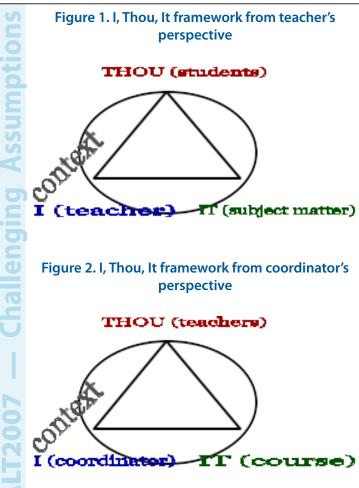
Mat White was a Senior Language Instructor and coordinator of general English classes at the Nanzan English Education Center, Nagoya campus, and a former coordinator of the Nanzan Workshop course (CBI program). From April 2008, he will be an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language Teaching at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies. <matspaldingwhite@hotmail.com>

Patricia Gage is also a Senior Language Instructor and coordinator of general English classes at the Nanzan English Education Center, Nagoya campus. She is also a former coordinator of the Nanzan Workshop courses (CBI program).<pattigage@hotmail.com>

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# **Appendix A**

#### Information about this workshop

**Objective:** In this workshop you will learn how to analyze a scene from a play from both a directing and acting perspective. You will also work closely with your peers to prepare and rehearse for a final presentation of your scene.

#### Grades:

- 1. Assignments / Action Log Entries: Due by Tuesday 10:00 am
- 2. English ONLY: Directors are responsible for making sure that students are using English at all times. If a group is caught speaking in Japanese, all members will receive a yellow warning card. If the same group members continue to use Japanese, each person will receive a red card (red cards = 5 points off of his/her FINAL grade.
- **3. Final presentation:** <u>Must be memorized</u>. This is a group grade, so please contribute as much as you can to help with your final presentations.
- 4. Attendance: You can only miss **two** classes (If, for some reason, you miss more than two, PLEASE contact me.)
- Assignments/Action Log Entries: 70
- Final Performance: 30

Lesson	Plan	Homework Characters/ Synopsis and Questions: pp. 4~7		
1	Introduction/ Warm ups/ Groups (Read Scene)			
2	Warm ups/ Groups (discuss the play)/ Discuss the play with the class	Topic Research and Action Log Entry: Pages 8 ~ 9		
3	Warm ups/ Discuss Research	Character OR Director Analysis: pages 10 ~ 12		
4	Warm ups/ Purpose (objectives) Groups (director and character analysis)	Purpose Statement Stories & Action Log: pages 13 ~ 14		
5	Warm ups/ Tactics and directing/ Rehearse scenes	Objectives/Obstacles/Tactics and Read List of Tactics: pages 16 ~ 17 (DO NOT HAND IN ACTION LOG)		
6	Warm ups/ Acting Tips/ Rehearse Scenes	Rehearse Scenes and read Acting Tips (p. 19) DO NOT HAND IN ACTION LOG		
7	Final presentations	Feedback form: page 20		

# Appendix B

# Workshop: Sophomore Mid-Year Survey

- A. Mathew White
- B. Patricia Gage

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- C. Mark Wright
- D. Karen Yasuda

The two classes I have had were \_\_\_\_and \_\_\_(A, B, C, or D)

In the space under each letter of the course you took, write the number that matches your opinion:

- 1 = disagree strongly
- 2 = disagree
- 3 =agree
- 4 = agree strongly

	Α	В	С	D
1. I learned a lot of English in this class.				
2. I learned a lot of other useful things in this class.				
3. This class was enjoyable.				
4. The teaching was helpful.				
5. The teaching was understandable.				
6. There was too much homework in this class.				
7. I was willing to do more homework in this class.				
8. I would take another class like this if I had the chance.				
9. This class was too easy.				
10. This class was irrelevant to what I wanted to study.				
11. I had a chance to interact with the teacher more in this class than in other classes.				
12. I had more time to interact with other students in this class than in other classes.				

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for Ion improving the workshop program at Nanzan? sumpt What subjects would you like to learn in workshop? AS What are your impressions of this year's workshop compared to your first year? Challenging Do you think Nanzan should offer workshop courses to third year students? Why or why not? ALT2007 —