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INTELLIGENT COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE ENGLISH AS A

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

By

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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University Honors

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Abstract

This study compares the effectiveness of traditional language teaching methods versus Natural Language Processing-based strategies in the Japanese English-as-a-Foreign-Language classroom. This study's purpose is to determine which approach improves linguistic performance. The research questions include the effectiveness of traditional language teaching methods, the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Language Learning, and how they differ. The significance of the study is its contribution to the ongoing debate in comparing classes that incorporate CALLprovided error feedback in the Japanese EFL classroom and those that do not.

From having explored the difference in results between traditional language teaching with those of CALL-incorporated classrooms, it has been shown that students have a better understanding of the language but will require help in both English and in the applications. On the other hand, while traditional language teaching may help in some aspects, they pale in comparison to the improvement of grammatical accuracy and applicative ability as compared to NLP-based teaching methods.

The study's conclusion discusses the implications of language teaching in the Japanese EFL classroom and suggests discussions for future research. In other words, students will still need the human side of language learning that traditional teaching provides in cooperation with CALL. Future research may explore the middle ground between CALL-incorporated and traditional learning methods. In conclusion, the study adds to the literature by comparing the quality of Japanese EFL classrooms' use of CALL and provides a guideline that a teacher may use when using CALL-provided feedback with a lesson plan made by the presenter.

Abstract1
Table of Contents2
Acknowledgements
1. Introduction4
1.1 Background of the Topic4
1.2 Purpose of the Study4
1.3 Research Questions
2. Overview of Traditional Language Teaching Methods in The Japanese EFL Classroom
2.1 Overview of AI-Based Language Learning Strategies7
2.2 Presentation in The Classroom
3. Findings on The Effectiveness of Traditional English Language Teaching Methods10
3.1 Findings on The Effectiveness of ICALL-Based Error Feedback11
3.2 Comparison of The Two Approaches12
4. Interpretation of The Results
4.1 Implications for Language Teaching in The Japanese EFL Classroom14
4.2 Suggestions for Future Research14
5. Conclusion15
6. Lesson Plan15
References17
Addendum

Table of Contents

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1. INTRODUCTION. While there is a compulsory requirement for Japanese students from the fifth grade until the twelfth, Japan is still one of the lowest in terms of English test scores among the countries in the South-East Asian region with a TOEFL median score of 73 when listed by country or region (Educational Testing Service 2021). A student may be unable to speak a mastered amount of English for many reasons, such as second language anxiety, a lack of practice, etc. While students from Japan may find issues in many other regards in English instruction, such as lack of student motivation, we will mainly focus on student input.

1.1. BACKGROUND ON THE TOPIC. The definition of "traditional" is based on the definition of "traditional" as defined by Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, "[a] characteristic manner, method, or style." And in the question of what traditional Japanese English teaching tradition is, it is defined by repeated rote memorization of words and phrases that is more or less shifted towards the student's passing of an entrance exam to the student's chosen university. A primary example of traditional English instruction that limits the Japanese EFL learner's ability to grammatically understand English text would be the standard Yakudoku method, in which students first memorize the translations of English and then reiterate each in Japanese (Gorsuch 1998); in contrast to the recommended methods of foreign language instruction that first asks students to take notice of the target grammatical structure and then learn practice examples as a class (Howatt 136).

1.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY. To improve English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching pedagogies in Japan, it is necessary to shift teaching away from simply preparing students for exams, commonly known as Shiken Jigoku, to interactive, grammar-focused learning activities that ask for all students in a class to participate. In fact, there are many initiatives set forth by many academics, researchers, and scholars, led by the Japanese MEXT, that are finding solutions

to the issue of English communicative ability of EFL students across Japan. However, with the rise of current technologies stemming from breakthroughs in computer science, I would like to leverage my knowledge of proven activities to EFL instruction.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS. There are many things that already work in the EFL classroom, such as textbooks, but while they do ask the student to do something besides translation, it's important that students have the necessary opportunity to engage with the target structure in an organic fashion. For instance, textbooks ask for students to use their knowledge of translations, conjugations, and vocabulary to solve problems, but they lack the interactive, free-flowing expression that precedes natural language growth. For example, the Yakudoku method mentioned above has been proven to only result in "seldom idiomatic English expressions" and "is only an approximation of the original [English reading]" (Hino 1988). Although the comprehension of foreign languages will never be one-to-one, it is still vital to not think of a foreign language in the terms of the native language; because if learners do view English as "a channel of one-way communication [...] for the reception of Western ideas but not for the transmission of Japanese ideas to the outside world[,]" (Law 1995) they would see English less as a means of expressing themselves to the outside world and more of one of many disposable tools memorized in school.

And because it is so important for students to have interactive methods in the classroom that promote engagement of the target language in the classroom, I aspire to include a modern means of language learning that all students can be a part of. I believe if we were to take advantage of the large stores of data from English corpora that encompasses many different kinds of English, ranging from beginner to academic, then a wide plethora of students would be able to learn at an individualized pace, just as much as students are able to learn either beginner

English and Academic English with Wordbricks. Then by including different kinds of English, and being able to piece words together dependent on the words next to each other with taking care of the syntactical structures as aided by color coding, students would be able to become more linguistically aware of the language that they are using.

Moreover, there is much well documented research that has proven the effectiveness of the integration of educational software in the foreign language classroom under the umbrella term, Computer-Assisted Language Learning. As soon as desktop computers were invented in 1964, there emerged the question of Computer Aided Language Learning (CALL); and a great example of this would be the University of Illinois' PLATO system, initially led by David Bitzer (Levy 1997). Then as CALL had become more prevalent through the widespread use of the desktop computer, it had become more important to academics who sought to explore the implications and applications of CALL in the foreign language classroom.

Thus, Japan serves as the optimal ground for CALL-supported language awareness by requiring necessary, organic inputs of the target language. Two examples that I would like to include are the Natural Language Generation (NLG) supported Question Generator and WordBricks, both of which support students in learning at their own pace with instant feedback. **2.** OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS IN THE JAPANESE EFL CLASSROOM. The Japanese classroom dynamics are teacher-oriented, with exams being the primary motivation for both students and teachers. However, students aren't given the communicative learning that is needed for English (Gorsuch 1998). There are many inhibitors of student input that transpire in the Japanese EFL classroom; for example, students feel better within the context of the Japanese classroom context to a point where they feel uncomfortable having to learn in the manner their native-English teacher acts.

2.1. OVERVIEW OF AI-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES. The first

application that this paper is focused on is titled the Question Generator. This device works with natural language-generating software that uses the English corpora to make its outputs. A student inputs a declarative statement into the web-based app, and it outputs a series of questions from the range of who, when, and where based on the student's topic. So, for example, when a student inputs a statement, "I went to the park," the app will say, "Who went to the park?", "When did you go to the park?" and "Where was the park?". When introduced to a group of Japanese EFL junior high school students, the application had proven to be useful in providing the students the necessary space to engage in the target language's grammatical structure with classmates.

Another app that aids in giving input within the classroom while still being free to choose an answer would have to be the Wordbricks web-based application. Wherein students are asked to use a drag-and-drop interface similar to the Scratch programming interface. By being able to use a drop and add function, students begin to follow the mental process of connecting words to categorizations of meaning within English. A feature of Wordbricks that makes it so valuable for the learning process is its instantaneous error process that reinforces the grammatical differences between the target language and the native language. For example, Japanese uses a Subject-Object-Verb syntactical structure while English uses Subject-Verb-Object structure, making it imperative that learners learn not just the translations, but the grammar as well.

Although the Wordbricks application is convenient for language learners, it still poses a risk for students in its main functions of incorporating a white space and a drag-and-drop function, giving students a range of motion that may seem too much. For example, the web application, Scratch, that it takes inspiration from has issues with only 8% of its user base using more than five variables at a time within their programming (Amanullah 2018). Taking this into

account with how students may feel when learning a different language and the anxieties that may arise, we must make sure that students are given a comfortable environment in which they can perform their assigned tasks; and in order to reach this goal, a teacher would have to be taught how to teach English but also how to teach basic programming skills that help students arrange their modes of reasoning.

2.2. PRESENTATION IN THE CLASSROOM. From the two applications, students can receive error feedback nearly instantaneously and without issue. For the former, students, after having written down their own generated questions, can check and compare with the application's own set of questions. In fact, the application also serves as a means for a teacher to organize and store their students' wide variety of answers for assessment (Blake 2023). When each answer is scrutinized enough, assumptions and patterns can be made on how students from a particular native language perceive the problem.

However, the underlying issue with both is that they still require an instructor to aid them in both English and the application, rather than English alone in common traditional English learning. For example, with the Question Generator, students could only thoroughly learn English grammar with the help of a teacher who understands the application's method of building question prompts. So, when in front of the computer, an instructor should first warm up with the students, present what the current learning goals are, practice with students as a group, then allow them to produce their inputs to their answers; then, finally wrap up with students while repeating what target structures had been gone over and reiterate its importance in the Englishspeaking world. In fact, an example of this being featured within the EFL classroom is shared below in the lesson plan.

Moreover, while Wordbricks is worth the time to implement in a classroom, the interface leaves room for improvement. Although receiving hints and feedback as you work is amazing, some students may still desire the brick-and-mortar fashion of writing on a piece of paper due to the application's drag-and-drop method of instruction. Thus, to remediate the complex issue of CALL-induced anxiety, an instructor learning in the target language and the application must work alongside the students. More preferably in the practice phase of the learning process in the classroom, in which the instructor is walking alongside the students and giving subtle hints and nudges toward the fact that each lexical category is within different sets of colors and shapes. If needed, the instructor should also reach for the mouse and demonstrate the drag-and-drop functionality of the application and, for example, tell students to picture the white space as a table and that each word is a strip of words that we connect the same as links of a chain.

Under the instructor, students are expected to follow the teacher's guidance and instructions as they introduce the goal of the class for that day. In particular, under an acclaimed EFL lesson teaching method; presentation, practice, and production; students are asked to spend the first minutes of the class listening to the instructor on today's learning targets, including instruction on how to work with today's application. For example, students within the first couple minutes of class should go over the main differences and similarities between Japanese and English; for instance, the teacher, in possibly their first beginner-English lessons, should explain how adjectives and nouns are similar in placement between English and Japanese, but the teacher's main takeaway should be that prepositional phrases are in different places between Japanese and English. Acknowledging the differences, the instructor should then demonstrate the application's ability to string together words in a grammatically correct manner, which conveys to the students the application's importance in illustrating the foundational rules of English.

So, with this in mind, it may seem that the best way to implement both applications is with an instructor involved. With an instructor working alongside the students and giving them the particular instruction they need to understand English grammar at first, students can then work on understanding the technological side of the applications. While students may feel confused at first, the challenges that students face pose for enhanced cognitive ability in both English and basic efficiency in programming, which may lead to more students pursuing STEM. **3.** FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS. With the compassion teachers already bring their students, teachers have been doing fascinatingly well with providing grammar instruction to students so that they have a foundation of the English paradigms when writing and reading. Although strict and formulaic, the grammar drills allow students to understand words in relation to their lexical category and place in time, such as knowing the word before a noun is usually a verb and that the word "was" is within the context of past tense. Hence, while taking a university entrance exam and coming across a question meant for English comprehension, they could, for example, answer how a prompt in English is organized by its outline; introduction, body, and conclusion.

English vocabulary instruction, in the context of traditional teaching methods, has allowed Japanese students to memorize the translation of words while gaining the ability to read English at the basic level, to the point that if a student were to have taken the six years of compulsory foreign language learning in Japan seriously, that they would have the ability to read basic English text. Vocabulary instruction is one of the major factors in the learning process, so it is no wonder that it has been a major factor within the realm of traditional teaching methods from the beginning of English instruction in Japan.

While controversial, exam-oriented English instruction methods have allowed students to gain the basic knowledge of English text formation. With students preparing for university entrance exams, students are prepared to read intermediate-level research papers in English. However, their communicative and written abilities can be improved with proper teaching pedagogies.

3.1 FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ICALL-BASED ERROR FEEDBACK.

Students can learn helpful features of English grammar from the two applications mentioned above. The Question Generator allows students to learn the paradigm of declarative-to-question that is imperative for English conversation. For example, when a person asks you, "Where is the house," you would then answer with "The house is to your right," with the understanding that "the house" is the subject. So using this knowledge, students can follow pre-written questions in English and answer a complete sentence. So understanding the question sentence and how it is formed allows students to function conversationally and critically.

In addition to the Question Generator, Wordbricks adds to the language awareness of its users by repeatedly testing their knowledge of English syntax. With the help of Wordbricks, students receive feedback while following the provided question prompts given to them. A vital part of English learning is understanding the sentence structure of English, in which students must understand that certain words must come in the order their lexical categories follow. For example, following the suggestions of English grammar suggested by the dependency grammar theory (Debusmann 2000), Wordbricks reinforces the structure of the English language that is imperative for speaking and understanding. As shown by the studies present in secondary/tertiary EFL classrooms, students were taught grammar more efficiently than students taught in a teacher-focused, traditional manner.

In addition to learning English grammar in the high school setting as compulsory education, university students motivated to read academic, peer-reviewed English were tasked with learning a variety of target structures in English, such as the target structure, "A is a method of B so that C can be D" (Purgina 146).

The beauty of using ICALL within the EFL classroom is how malleable it is to the contexts they find themselves in. If a teacher would like to improve their student's understanding of a particular English paradigm, they could change their application's target structure. With a teacher also receiving feedback by the end of the day, a teacher would then be able to try to remediate the misunderstandings from a group of students the next day or free period. Because in the usual language classroom setting, a teacher must first receive their student's understanding of the topic the next day and then only be able to review them themself when they can grade them. The ability for seamless data retrieval from students is pushed further with the addition of computer-aided learning. With each student most likely having a device within their pockets, what better time than any to take advantage of the technology they have that once put people in space?

3.2. COMPARISON OF THE TWO APPROACHES. When comparing the two approaches, it becomes apparent that traditional teaching methods can be improved by adding ICALL in the classroom. While it may be in the matters of the Japanese Ministry of Education and the hands of Japanese culture itself, it becomes less of a problem when we see ICALL as a learning tool than a new learning method - in other words, ICALL should work alongside traditional English teaching methods rather than it is the crutch of the EFL classroom.

Traditional teaching methods are still a strong force within the Japanese EFL classroom. It may have some downsides, such as a need for more focus in speaking with other students;

however, it still provides students with mainly human-to-human interaction with the teacher. Including the silence that students bring to the classroom is not inherently wrong; some may consider it a vital part of learning for Japanese students as it instills cultural respect toward the teacher. The problem may not lie that there is a problem, to begin with, but the fact that Japanese students, in particular, learn differently than other cultures. To illustrate, the students are learning at a pace correct for themselves and their culture, just like when you tell a man to dig with a shovel when, from birth, they have learned to use their hands.

In the end, traditional teaching methods in the EFL classroom bring to students what they are familiar with and the "human" touch to their learning that they have learned from kindergarten. We should not then think of ways to appropriate their culture but instead learn and appreciate what they have and offer our best help. The ICALL presented this; Question Generator and Wordbricks do the best. They give the teachers the least learning curve vs. learning a different teaching method and more on supplementary material, the same as an extra workbook. Nevertheless, unlike a regular workbook, ICALL presents the learner with a greater amount of resources to work on, such as instant feedback and availability.

4. INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS. From looking at how ICALL is presented in the classrooms, it is clear that students gain a greater language awareness than without them. In fact, a newer way to learn to students may spark interest in learning English. Instead of the class being another year in the six compulsory years of English learning, it becomes a matter of importance and interest to students. For example, instead of teaching like math and science, where learning is dependent on whether answers to questions are right or wrong, students would begin to learn that foreign language learning is all about the interactivity between a person and the other.

4.1. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE JAPANESE EFL

CLASSROOM. Integrating the Question Generator and Wordbricks in the classroom is nothing short of an improvement as students, from the number of experiments from the technologies, have shown a grander range of language awareness of English. Taking this into consideration for other technologies, it may be of great help to the students of Japan that new supplementary methods are introduced to them in the classroom. ICALL-based supplementary materials that could be introduced are an introduction to pedagogical material within the software technologies mentioned above.

In fact, ICALL-based learning materials have the potential to alleviate some of the anxieties with learning a new language with Japanese EFL students living in a society of "winners only. With students being able to continue their studies from class at home, they are less likely to feel nervous than being asked for correct answers by their peers and teachers. Instead, they are given feedback from a computer, and as research suggests, students are less likely to feel pressured by computer-given feedback than instructor-given.

4.2. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH. ICALL technologies are great for supplementary material in the language classroom. Although, what should be noted is how much of using a computer device could be overbearing for students. For the Wordbricks app in particular, the students studied had a background in computer science and already understood the similar roles code bricks in Scratch have to words in Wordbricks (Blake 145).

In addition, teachers should learn what would be considered too much linguistic-focused material when using either the Question Generator or Wordbricks. A great example would be whether students should learn the verb-auxiliary shift when forming questions in English, or how syntax trees are produced in Wordbricks.

5. CONCLUSION. As shown by the research, students perform more under the support of CALL than students who aren't. Moreover, CALL works so well as supplemental material in the Japanese context that it also makes sure to acknowledge the cultural norms of students. In particular, students have been taught from an early age to remain silent and attentive to the teacher at the cost of individual creativity and problem-solving. Hence, as CALL situates itself real comfily into the palms and laps of students, it finds itself snug as an outlet for students to engage with the target language without having to impede or disrupt established practices.

Furthermore, the integration of Computer-Assisted Language Learning helps students fulfill their individual goals and the goals of the teacher. Including supporting students foundationally, ICALL helps to uphold cultural sensitivities under use in the classroom. Although it may be difficult to facilitate a native English speaker to speak one-on-one with each student, we can still hope to achieve a fair amount of input for all students with ICALL. **6.** LESSON PLAN. When writing a lesson plan, an EFL teacher must take notice of each student's needs. For our case, we will focus on the general use of the WordBricks and Question Generator applications in the Japanese EFL tertiary educational setting. We will automatically assume that the students have a basic understanding of the computer interface and will not go over the discussion of, for example, how to turn on a computer.

When writing a lesson plan for the EFL setting, it is recommended that teachers and tutors look at important methodologies and the styles of lesson plans that have been proven to work well in the EFL classroom. For example, teachers may want to work with an assortment of methodologies such as the PPP method, ESA method, and the ARC method, while each defined as Presentation, Practice, and Production; Engage, Study, and Activate; Clarification and Focus, Restricted Use, and Authentic Use, respectively. While each is important for separate reasons,

we will focus primarily on the PPP style of presenting and facilitating activities in the classroom.

When writing an effective lesson plan for students, it is important to follow certain steps. First, identify the necessary resources that will be needed. Next, consider the learning styles that are most appropriate for the context. Additionally, incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy (Sosniak 1994) as a framework for instructional design. Finally, ensure that the learning objectives are clear, concise, and visible to the instructors.

For instance, instead of a vague objective like "students will be better in English," instructors should write a more specific objective such as "students will be able to write in the format of X is Y." This objective aligns with Bloom's Taxonomy, particularly the higher-order thinking skill of combining parts to create a new whole (Sosniak 1994). By using clear and measurable learning objectives, instructors can enhance the effectiveness of their lesson plans.

In conclusion, lesson planning utilizes creativity and confidence on the part of the teacher to administer a set of rules and objectives for the students to follow. We can never know what is going on in the minds of students, though we can guess, but we can gauge what they know by following Bloom's Taxonomy. Then understanding what is required from the students, we can happily and confidently help them to the best of our abilities to guide them to their learning goals. Using the PPP method, we can be sure that students are given the effective amount of time to be introduced to the topic, practice, and create their own sentences and examples of the target structure all within the supervision of a certified EFL teacher.

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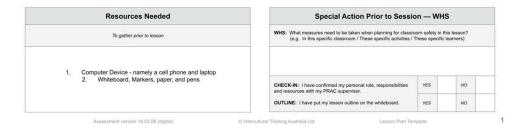
Addendum:

Lesson Plan Slide 1:

TESOL Foundations	ask 6 Lesson Plans and Resources Part B		Full Lesson Plan template 45* minut
	Blank Lesson Plan Template	Name	Ulyses Newvine
Lesson Topic	Using WordBricks in the Classroom	Date	4/26/23
Level	Tertiary	Venue	

Example: Ss will be able to (measurable action verb) ... (specific details that explain how your students will accomplish the learning in the activity)

Learning Outcomes (usually 1 per activity; numbered)	1. Students should be able to differentiate the lexical categories of English
	2. Students should be able to interpret the different categories of words through the bricks' different colors
	3. Students should be able to interpret the error hints from Wordbricks
	4. Students should be able to translate a beginner-level phrase in Japanese to English that incorporates prepositional phrases.



Lesson Plan Slide 2:

Learning Outcome Time No.	Activity	Gr ou pin gs	Resources
	Warm Up: Give students devices and explain to them that we will be using a computer device and a new application, Wordbricks, to check for understanding of the students' abilities of written English grammar. Tell the students that the application will be useful later to help them with independent study, and that today's lesson is to get them used to the program's user interface. Also provide the classroom with strings of words, their lexical categories underneath, and paper/pencils.		

Lesson Plan Slide 3:

earning Dutcome Io.	Time	Activity	Gr ou pin gs	Resources
1		 E. As the first step of the activity, the teacher should first review with the students the different lexical categories of English. Explain that words share the meanings of adjective, noun, and prepositional particles, respectively. However, do not forget to include that Japanese prepositional phrases are post-prepositional, while English's are pre-prepositional. Then, Demonstrate the word pattern in English that convey the lexical categories such as: I went to the store My dog ran under the table The boy walks on top of the rain The bird flew out of the tree. With simple English, title the phrases using keywords such as Noun phrase, Verb phrase, prepositional phrase, noun phrase. Tell students this is because English follows the SVO style of grammar. A. Give students more sample sentences and ask them to label the phrases of English in their sentences with the lexical categories pre-labeled. Make sure students are labelling properly. S. Cold call students to gather the classroom's understandings of English syntax. For example sate, "Where does the noun		

Lesson Plan Slide 4:

No.
2

Lesson Plan Slide 5:

Learning Outcome No.	Time	Activity	Groupings	Resources
3		 E. Continuing from the question asked previously, explain to the students that the error hints provide the information necessary to understand that some words don't mix and that some words do. Explain that the hints provide the information necessary to independently string together words and that the error hints is like an automatic grader. A. While students are continuing to piece together words and demonstrating their ability to construe grammatical sentences in English, ask them to read aloud the error hints that pop up. Convey to them the importance of making mistakes and learning from them with the assistance of automatic graders that tell them what they've done wrong. 		
		S. Explain that the application is nothing more than supplementary material the same as a notebook or workbook that they can use at their own leisure for practice. Now after having practiced the syntactical paradigm of English, ask them, without Wordbricks, to give an example of an English sentence that uses any of the prepositional phrases given.		

Lesson Plan Slide 6:

Dutcome No.	Time A	Activity	Groupings	Resources
4	a p re A m m S S	 E. Continuing from the question asked in the previous activity, ask that students write their own sentences on paper and pencil. After 3 minutes or so, ask that students ead aloud their sentences to their nearby table partners A. While students are writing down their sentences, nonitor for mistakes. Then when they start speaking, don't nonitor for fluency but help with grammar and pronunciation. S. Ask that a student from their groups read aloud to the eacher what they've written. Cold call students. 		

Lesson Plan Slide 7:

Learning Outcome No.	Time	Activity	Groupings	Resources
		 Wrap Up: Think, Pair, Share E: When finished with this lesson, have the Ss reflect on what they learned in class today by doing a "Think, Pair, Share" reflection activity. Have Ss think quietly about 2 things they learned today. (30 sec) Have Ss find a new partner (pair) and talk about what they learned. (2 min) Have those pairs get into small groups and share with the new students what their partners learned. (2 min) 		
		A: Do this activity as a class. S: Have each group share with the class at least one thing that someone in their group learned today		

Lesson Plan Slide 8:

Student Feedback (Student to complete)	1 = OK 2 = good 3 = excellent	1	2	3					
Student Name:	me: Did you enjoy the lesson?								
What advice could you give the teacher?	Did you learn something?								
	Were the instructions clear?								
	Will you use the new vocabulary this week?								
Trainee Teacher Reflection (Reflect on your teaching skills)									
What went well? (2 things that you did well) 1. 2.	1.								
What could you improve? (2 things that you could improve) 1. 2.									
Resource Rationale Respond to the following questions to explain why	you chose to use your resources (about 100 total w	ords)							
Why did you choose the resources that you did?									
How effective were they in achieving the lesson's learning outcomes?									
What internet sources did you use and how did you adjust them to suit the lesson (if applicable)? Include a reference list when appropriate, stating where to find resources. (Webpage name, Text name and page number, YouTube video name or link, etc.)									