

NUFS Workshop 2015

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May (Day 1)

Date: May 9th, 2015, 13:00-16:00

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 226

Title: "Developing a Focus-on-Form Lesson through Teacher Collaboration"

Presenter: Noriko Okuda (Tempaku High School)

Abstract: Focus-on-Form is an effective way to teach grammar communicatively. Lee & VanPatten (2003) claim that in order to get grammar into their heads learners need to have “meaning-bearing input, that is, language that contains a message to which a learner needs to attend” (p.26). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to create opportunities to let learners process input. I will demonstrate some focus-on-form activities. Moreover, “teacher learning influences student learning, and vice versa (MaLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Sato & Takahashi, 2003).” Teacher collaboration played an important role to improve students’ ability. I will share the results of a practice at my previous school.



Title: "Integrating Writing and Speaking"

Presenter: Hazelynn Caceres (Doho High School)

Abstract: Most students’ English learning goal is to improve their speaking skills so providing more speaking opportunities in the classroom is essential to match student's goals and motivate them to achieve it. However, the course of study for senior high school does not only focus on a specific skill rather it demands developing communicative ability through effectively integrating listening, speaking, reading and writing. To implement skill integration, teachers should create meaningful tasks and activities which will enhance learners’ deeper understanding and would also increase motivation (Brown, 2007; McDonough and Shaw, 1993). In addition, students in a writing class should be engaged in conversation at many points in the writing process. In this workshop, I will share how our school integrated writing and speaking. In this regard, I would like to demonstrate how to do recording and transcription as one way of speaking and writing integration. We are going to use smartphones to record conversations so kindly make sure your phones are fully charged.



The number of participants: 48

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Noriko's information gap is a great activity I would be interested in using in my classes because it gives students a great real world application that relates with travel.
- I want to try Focus on Form. I didn't know that way. Till now I've always taught grammars before do some activities, but it was boring for students and me. I think notice is important to learn.
- Small talk – I sometimes feel that the class is not ready for conversation. Small talk gives class good atmosphere and students get ready to talk. I will check 'Conversation Questions for the ESL'.
- Information Gap activity to tell manner and custom was interesting. The pictures in the handout showed the meanings well. Students also learn about foreign culture.
- I thought speaking skill and writing skill are improved gradually at the same time. I work in a junior high school, but I can use Hazelynn's presentation in my class, too.
- Communicative grammar activities – Incidental focus on form allowing the students to absorb the content. Because cognitive learning should improve students' retention and motivation.
- I want to use 'information gap' activity. It's a kind of game. Students can get a lot of chances to speak and practice phrases by repeating what the partner says. I try to make worksheet for my students.
- Focus on Form in Noriko's presentation was interesting. Because teachers should not tell the grammar explanation first. It is different from traditional way. So I was so impressed.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned that you can focus on teaching grammatical forms without explicitly telling the students about the form they will be practicing, but by showing them and let them devise the meaning through context. I also learned collaboration is important to teaching.
- I think it was meaningful for me the way they demonstrated Focus-on-Form activities because it's difficult for the students to learn grammar. Most of the time it's also boring for them. I value the way you both involved different learning strategies.
- Focus-on-Form instruction is interesting even for me. Students can get a lot of information from it and it can meet students' individual learning. I really believe that we learn from what we notice.
- I have to try more communicative activities. This workshop gave me motivation to learn about F on F and communicative approach.
- Now I mainly 'teach' English (ex. vocab. grammar and so on) as an English teacher. However from Noriko's lecture, I could understand teachers should give chance to use English.
- I learned from Hazelynn's lecture that most students are eager to talk in English even though their level isn't high. I'm thinking about this process to junior high students.
- Incidental F on F and Planned F on F are different, but teachers can make use of them to lead students boost communication skills.



3. Questions and Answers

<To Noriko>

Q (1): Do all students do their homework about Vision Quest? I'm concerned about this point.

Yes. However, students were not able to answer all correctly. I sometimes took time to explain some points in class.

Q (2): How do you get ideas on Focus-on-form handouts?

I get ideas from other books.

「新しい英文法指導アイデアワーク」 佐藤一嘉編著 明治図書

「高校英語のコミュニケーションプラクティス」 高橋正夫著 中教

Q (3): Can I see some list of references? I'm really interested in the theoretical background for your presentation.

Brown, H.D. (2007). *Teaching by principles, An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.

Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition*. Second edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lee, J.F., & VanPatten, B. (2003). *Making communicative language teaching happen*. Second edition. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Murphy, T., & Sato, K. (Eds.). (2005). *Communities of Supportive Professionals*. Professional Development in Language Education Series Vol. 4. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL).

Savignon, S. J. (2002). *Interpreting communicative language teaching: contexts and concerns in teacher education*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

VanPatten, B., & Benati A. G. (2010). *Key terms in second language acquisition*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Q (4): How long do you use for in-input activity in your class?

It depends on grammar I teach. In my previous school, I usually spent one class period for the input activity and grammar noticing, and then had students do textbook exercises at home. In the next period, after checking homework, students did output activity/activities in class.

Q (5): How much did your low level students improve through your method?

Table 1, 2 and 3 shows the students' change.

Table 1: "Can you use grammar you learned before?" There were students who chose "no" in April. However, the number of students who answered "no" obviously decreased to almost zero. For comparison, over 90% of students chose positive answers, either "yes" or "rather yes" in March.

Table 2: Writing skills. Table 3: Speaking skills. Those Tables indicate that even low level students were able to improve their English skills. Sorry but I don't have any hard data of individual students.



Table 1 Grammar in April, July, and March “Can you use grammar you learned before?”

answer	JHS	SHS(July)			SHS (March)		
	(April)	<i>n</i> = 40			<i>n</i> = 38		
	<i>n</i> = 40	Tense	Perfect tense	Auxiliary Verb	Relative Clause	Comparison	Subjunctive mood
Yes	0%	13%	5%	10%	15.80%	39.50%	13.20%
Rather Yes	63%	68%	78%	53%	63.20%	57.90%	68.40%
Rather No	32%	20%	18%	38%	21.10%	2.60%	15.80%
No	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.6%(1)
average	2.58	2.93	2.88	2.73	3.03	3.55	3.00

Note: JHS = Junior High School, SHS = Senior High School

Table 2 Writing Skills in April, July and March

	April	July	March
	<i>n</i> = 40	<i>n</i> = 36	<i>n</i> = 36
Can write over 120 words	0% (0)	3% (1)	7.9%(3)
Can write over 100 words	8% (3)	8% (3)	7.9%(3)
Can write over 80 words	15% (6)	19% (7)	34.2%(13)
Can write over 50 words	13% (5)	33% (12)	28.9%(11)
Can write over 30 words	43% (17)	22% (8)	21.1%(8)
Can write over 10 words	15% (6)	6% (2)	0%(0)
Can write with fewer than 10 words	3% (1)	3% (1)	0%(0)
Cannot write at all	5% (2)	6% (2)	0%(0)

Table 3 Speaking Skills in April, July, and March

	April	July	March
	<i>n</i> = 40	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 38
Can naturally have a prompt conversation on familiar topics for more than 4 minutes using follow-up questions	3% (1)	3% (1)	5.3% (2)
Can manage to have a prompt conversation on familiar topics for more than 3 minutes using follow-up questions	13% (5)	13% (5)	23.7% (9)
Can manage to have a prompt conversation on familiar topics for more than 2 minutes using follow-up questions	10% (4)	15% (6)	39.5% (15)
Can manage to have a prompt conversation on familiar topics for more than 1 minutes	25% (10)	38% (15)	21.1% (8)
Can manage to have a prompt conversation on familiar topics for more than half a minute	33% (13)	21% (8)	7.9% (3)
Can not have any prompt conversation	18% (7)	10% (4)	2.6% (1)

Q (6): How many classes do you use for one grammar point? How many classes did you have a week for English Expression I class?

It depends on grammar, but usually 2 classes. One for input & grammar noticing, and one for homework check(textbook) & output. Students had this subject twice a week.

Q (7): I have now good coworkers like you but if you don't have people really motivated, what can we do?

Well, this is a hard question for me. I'm still struggling. I feel teachers collaborate more in a difficult situation. It doesn't matter whether males or females, young or old, but school working culture has an influence on teacher collaboration.

<To Hazelynn>

Q (1): Would you say that your curriculum requires more teacher involvement, or less than the traditional teaching method?

The curriculum was developed gradually by teachers and students who were involved in improving and shaping it. Even though I only presented how my colleagues and I integrated speaking and writing at the workshop, it is highly unlikely, however, that integrating skills could have caused the significant changes observed, without the major reform of the assessment plan.



For assessment, we used formative assessment (quizzes, drafts, recordings, information exchange tasks, recordings, transcriptions and self-assessment) and summative assessment (speaking tests, fun essays and paper tests) which helped teachers to monitor students' progress and design scaffolding activities to ensure that students are guided towards the learning goal and assessed the mastery of a given topic. We also put emphasis in the significance of training students to keep track of their own learning, use the evaluation from this monitoring and to be able to make adjustments accordingly (Earl, 2007). Having said this, teacher's role in this kind of curriculum is the guide whose main task is to make sure all students reach the finish line successfully. Student's role is to be the bond between learning and assessment. Teachers and students were involved all throughout the learning process.

Q (2): How long do you use for input activity in your class?

For input activities, we usually spend two days. On the first day, we do a listening activity. Students listen to a conversation of which the content of the conversation is related to the topic. After which, students do brainstorming in class. In groups of 2-3, each student of the group has to write any word they can think of on the blackboard. They take turns, until the set time ends. The teacher then read some of the words written on the board. The words written on the blackboard serve as input. In other topics, we teachers share in class through short speeches about our dream trips and treasures. The second day, we used the script for listening activity/speech for students to read as an additional input and noticed some grammar points. We also used focus-on-form instruction which had structured input on the second day to teach grammar.

Q (3): How long did you teach communication strategies? How many did you teach?

When I came to my school last year, I was told that 2nd year students learned CS (conversation

strategies) when they were in their 1st year. Moving on to 2nd year, in each topic we decided on the strategies we wanted students to focus on. We usually have the lists of CS on the board and just reminded students to use these each time they make conversations with their pairs or group mates. As I have mentioned at the workshop, students had many speaking opportunities in class, so they had many chances to use CS as well.

Here's the list of conversation strategies we introduced for the school year 2014-2015:

Semester	Topics	Conversation Strategies
1 st	1. About Me	openers, closers and rejoinders
	2. My Dream Trip	Sounds good/bad/nice, Let me see and “What does it mean?”
2 nd	3. My Summer Vacation	Keyword shadowing and follow-up questions
	4. My Treasure	Shadowing (partial and full)
3 rd	5. A People I Admire	Follow-up sentences and questions
	6. Okinawa/ Doraemon's Tools	Follow-up sentences and questions, What else...?

Q (4): What types of improvements did you see in your students?

I have chosen six students to present the developments of their speaking and writing ability based on the respective rubrics.

1. Improvements in Writing

	My Dream Trip 1 st semester			My Treasure 2 nd semester			Doraemon's Tools 3 rd semester		
	Length	Content	Grammar & Spelling	Length	Content	Grammar & Spelling	Length	Content	Grammar & Spelling
A	0	1 2 3	1 2 3	43	1 2 3	0 1 2	-	-	-
B	180	1 2 3	1 2 3	200	1 2 3	0 1 2	220	1 2 3	0 1 2
C	147	1 2 3	1 2 3	175	1 2 3	0 1 2	182	1 2 3	0 1 2
D	189	1 2 3	1 2 3	193	1 2 3	0 1 2	188	1 2 3	0 1 2
E	210	1 2 3	1 2 3	206	1 2 3	0 1 2	369	1 2 3	0 1 2
F	173	1 2 3	1 2 3	198	1 2 3	0 1 2	284	1 2 3	0 1 2

2. Improvements in Speaking

	My Dream Trip 1 st semester			My Treasure 2 nd semester			Doraemon's Tools 3 rd semester		
	CS	FC	Accuracy	CS	FC	Accuracy	CS	FC	Accuracy
A	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2
B	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2
C	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2
D	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2
E	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2
F	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	0 1 2

A and B = low level students; C and D = average students; E and F = advance students

3. Improvements in Students' Attitude towards Learning

Student's comments from Self-assessment in November, 2014 and February, 2015

In November

Speaking

I want to speak more fluently. (5)

I want to initiate a conversation and talk to foreign people. (2)

I want to discover different cultures through communicating in English. (1)

Negative Comments:

It was difficult to maintain a conversation. At times, I keep on talking but there were silence as well. I use the same conversation strategies again and again (2)

I really don't understand. I couldn't speak English. I can't answer any question. (1)

Motivation and Attitude

It was not until I started to speak English that I realized how fun it is. (2)

In February

Speaking

I want to speak more fluently. (2)

I want to speak with foreign people and make myself understood by foreigners. (2)

I was able to remember many English sentences. I was able to use them. I also learned many conversation strategies and I want to use them. (6)

I enjoyed the conversation. I used conversation strategies unconsciously. (1)

Writing and Dictionary usage.

I want to write more English sentences using the dictionary. (2)

Accuracy

I want to speak and write accurately. (5)

Other Comments

I like interesting topics such as "A People I Admire". It was really interesting. I would like to write even more. (1)

Speed Writing is very helpful to prepare me for tests which requires us to write essays. (1)

For a year, most of the students improved their writing and speaking skills as well as their attitude towards learning.

Q (5): Correcting writing is very hard job. How many students do you have regularly?

It was hard for me at the beginning. Students had to write two drafts and one final essay (fun essay). At first, I corrected almost all mistakes but too much error correction is not helpful for students. Lee & VanPatten (2003) suggest that feedback in composition includes responding to content. Instructor's response should encourage writers to express themselves better. I tried to apply it especially to students who were not able to write the minimum length requirement. I asked questions on their drafts and they included them on their next draft.

These are some activities/tool that we used to lessen teacher's burden in correcting drafts/compositions:

1. Peer Editing - we ask students to read each other's' drafts and notice good sentences and some errors. With the level of our students, it is not possible to correct grammatical errors especially in the early stage of the writing process but gradually, most of the students were able to notice errors like capitalization, punctuations, spelling mistakes and even subject and verb agreement (advanced level students). After

peer editing, it was easier for teachers to correct other errors.

2. Collecting common mistakes/errors helped teachers to lessen possible errors that students make for the next draft. Teachers collect common errors from students' 1st drafts. We usually choose 10 and asked the students to correct them in pairs.

3. Providing a rubric for drafts and essays helped both teachers and students. A rubric lists all the requirements students should include in their drafts and fun essay. It contains the required number of words, what should be included in the content, the target grammar points they should use, deadline and the corresponding points. This tool lessens the teachers' burden because it is systematic and if teachers get used to using it, correcting essays becomes faster. It also avoids complaints after giving out the drafts and essays because teachers' expectations were clearly laid out and communicated through the rubric beforehand so students should know what they should do in order to meet them. Students did not only write drafts and fun essays because we included writing essays in paper tests (another essay to correct!) and we found out that including the rubric on answer sheets motivated students to write more and moreover, it made teachers correct faster.

Last year, I had nine classes of which eight classes had 18-20 students and one class had 12-13 students.

Workshop in May (Day 2)

Date: May 9th, 2015, 13:00-16:00

Venue: Hotel Takeshima, Conference Room

Title: "Action Research Report"

Presenter: Terumi Yoshida (Bisai High School)

Abstract: Changing a teacher's belief is difficult, isn't it? In order to change my belief and develop my teaching skill, I utilized the action research method. Action research is a way of steadily improving your own teaching practices through an on-going process of reflection and experimentation. The teaching innovations implemented for two and a half years were; the use of a communicative language teaching approach with skills integration, reading instructions with a three-part framework, extensive reading, and performance tests which included essays and speaking tests with conversation strategies. Quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaires, surveys, students' writing, speaking tests, self-evaluations, and comments were also collected.



The number of participants: 21



Workshop in June (Scheduled)

Date: June 13, 2015, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31 (1-9-6 Shinsakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya)

<http://www.nufs.ac.jp/cms/cms-files/20150218-113526-1680.pdf>

Presenter: Tim Murphey (Kanda University of International Studies)

Title: “Students Teaching Others to Learn: A Positive Psychology Take on Task-Based Learning”

Please send an email to Chihaya (chiha143@nufs.ac.jp) to attend this workshop.