On Sunday, February 5, 2012, the Arizona Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) hosted Prof. Y-H Tohsaku, of University of California, San Diego, at the 13th Annual Prof. Tohsaku Workshop, on the Tempe campus of Arizona State University. This workshop was a continuation of a previous workshop that introduced us to Web 2.0 tools and their potential application in the world language classroom. This year, Prof. Tohsaku focused specifically on tools useful for storytelling. Defining “story” in the broadest sense, Prof. Tohsaku noted that the March 2011 tsunami disaster had revitalized a strong urge among Japanese people to tell, and share, their own stories. But in general, humans have always had the need to tell their own experiences to others. These digital tools can exploit that need and make presentational speaking in the classroom relevant and interesting for students. Furthermore, using these tools in the classroom help our students become technologically literate.

Sharing examples along the way, Prof. Tohsaku then introduced us to a number of Web 2.0 sites, including PhotoPeach, pikiwiki, storybird, storyjumpers, wallwisher, voicethread, and styxy. Linoit is another website useful for Japanese language teachers. One highlight was the example, prepared by Karin Bessin for New Jersey language teachers, on “A Year in the Life of an American Teacher.” (https://sites.google.com/site/msbessinedtech/Digital-storytelling-projects). All workshop participants were then invited to create a story using PeachPhoto. In less than 30 minutes, each pair had successfully created a basic story with clipart pictures, to share with the group. After lunch, participants regrouped into like-level groups and began to create an activity related to their current classroom curriculum. Voicethread was a popular website for this activity. Examples were shared, all the participants commented on their most and least favorite aspects of utilizing digital storytelling tools, and we departed, equipped with a shiny new toolbox to share with our colleagues and our students.
Prof. Tohsaku explaining a digital point.