

Professional Development Activities: Understanding How Cultural Stigmas Impact the
Participation of Japanese English Learners in Universities

by

Peter Apolo Rom

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Oral Language

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2021

Primary Advisor: Julia Reimer
Content Reviewer: John Galindo

Research Question

The guiding question of my capstone project was: *How do cultural stigmas impact the participation of Japanese ELs in the university EFL classroom taught by native English speakers?*

Project Summary

This project aims to create a variety of activities for the professional development (PD) of current and prospective native English teachers (NETs) teaching at university in Japan. These activities will be provided through Wix, a website provider, in which I have designed specifically to inform NETs about the cultural stigmas of classroom participation in Japan. There are two main interconnected objectives for this website project. The first main objective is for NETs to gain knowledge about how cultural stigmas impact their classes. Information related to this objective aims to help NETs understand why their Japanese ELs in university may not be as forthcoming when it comes to participation concerning speaking-related tasks. Some examples include debates, critique, counter-argument practices, asking questions, and volunteering answers. The second objective then is to encourage NETs to practice culturally relevant teaching methods in their lessons through activities. To have NETs themselves experience culturally relevant learning in the Japanese EFL university context would be how I can encourage NETs to practice culturally relevant methods. In this way, NETs can gather ideas for their own lessons teaching Japanese ELs at university. Strategically allocating time for group work, speaking warmups, or distributing different key roles for a task are some examples that may make learning experience more effective for Japanese ELs. These are elements that can be found throughout my activities. In addition, while the

activities on the website are specifically for the professional development of NETs, these activities are inspired by my own teaching experiences in which I have used them in my classrooms.

The Project

The website with all 15 PD activities can be found at:

<https://prom010.wixsite.com/teachingeflinjapan>. Although I am not an expert web designer, careful consideration was given to the choice of which website will host my project. I have chosen Wix as a host for three prominent inter-related reasons: cost-free features, accessibility, and usability. What I mean by this is, the cost-free features and accessibility is what makes my project on Wix a very user-friendly website.

After choosing my template, designing my website, integrating relevant information, and adding my PD activities, I make sure to check off two essential rules stated by Krug (2014) in *Don't Make Me Think: Revisited*—a guidebook for creating user-friendly web pages and apps.

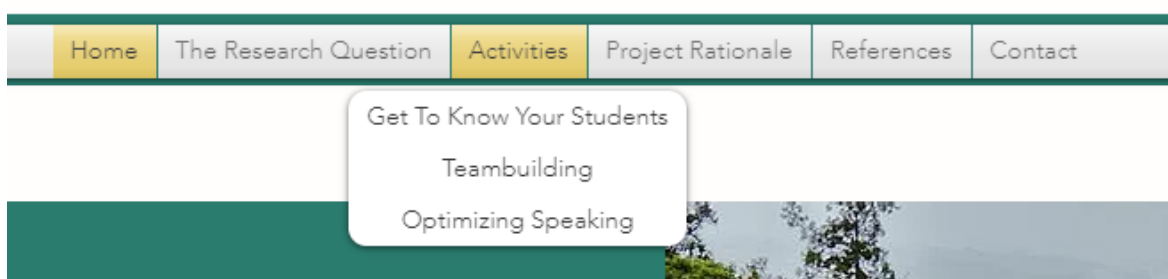
The first box I checked off is having an intuitive website. Krug (2014) calls this “self-evident” (p. 25), and it is his first rule of creating a user-friendly website or app. Krug writes that a self-evident website should be self-explanatory and not demand users to think too much. One characteristic of a self-evident web page is choosing words that are familiar to your audience. Since my audience are EFL professionals, I believe that users would be able to move around my website just fine. With this rule in mind, I also considered naming my tabs so that it requires less thinking. For instance, instead of naming my tab ‘*Capstone Project Activities*’, keeping that short to just *Activities* would optimize usability. Moreover, Krug also suggests tabs to be made consistent but also

setting different colors to distinguish pages or links. Below is an image of how I consider the words I use for my website title and the coloring of my tabs to let users know which page they are currently on.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: TEACHING EFL TO JAPANESE ENGLISH LEARNERS IN UNIVERSITY

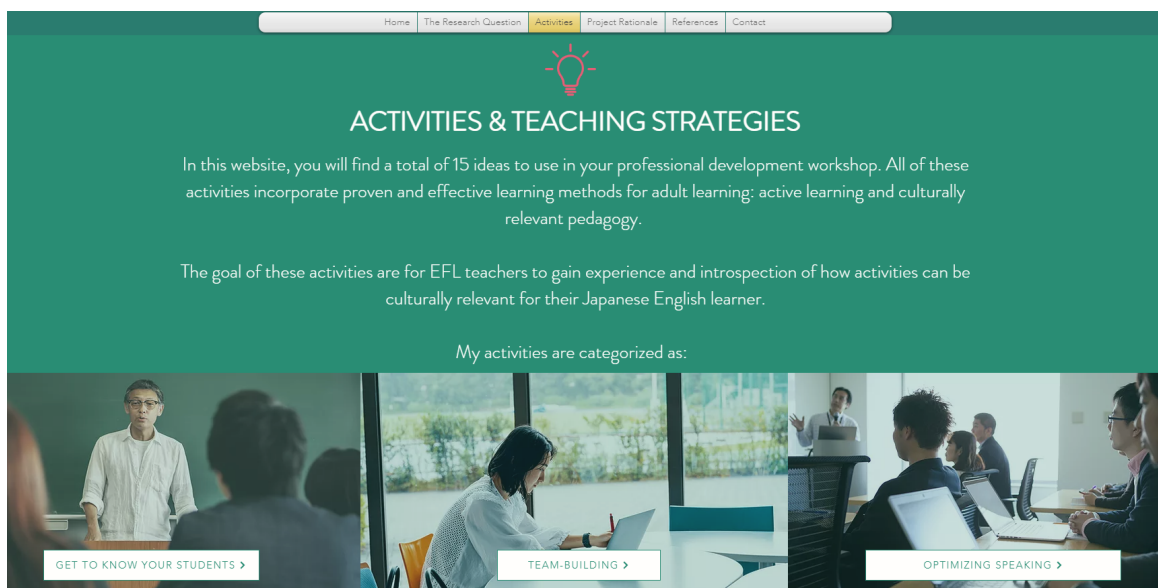


Another rule that Krug (2014) suggests is building a website designed for scanning. Since users are typically on a website with a mission, it is key to keep information organized and straight-forward. Understanding this, it is safe to assume that the majority of the EFL professionals on my website would go directly straight to the *Activities* tab. With this assumption, I have created sub-tabs for each category of my PD activity. One way to access a specific category is by hovering over the *Activities* tab. By doing this, users will immediately see three sub-tabs corresponding to their respective names: *Get To Know Your Students*, *Teambuilding*, and *Optimizing Speaking*.

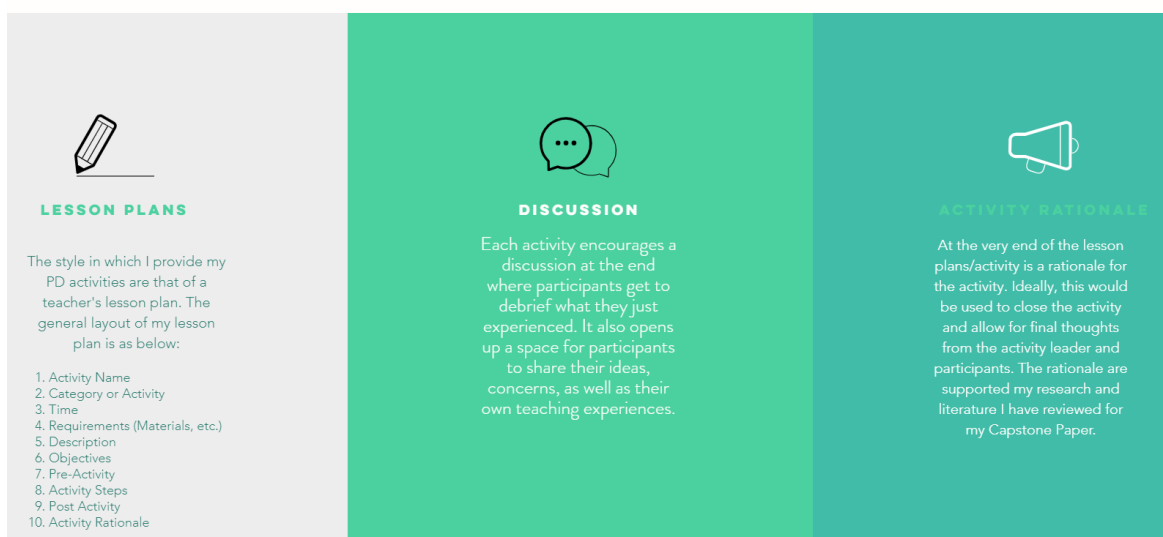


A second way to access a particular category of activities is by entering the *Activities* page itself where I brief the objective my PD activities. Directly below the brief description are the three categories for my PD activities. It is also for this reason that I

include extra, but not necessary, information below the categories. This information pertains to providing readers an outline of my activity layouts.

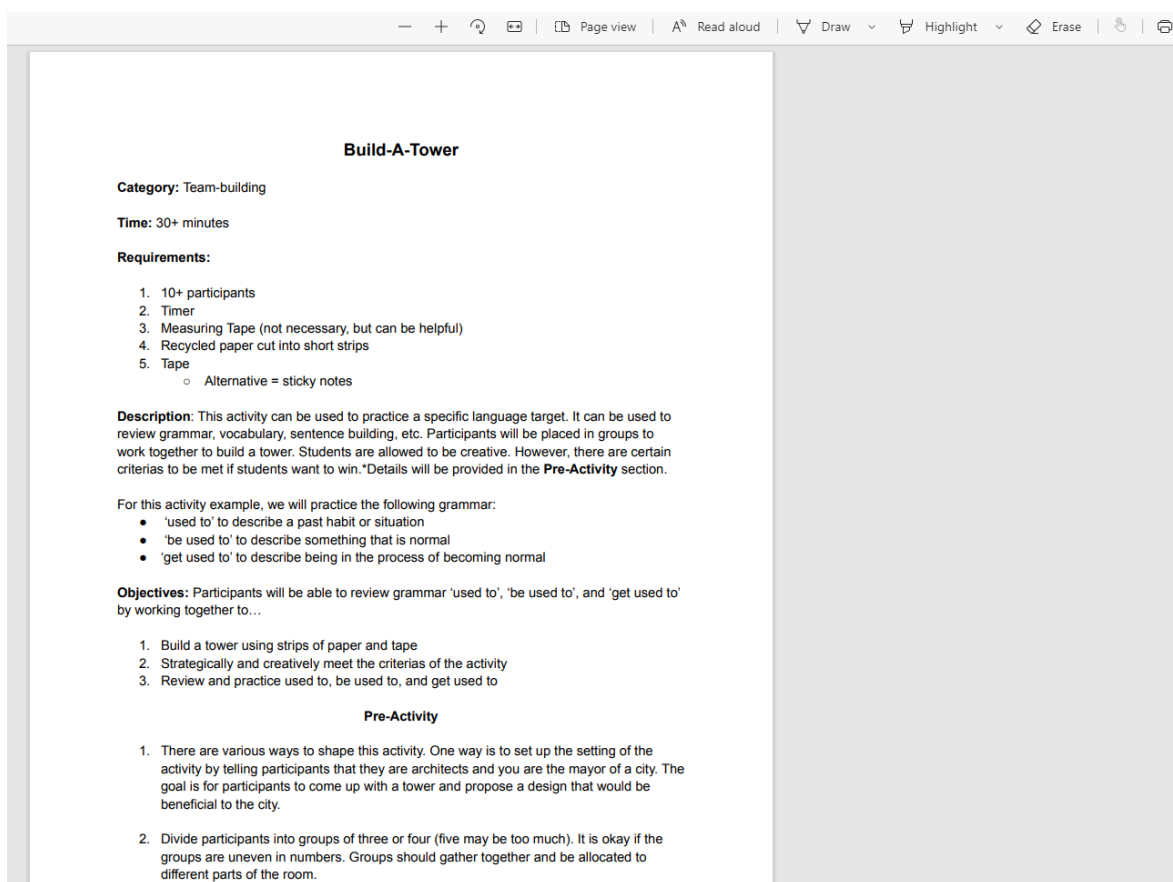
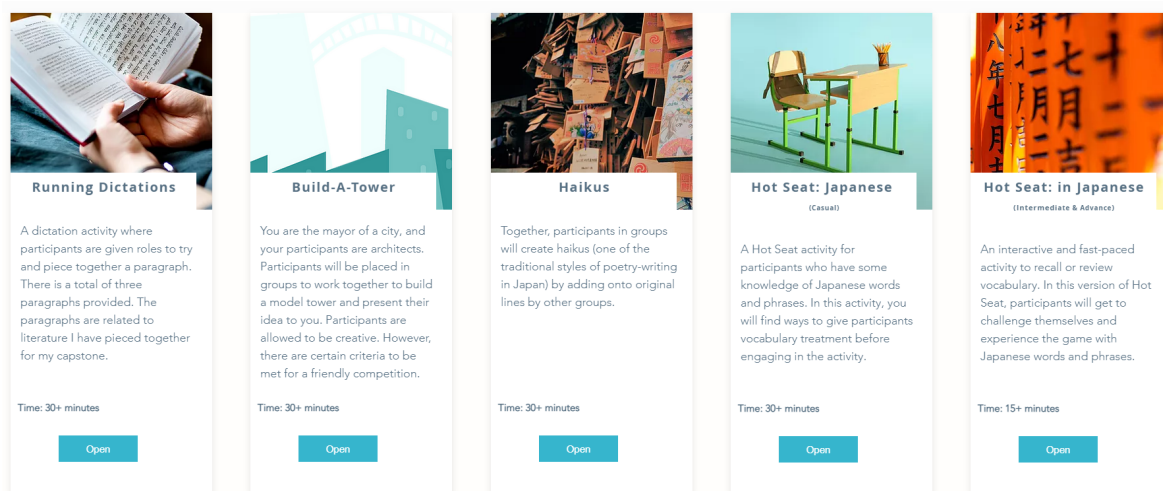


ACTIVITY LAYOUT



After clicking and selecting a category from either a subtab from the menu bar, or a tab from the *Activities* page, users would be directly sent (using the same window) to a list of activities. Each activity will have a brief description and the estimated time for

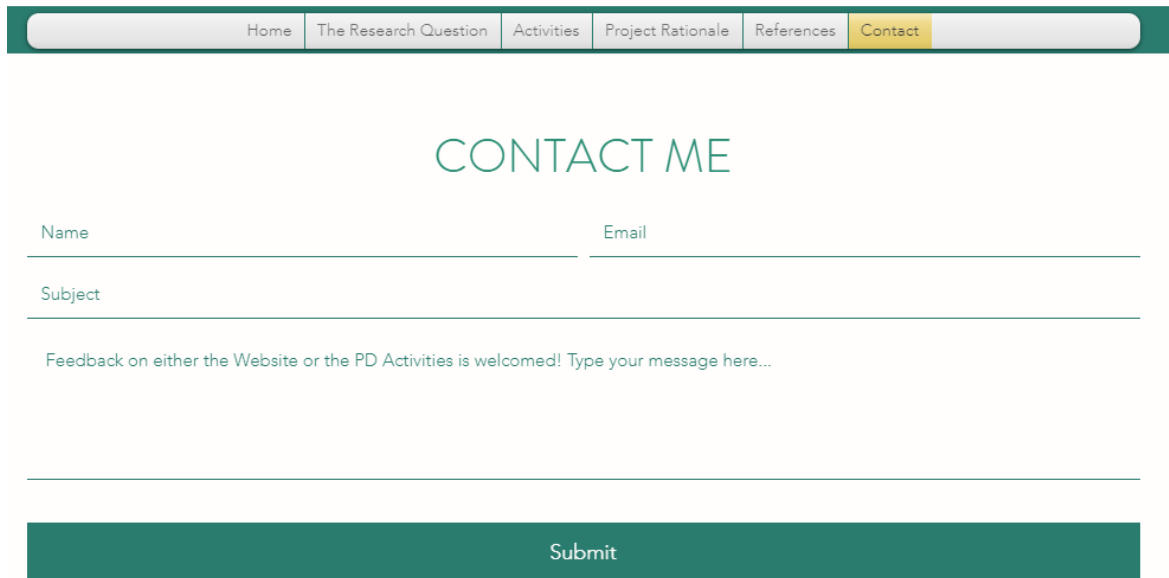
how long an activity will take. Users can directly click the *Open* tab where a PDF of the selected activity will appear in a separate window. Users would then have the option to download the PDF if they desire. The images below is an example of this looks like.



Guided by these two rules, I apply them throughout my entire website. I ensure that my word choice is user-friendly, and include straight-forward information for scanning. As mentioned above, the focus of the website are these two main contents: 1) information on literature gathered in Chapter Two (the *Research Question* tab), and 2) a total of 15 professional development activities (the *Activities* tab). Minor contents will also have their own separate tabs and pages. These minor contents include my project rationale, a reference list, and user experience to contact me or provide feedback. All contents, both major and minor, can be found within the menu bar as shown in the image above.

The first tab, *Home*, is a simple welcome and summary of my capstone project. It tells the reader what they can find in my website. This is the page that users will first see upon entering my website. The second tab in the menu bar, *The Research Question*, includes information answering the guiding question of my capstone. In this page, readers can find my guiding question and the answers I discovered through reviewing literature in Chapter Two. The third tab, *Activities*, will then lead readers to the PD activities themselves. Readers will be able to see that my PD activities are divided into three categories: Get To Know Your Students, Teambuilding, and Optimizing Speaking. As mentioned earlier, these categories (and the PD activities) all reflect the literature I reviewed in Chapter Two: Teaching Strategies for Japanese ELs. The fourth tab is called *Project Rationale*. In this tab, readers will be able understand what inspired me to create PD activities for NETs teaching EFL in Japanese universities. Information in this page will reflect information I wrote in Chapter One. Following the fourth tab is *References*, a page where I give credit to all the sources I used throughout my entire capstone project

process. Lastly, the sixth tab is where users accessing my website can provide feedback under the *Contact* tab. In the feedback form, I encourage users to share their thoughts in either how they experience the website or any comments/questions they might have about anything regarding my PD activities.



Home	The Research Question	Activities	Project Rationale	References	Contact
------	-----------------------	------------	-------------------	------------	---------

CONTACT ME

Name

Email

Subject

Feedback on either the Website or the PD Activities is welcomed! Type your message here...

Submit

REFERENCES

- Armetta, K. L. (2019). *The nail that sticks out gets hammered in: A comparative analysis of social withdrawal in Japan and Taiwan*. [Senior Theses, Fordham University] Fordham Research Commons.
https://research.library.fordham.edu/international_senior/21
- Benson, M. J. (1991). Attitudes and motivation towards English: A survey of Japanese freshmen. *RELC Journal*, 22(1), 34-48. doi:10.1177/003368829102200103
- Campos, A. T. S. (2009). Strategies to raise cultural awareness and create multicultural materials and activities in the language classroom. *Revista de Linguas Modernas*, 11, 383–390.
- Cutrone, P. (2010). Helping Japanese ESL/EFL learners overcome difficulties in intercultural communication. *Journal of the Faculty of Global Communications, University of Nagasaki*, 1(11), 11-23.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Doi, T. (2005). *Understanding amae: The Japanese concept of need-love: Collected papers of Takeo Doi*. Global Oriental.
- Harumi, S. (2011). Classroom silence: voices from Japanese EFL learners. *ELT journal*, 65(3), 260-269.
- Hayashi, M., & Cherry, D. (2014). Japanese students' learning style preferences in the EFL classroom. *Bulletin of Hokuriku University*, 28, 83-93.

- Hyland, K. (1994). Culture and Learning: A study of the learning style preferences of Japanese students. *RELC Journal*, 24(2), 69-87.
doi:10.1177/003368829302400204
- Kassem, H. M. (2019). The Impact of student-centered instruction on EFL Learners' affect and achievement. *English language teaching*, 12(1), 134-153.
- Kimura, Tadamasa. 2010. Keitai, blog, and kuuki-wo-yomu (read the atmosphere): Communicative Ecology in Japanese Society.” *EPIC Ethnographic Praxis in Industry* 2010 (1): 199–215.
- Konishi, E., Yahiro, M., Nakajima, N., & Ono, M. (2009). The Japanese value of harmony and nursing ethics. *Nursing Ethics*, 16(5), 625–636.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.hamline.edu/10.1177/0969733009106654>
- Krug, Steve (2014). Don't make me think, revisited: A common sense approach to web usability. Amazon (3rd ed.). New Riders.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*. 1995;32(3):465-491.
doi:[10.3102/00028312032003465](https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465)
- Leung, R. C. Y. (2020). Understanding the in-class behavior patterns of Japanese university students in EFL Classes: A foreign English teacher's perspective. *Jissen Women's University CLEIP Journal*, 6, 9-22.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. (2005). Second language research methodology and design. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Macwhinnie, S. G., & Mitchell, C. (2017). English classroom reforms in Japan: A study of Japanese university EFL student anxiety and motivation. *Asian-Pacific Journal*

of Second and Foreign Language Education, 2(1).

doi:10.1186/s40862-017-0030-2

Nakamura, I. (1996). Japanese students' nonverbal responses - What they teach us. *JALT International Conference 1996 Proceedings. On JALT 95 Curriculum and Evaluation*. JALT Publication, 133-137.

Ohtani, C. (2010). Problems in the assistant language teacher system and English activity at Japanese public elementary schools. *Educational Perspectives*, 43, 38-45.

Osterman, G. L. (2014). Experiences of Japanese university students' willingness to speak English in class. *SAGE Open*, 4(3), 215824401454377.

doi:10.1177/2158244014543779

Peng, J. E. (2012). Towards an ecological understanding of willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms in China. *System*, 40, 203-213.

doi:10.1016/j.system.2012.02.002

Sasaki, C. L. (1996). Teacher preferences of student behavior in Japan. *JALT Journal - Issue 18.2*, 229.

Snyder, B. (2018). Creating engagement and motivation in the Japanese university language classroom. *Teaching English at Japanese Universities*, 137-143.

doi:10.4324/9781315147239-15

Williams, K. E., & Andrade, M. R. (2008). Foreign language learning anxiety in Japanese EFL university classes: Causes, coping, and locus of control. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5(2), 181-191.

Yamada, H. (2015). Yappari, as I thought: listener talk in Japanese communication. *Global Advances in Business Communication*, 4(1), 3.

Yoneyama, S. 2008. The era of bullying: Japan under neoliberalism. *The Asia-Pacific Journal. The Japan Focus*,

<https://apjif.org/-Shoko-YONEYAMA/3001/article.html>