The School House

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In this Issue （内容）

At the moment we don't have a Publicity Chair but we are actively looking for someone to fill this position. If interested you can email me pnanton@gmail.com or go to our Facebook site (https://www.facebook.com/groups/jshsig/).

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Hi Everyone!

By the time you read this your school should be on spring break or on the verge. I hope you enjoy this issue. The first article by Melony Ward looks at the importance of scaffolding for your learners. A vital method needed for young learners to progress. The next article, Jeremy Lanig, outlines the START method in the EFL classroom. Finally, Samiksha Bidari, provides a couple of inexpensive, crafty and easy lesson activities.

If that is not enough for you, get onto our lively Facebook site (https://www.facebook.com/groups/jshsig/) to see regular posts offering advice, links, information, jobs and a sense of community! See you there!!

With the new school year upon us I would like to get another *School House out* before Golden Week. If you would like to contribute an article, an event you're promoting or anything you would like to be announced to TYL members, you can send it to me (pnanton@gmail.com). Enjoy your spring vacation.

Paul Nanton, Editor, *The School House*

The Role of Scaffolding in Foreign Language Instruction for Young Learners

By Melony Ward, Bambi Bilingual Kindergarten, 2019

Scaffolding is critical to student success. "Scaffolded instruction optimizes student learning by providing a supportive environment while facilitating student independence" (Larkin, 2002). It provides a safety net, a sense of comfort, and clarity of expectations. Proper scaffolding leads to a healthy and productive learning cycle that is self-sustaining. In the natural progression of language learning, students will face small risks as they seek to make connections between all of the sounds/words/phrases they hear and corresponding objects or situations. With the listening comprehension gained through these experiences, students will become more comfortable and will gradually be ready to accept the greater risk of speaking in English. Success in these utterances leads to confidence, which leads to further acceptance of risk, and that in turn leads to more opportunities for a sense of accomplishment through increased English output.

What Is Scaffolding?

- In a language learning setting, Scaffolding, also known as Scaffolded Instruction, refers to the support that students receive from teachers and caregivers as they seek to build listening comprehension, acquire vocabulary and understand new points of grammar, and move toward using these skills in their own speech.

- "Scaffolding is a key feature of effective teaching, where the adult continually adjusts the level of his or her help in response to the learner's level of performance" (McLeod, S.A. 2012).

- Scaffolding is necessary when working with students who are venturing out of their comfort zone, and into new territory. This new territory can be referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD lies in the gap between what students already know and what they are trying to attain. The ZPD covers the skills which are too difficult for a student to master independently, but that can be accomplished with "guidance and encouragement" from a teacher (McLeod, S.A. 2012).

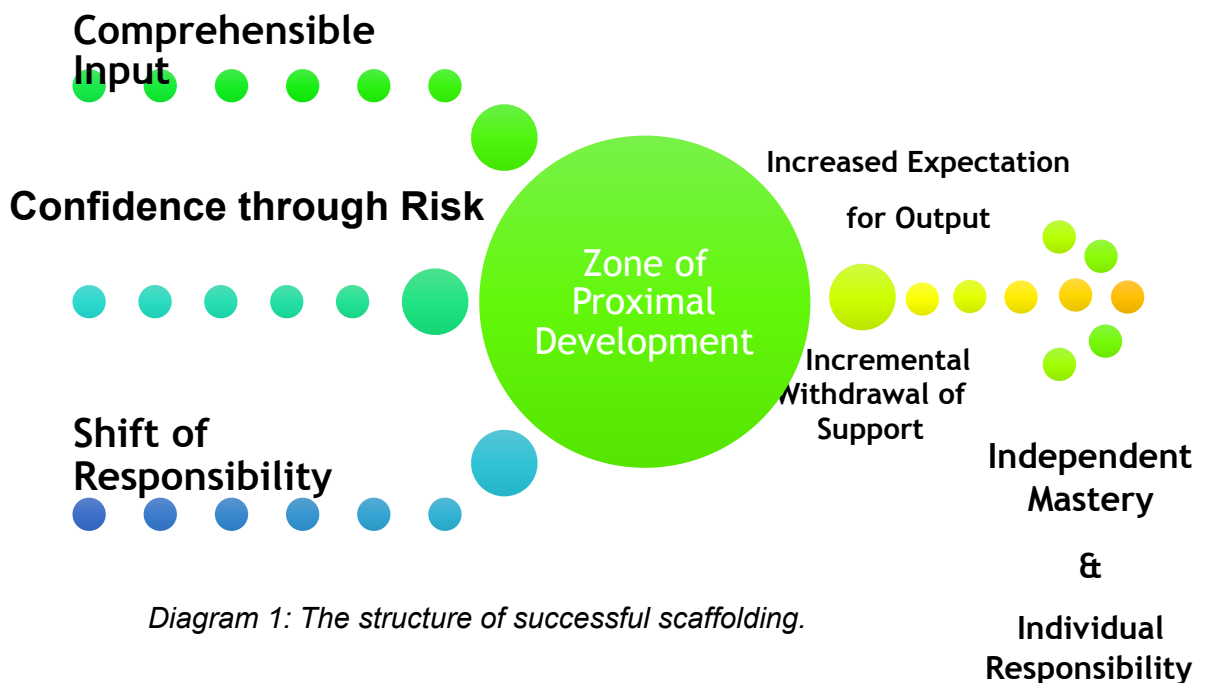## What Does Successful Scaffolding Look Like?

As shown in Diagram 1, below, successful scaffolding is a process consisting of several important components.

- Teachers must carefully and skillfully assist students in building listening comprehension skills for the most useful vocabulary and grammar points, and **gradually shift their focus** to helping students to achieve English output. Expectations for output must also be **incremental** to allow the children to achieve small successes first, and then build on those little by little.

- This focal shift from input to output is actually a shift of "responsibility for learning from the teacher to the students" (Larkin, 2002). With greater responsibility for their own learning, the students feel empowered and motivated to continue learning. For this empowerment and motivation to take hold, the shift must take place comfortably and successfully, which requires careful planning and awareness on the part of the teacher as they prepare to withdraw support.

- The essence of scaffolding requires that students receive support as long as is necessary for them to begin using new language (vocabulary and sentence structures) on their own. The timing and method of the withdrawal of support is as important as the implementation of scaffolding.

  Abrupt withdrawal places students' confidence at risk and forces them to accept greater challenges than those which they are prepared to handle. **Delayed withdrawal**, on the other hand, creates obstacles to students' confidence and independence as they continue to use and rely on supports which they no longer actually need. However, carefully planned, **incremental withdrawal** of support enables the students to take on manageable challenges, thereby becoming more independent, self-sufficient and self-confident.

- Without proper scaffolding, meaningful free talk is impossible and attempts can be damaging to students' confidence and thereby motivation.

Comprehensible Input

Confidence through Risk

Shift of Responsibility

Zone of Proximal Development

Increased Expectation for Output

Incremental Withdrawal of Support

Independent Mastery

&

Individual Responsibility

Diagram 1: The structure of successful scaffolding.

What techniques are a part of successful scaffolding?

Diagram 2 illustrates the techniques which come together to form successful scaffolding.

- **Modeling and Specific Instruction** – The teacher provides ample comprehensible input by directly modeling the vocabulary and target phrases. This can be supported by using puppets to demonstrate a role play which illustrates the target phrase with appropriate vocabulary.

- **Visual / Auditory Cues and Prompts** – The teacher uses pictures, video, realia, music, chants, and TPR (Total Physical Response) to illustrate the vocabulary and phrases, augmenting comprehensible input and supporting learner retention.

- **Materials and Activity Adaptation** – The teacher adjusts teaching materials and activities in a responsive manner, reflecting the changing abilities of the students as they move through their ZPD and toward mastery of the content. The teacher takes care to plan activities and use materials which change only one element of the learning process at one time. Students can focus their energy on one area of learning, maximizing their potential for comprehension and acquisition.

- **Cooperative Learning & Student Centering** – The teacher encourages student cooperation in the form of peer modeling and group, pair and individual output. Giving ownership of activities to the students, the teacher shifts responsibility for learning to the students themselves.
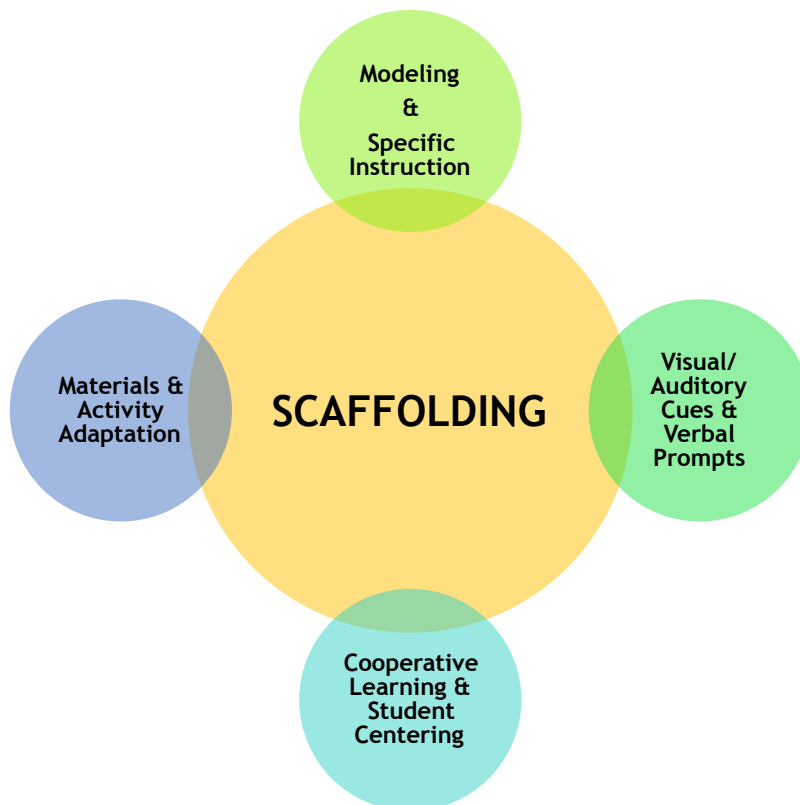

Diagram 2: Techniques of successful scaffolding.

How is Scaffolding used in a language learning setting?

① **Maximization of comprehensible input and confirmation of understanding:** The use of Visual and Auditory Cues provides context for the target language. Modeling, Specific Instruction and Materials Adaptation are key components of this step as students build the foundation for listening comprehension.

② **Class output:** Teacher elicits class production of vocabulary and target language structures via guided practice games and activities. Continued use of Visual Cues/Auditory Cues reinforces comprehension. Modeling & Specific Instruction are also necessary when eliciting output for the first time in order to ease students into their ZPD and build confidence with new material.

③ **Small group or pair output:** Teacher facilitates small group or pair language production via guided practice games and activities. Verbal and Auditory Cues & Prompts are useful tools at this stage, working to support students as they begin to take responsibility for independent output. Activity Adaptation allows the teacher to customize lesson content to the needs of specific students. Students move through their ZPD as they apply their growing confidence to taking greater risks toward independent language production.

④ **Individual output:** Teacher facilitates individual language production by each student, working alone or in pairs as conversation partners. Cooperative Learning and Student Centering allow students to support and learn from each other at this critical stage, moving out of their ZPD and into the territory of newly acquired language skills.

What might a Unit structure look like when Scaffolding is being used properly?

① Introduction of target vocabulary / sentence structures in the form of comprehensible input via songs, flashcards, realia, TPR (Total Physical Response) actions, etc.

② Reinforcement of comprehensible input via games and activities where students can interact with the language by listening and offering non-verbal responses, for example playing a simple teacher-led BINGO game.

③ Beginning of class output via interactions in which the students say the target vocabulary as a part of the activity. An example would be a simple game of charades, where the Teacher acts out the TPR for each vocabulary item and the students say the word. The next logical step to this activity would be student-led charades where the students take turns acting out the cards for their peers.

④ Beginning of small group or pair output via activities in which the students must produce the language for the game to proceed, such as a memory card game, where the students work in pairs to try to make matches with the vocabulary, calling out the vocabulary or target phrase as they move through the game. The next logical step to this activity is to move from production of isolated vocabulary words to use of vocabulary within the full phrases or sentences of the target language structures.

⑤ Facilitation of individual output of the vocabulary with the full phrases or sentences via an activity such as a student-led role play using realia.

Chart 1 is a sample outline for a 5-week unit aimed at kindergarten-aged students, covering present-continuous tense verbs in a playtime setting.

Lesson Number	Activities	Scaffolded Characteristics
1	• Role Play blowing bubbles. Use puppet to ask "What are you doing?" Teacher uses realia to pretend to blow bubbles, answering "I'm blowing bubbles." • Listen to the song "What Are You Doing?" from the Tiny Talk Songbook Collection. • Show flashcards for target vocabulary, modeling the language intonation and pronunciation. • Model TPR actions for each vocabulary as saying it, encouraging students to copy the actions and pronunciation.	• Modeling, Visual & Auditory Cues • Auditory cues • Visual & Auditory Cues; Specific Instruction • Modeling, Specific Instruction, Visual & Auditory Cues
2	• Review TPR actions with flashcards, encouraging students to do the actions while repeating the vocabulary. • Implement a teacher-led, teams-based BINGO game using a grid which includes all the target verb phrases. Encourage the class to ask "What are you doing?" before saying the verb phrase for each turn of the BINGO game, such as "I'm blowing bubbles". • Sing the "What Are You Doing?" song again, using flashcards and encouraging students to do the TPR during the song.	• Visual & Auditory Cues • Visual & Auditory Cues; Cooperative Learning • Visual & Auditory Cues
3	• Sing the "What Are You Doing?" song using realia or flashcards, requiring students to sing and dance along. Let students help by each holding one card or item. • Review the TPR for each vocabulary item, requiring students to copy the TPR and say the vocabulary, providing verbal prompts as necessary. When students have difficulty with an item ask "Is this (wrong item)" a time or two, and then supply the beginning sounds of the correct item. • Play a charades game, shifting from teacher-led where the teacher does the TPR action and the class guesses the verb phrase, to student-led where the students take turns doing the TPR action in front of the class.	• Visual & Auditory Cues; Student Centering; Materials Adaptation • Visual & Auditory Cues; Student Centering; Prompts • Student Centering; Activity Adaptation; Transfer of Responsibility
4	• Do a fast review for the vocabulary, showing the cards and requiring students to both do the TPR and say the vocabulary. Leave a couple of items out and ask the class to recall which vocabulary were skipped. Refrain from offering prompts for the vocabulary such as saying the first sound, or showing the TPR to the students unless the students are having difficulty with an item. • Play the "Collect Game". Divide the class into teams and give each team a set of vocabulary flashcards. The teams race to see which team can say all of the vocabulary the fastest. Focus on proper pronunciation and whole-team participation. Always ask "What are you doing?" before allowing the team to say a card. • Listen to the "What Are You Doing?" song, requiring students to sing and dance without teacher assistance.	• Visual & Auditory Cues; Student Centering; Materials & Activity Adaptation; Incremental Withdrawal of Support; Transfer of Responsibility • Collective Learning; Student Centering; Transfer of Responsibility; Increased Expectation for Output; Incremental Withdrawal of Support • Visual & Auditory Cues; Transfer of Responsibility
5	• Let students take turns drawing a card or realia item from a "Magic Box". Students act in pairs, asking "What are you doing?" and answering, "I'm (blowing bubbles)." • The class acts out the song in two teams, one team singing "What are you doing?" and the other singing the "I'm (blowing bubbles)" portion of the song.	• Student Centering; Collective Learning; Materials & Activity Adaptation • Student Centering; Materials & Activity Adaptation

Chart 1: Sample Unit Outline Demonstrating the Role of Scaffolding

When students are given the amount and type of support appropriate for the level of their language proficiency, and when that support is adapted and withdrawn at an appropriate time, students' language ability will develop more quickly and will result in greater gains in confidence and motivation. Scaffolding skills can be honed throughout every teacher-student interaction, and as teachers develop stronger scaffolding skills, the benefits to students are real and long-lasting.

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Larkin, M. (2002). Using scaffolded instruction to optimize learning. Arlington, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

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The Stagger-Repeat Teaching Method (START Method)
An Approach to Teaching EFL with Mixed-Ability Students
By **Jeremy Lanig, M.A.** | jeremy@bingobongokids.com
Step by Step Eikaiwa | www.stepbystepeikaiwa.jp

What is the START Method and how does staggering ability levels and repeating classes benefit EFL/ESL students?

The START Method is a teaching method by Jeremy Lanig, founder and director of Step by Step Eikaiwa, which encourages peer-based learning by combining mixed-ability students in EFL classrooms. START stands for "Stagger-Repeat Teaching," and this method of teaching has proven to be an effective teaching method, allowing for improved development in speaking and listening skills among young children learning English as a foreign language (EFL students) in Japan. This article will describe the theory behind the START Method, the benefits and challenges of using it, and practical applications of the method in the classroom.

The START Method is a teaching method based on a curriculum that can be repeated twice for a group of students, having a slightly increased level of difficulty the second time it is used. In traditional teaching models, students typically advance through a system of one-year grades without repetition. In the case of EFL education, however, there is a greater need for practice and review of studied material if there is a long interval of time between lessons or study. This is often the case for young EFL students in Japan who typically only study once per week as an extracurricular activity. The START Method can be thought of as having grades or levels which last for two years. If an EFL course is used for six years, then the START Method has three two-year levels, rather than six one-year levels.

The START Method also allows classes to have staggered levels of student ability in a grade, meaning new students can join the class with existing students each year. The first-year students are called "Juniors," and the second-year students are called "Seniors." This style of class is easy to visualize by thinking of a constantly moving escalator with only two steps, requiring two years to get from the bottom to the top. Juniors step onto the escalator in their first year, become Seniors halfway up the escalator when it reaches the second step, and complete the grade when stepping off the escalator. A unique characteristic of the START Method is that new students can get onto the first step of the escalator when it becomes empty after the previous Juniors have advanced to Seniors. A class based on the START Method is fixed in place, constantly repeating like an escalator, and students are regularly entering the class, studying for two years, and then moving to the next class, or two-step escalator.

The START Method and the Input Hypothesis (i+1)

Based on the ideas of second-language acquisition by Stephen Krashen, it is hypothesized that students can easily acquire language which is slightly more advanced (level i+1) than their current base of knowledge (level i). When a class is staggered using the START Method, it creates an ideal environment for Juniors (level i) to learn not only from the teacher, but also from the Seniors whose level is (i+1) relative to the Juniors. Seniors can also benefit in their second year through review and peer-based learning as they help teach the Juniors the language and concepts acquired in their first year.

The benefits of the START Method

The benefits of the START Method are clear. A classroom where students can learn from both their teacher and their peers is preferable for obvious reasons. It creates an environment reflective of how native speakers naturally learn their first language. When children play with other children and speak in their native language, it's rare for students to all have the same level of speaking experience and same core vocabulary. Their speaking abilities, although similar, have variance which is ideal from the perspective of language acquisition. It can be argued that children learn faster by imitating their peers, and therefore, the teaching process is more effective when using the START Method. Creating an environment which allows for a slightly increased level of difficulty (i+1) is difficult to achieve in one-year classes commonly found in EFL classrooms, but this idea is built into the foundation of the START Method.

In addition, the START Method can be easily applied to an existing curriculum using context-based or task-based learning. An activity which is repeated in every lesson such as taking attendance, for example, can be more effective when carried out using the START method. When taking attendance, students learn expressions such as, "I'm here," "He's here," and "She's here." If students haven't studied these expressions yet, a teacher may have difficulty explaining how to do the activity. As a result, it may take several lessons before the students can understand and internalize the language. Using the START Method, Juniors, who are learning these expressions for the first time, can mimic their Seniors doing the attendance activity and immediately follow suit. It should be noted that the Seniors also learned this activity by mimicking their own Seniors in their Junior year. Thus, it's a repeating cycle, much like an escalator.

Difficulties applying the START Method

The most difficult part of applying the START Method is finding an ideal curriculum to use in a two-year course having staggered levels of student abilities. Students who study the same topics for two years may become bored, so the curriculum in the second year should have an appropriate increase in difficulty level. This can be achieved by giving the Seniors additional challenges or resources to further deepen their understanding of the language being reviewed from their Junior year. In the example of taking attendance, the teacher could ask the Seniors more advanced questions such as, "Where is he?" in response to the answer, "He's not here," which Juniors are expected to learn. A curriculum which has two different sets of

worksheets or homework activities based on the same core vocabulary is ideal when using the START Method in the EFL classroom.

Practical applications of the START Method in EFL classrooms

Many teachers of EFL often rely heavily on flashcards and textbooks which are used linearly, providing little opportunity for review. To effectively apply the START Method, a curriculum must be able to be repeated for two years and use the same core vocabulary with a slightly higher level of difficulty for the Seniors. If students were studying new words starting with different letters of the alphabet (**ant, apple, alligator**), for example, Juniors could learn the words and focus on the uppercase letters and letter names. Seniors, on the other hand, could focus on using the words with various expressions (**Do you like ants? Do you eat apples? Do you have an alligator?**) and focus on learning the lowercase letters, phonics, and spelling. By keeping the target vocabulary the same for both years of a grade, the START Method allows the Juniors to learn the words more efficiently from the teacher as well as their Seniors. And since the Seniors already know the vocabulary from their Junior year, the phonics and spelling of the words can be taught more effectively with a deeper level of understanding.

Another example of an application of the START Method is teaching verbs and adjectives. Juniors can learn adjectives (**hot, cold, big, small**) and the present tense of verbs (**run, jump, swim**), while the Seniors can learn the comparative forms of the same adjectives (**hotter, colder, bigger, smaller**) and the present participle forms of the verbs (**running, jumping, swimming**). The core vocabulary doesn't change, but the teaching efficiency and the level of understanding that students can achieve greatly improves.

Although the START Method requires a curriculum which uses common vocabulary for two years, additional non-repeating material can also be introduced each year to disguise the repetitive nature of the method. A song of the month which is never repeated over a two-year period could be introduced every month to give Juniors and Seniors new, fresh materials to avoid a sense of stagnation.

Improving the future of EFL English education using the START Method

The START Method clearly has potential to improve the efficiency of English education by increasing the opportunity for peer-based learning and providing ample opportunity for review in EFL classrooms. Many of the frustrations and limitations associated with common teaching methods and resources in EFL classrooms can be overcome if curricula and teaching resources are designed with the principles of the START Method in mind. BINGOBONGO Learning's EFL resources including the free BINGOBONGO Curriculum, FUN!books, Curriculum Cards, and A.S.K. Profile Cards have all been designed based on the START Method. Anyone interested in learning more about the **START Method** or BINGOBONGO Learning's education resources based on the **START Method** should visit www.bingobongokids.com.

Cost effective material ideas for young learners. By Samiksha Bidari

Tachikawa Elementary Schools ALT

DICE GAME

Materials required:
A4 sheet
Ruler, pencil, eraser, marker pen
Photo copied pictures from any book of related topic.
Stickers (optional)
Dice

Time required:
10-15 minutes

Target production:
To teach up to 20 words and 2 to 4 phrases.

Description:
This is one of my students' most loved activities, designed for elementary school level.   Take an A4 sheet of paper and draw lines and make blank boxes. I have made a 6 by 7 grid (42 boxes). According to your comfort, you can alter the numbers. I usually find this one perfect.
Next we have to plan the target vocabulary and the target phrase(s) to be taught that day.

The following is designed to teach the names of the sports played in the Olympics and Paralympics
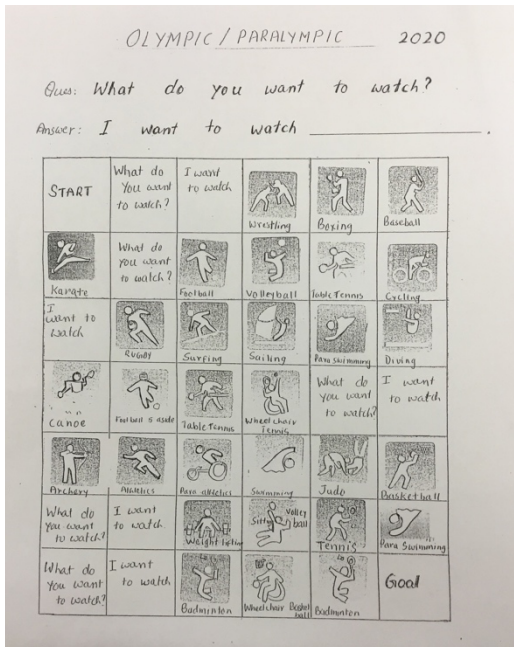Target vocabulary: 29 words
Target phrases: 2
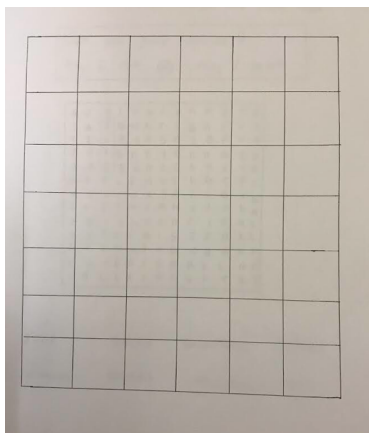
Step by step instruction followed by the picture.

Step 1. Make boxes

Step 2. Cut out the sports symbols and stick on, or draw them. If there is not enough time and students have already learned to read, we can just write the names of the sports in the boxes. The dice game chart is ready.

The main material is dice, which we can easily buy at the 100 yen store nearby. It's best to buy 2 or 3 sets, with 5 or 6 dice inside. I bought one with six dice, out of which 2 are too small which I rarely use.

Students can use their pencil cap or eraser as their marker and at the end of the lesson they will have to return the dice and the sheets given to them. Teachers make groups of four students each, which is best to play this game.
The teacher's role is to make groups and explain the rules of the game.
Students should use only English and if the student can't read what's written, they have to wait till their friend reaches the same box, learn and repeat from him/her for the next move. The vocabulary and the target phrase should be revised up to 7 times before starting the game, otherwise the students who can't read will feel that they missed out, but just by practicing many times it becomes easier for everyone. Once the student reaches the goal, he or she has to call the teacher. I usually award them a sticker and carry 3D stickers for the first one to win or to finish, and the other winners will receive ordinary stickers.
I hope you can enjoy this with your students.

Word search

Materials required:
A4 sheet
Ruler, pencil, eraser

Time required:
10-15 minutes

Target production:
To introduce up to 20 vocabulary and alphabet observation.
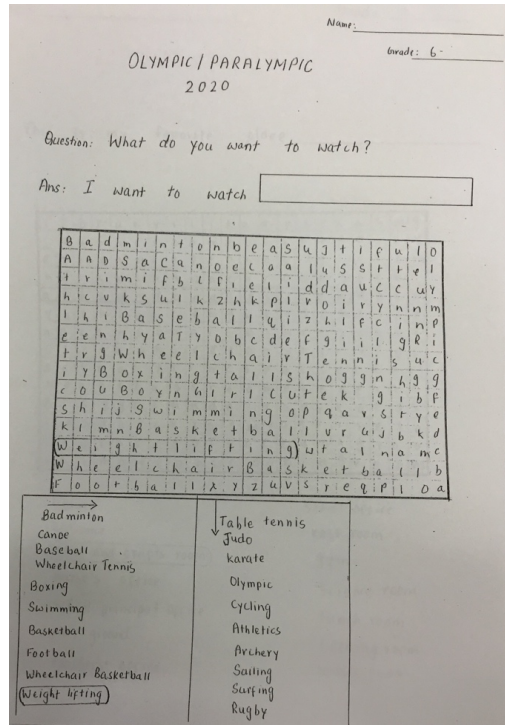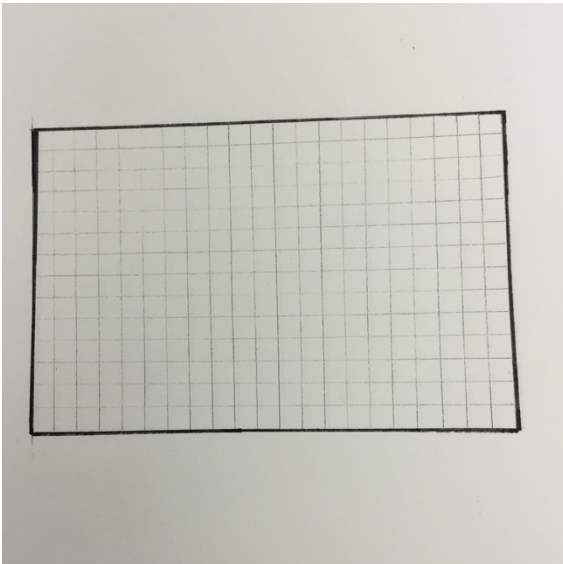
Target group:
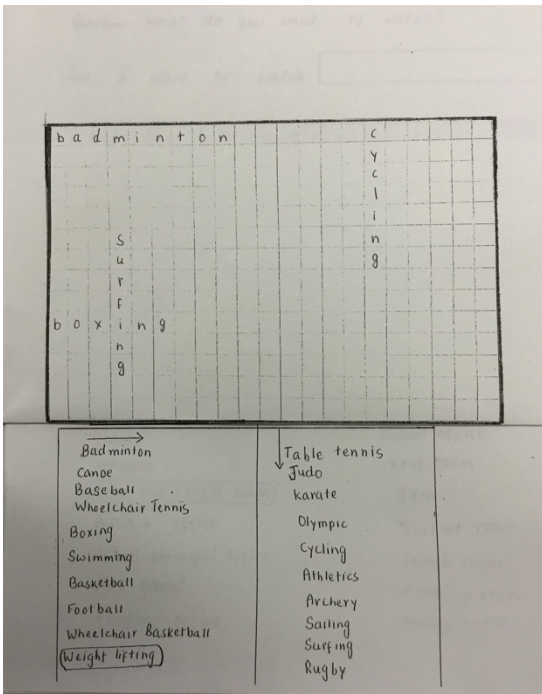New learners, Japanese elementary school 3rd grade onwards.

Method:
Take A4 sheet. Draw small boxes using ruler and pencil. Plan the vocabulary to be used.
Fill in the boxes with the words to be searched. Once all the vocabulary is filled, fill the remaining boxes with whatever letters comes to mind but make sure to include everything from A to Z.
Picture detail given below.

b a d m i n t o n   c
y
c
l
i
n
g

s
u
r
f
b o x i n g
n
g

Badminton →	↓ Table tennis
Canoe	Judo
Baseball	karate
Wheelchair Tennis	Olympic
Boxing	Cycling
Swimming	Athletics
Basketball	Archery
Football	Sailing
Wheelchair Basketball	Surfing
(Weight lifting)	Rugby

Step 1. Draw lines and make boxes.

Step 2. Plan the words and start writing

Fill in the remaining boxes with letters A to Z as you like.