NUFS Workshop 2016

Newsletter No.8

<u>Workshop in December</u>

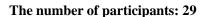### <Part 1>

Date: December 10, 2016, 10:30-14:30
Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-31, Bldg. Minami
Title: "Learn the "How" and "Why" of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) by Creating a TBLT Lesson in a Collaborative Group"
Presenter: Nancy Mutoh (Emeritus professor of NUFS)

Abstract: Task-based language teaching has become a familiar term among most English teachers in Japan. Most, however, do not feel confident about what "tasks" are or how to use them in their own classrooms. The presenter will describe the characteristics of tasks and show the types and structure of tasks. You will then experience doing a task-based lesson first-hand, as learners. Collaborating in a group, you will create a task-based lesson and share it with other groups.

The number of participants: 29

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

- The tasks we learned today were all interesting. I don't know how much I can use but I can use some ideas such as listing and ordering in a small talk and other activities.
- I would like to have students do peer and self-evaluations. This is something I have not done before and I think it would be great for students.
- Task-based activities such as problem-solving task; giving advice to stay health. As the task is personalized, it is easy for students to think about expressing their opinions by speaking and writing.
- I like the basic layout of the sample lesson. The ideas for the peer correction are great and I would like to expand on it more.
- Categorizing our ideas into a few things, namely 19 listing 2) ordering and 3) problem-solving. It was a great opportunity to think about a way of brainstorming, which I can implement into my class.
- The movie interview activity would be good to use in my oral communication classes. I like the following writing activity about it as well.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I realized repetition is important in any kind of learning. I remembered things I had learned about TBLT but hadn't given much thought for lately. I will look at my handouts and activities again and change some parts based on what o learned today.

- Planning TBLT lesson was really fun. We planned the lesson thinking about our students' faces. They will enjoy our lesson definitely.
- Miwako's activity reminds me how effective TBLT is. Remembering what state of mind I was in at first, I want to make activities based on TBLT.
- I was able to learn how to make a task. I thought my activities were not clear so far. I want to make the goal for each activity from now on.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): I'm still unclear on "prestige language use" and how it differs from focus on form.

A: Prestige language use: Willis and Willis use "prestige language" to mean *carefully* spoken or written language, more so than casual or everyday language. For example, a document is usually written more carefully than most emails. A presentation is more carefully prepared and delivered than a conversation.

While working on a task, learners focus on making the content of their task as good as possible. They focus on meaning rather than English usage. The last step in a task is making the report, which should be carefully written (prestige) language. Learners work together to produce their best English at that point in their English development. They may use dictionaries or ask for language help from the teacher in making the report.

Focus on form (FoF), on the other hand, is grammar-teaching technique. Teachers focus learners' attention on the meaning and form of the structures at the same time. There are two types of FoF: "structured input and output" which focuses on a particular grammar point decided by the teacher and "incidental focus on form" which focuses on several "common errors" made by many learners in the same piece of work or on noticing particular characteristics of a written or oral text that was input for the task.

Q (2): Although this question is about language assessment rather than TBLT, I just wonder if it is good to let students evaluate their development of writing by themselves. I truly understand the importance of self-evaluation, however, isn't it essential to have a sample description of the category in an evaluation criteria?

A: Your first question: "I just wonder if it is good to let students evaluate their development of writing by themselves."

Students' self-assessments are not expected to skillful analyses of their writing. Rather, self-assessment is part of students' learning process.

Reasons for self-assessment
- Students develop reflective self-awareness of their own learning process. That awareness causes most students to take more interest in improving their writing. When self-assessment is done regularly, students can see the improvement in their writing, which tends to increase their confidence and motivation.
- Students learn qualities of good writing by seeing them listed in the self-assessment table and thinking about them with each self-assessment.

Your second question:" Isn't it essential to have a sample description of the category in an evaluation criteria?"

I think you are referring to a rubric, which is the assessment tool used by teachers to assess students' English production (writing and speaking) for test purposes. Please see the model high school rubric below for assessing a "fun essay." As you see, it includes descriptions of the levels of accomplishment for each criterion. Teachers should also show the rubric to students early in the year or term and again as test time approaches so they understand the goals they are expected to reach.

Table 11: Modified version of the rubric for the speaking test – 20 points (December 2004)

Fluency & Content	10 points	(10) be able to maintain 3 minute-conversation fluently, with good content
		(7) be able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some silence, with adequate content
		(4) be able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some silence, with poor content
		(1) be hardly able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some long silences
Accuracy (grammar & pronunciation)	3 points	(3) be able to communicate with accuracy
		(2) be able to communicate with some errors
		(1) communicate with many errors, using mainly key words
Delivery (volume & eye contact)	3 points	(3) be able to speak with good volume and eye contact
		(2) occasionally speak with adequate volume and eye contact
		(1) be hardly able to speak with adequate volume and eye contact
Strategies (conversation strategies & follow-up questions)	4 points	(4) be able to use many conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(3) be able to use some conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(2) use a few conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(1) be hardly able to use conversation strategies and follow-up questions

Sato & Takahashi (2008)

Q (3): Still I'm wondering the thought about assessment. I'm reading Lee & Van Pattern now, but actually what should it be for the students and teachers?

A: I'm not sure about the meaning of your question, but Lee & VanPatten is an excellent book for learning about effective and practical assessment. Please also read question two above and my answer. It may also help answer your question.

Q (4): What is the simplest way to define task-based activities?

A: There is no single definition that is broadly accepted. Many respected researchers have made their own definitions. Most of the definitions are similar in content but at the same time differ somewhat. For that reason, many people feel that the check list of "Characteristics of effective tasks" (Willis, D. & J. Willis, 2007, p. 13) can function as a practical definition. In the workshop, I asked each group to change the six questions into

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statements. The purpose was to make the list feel more like a definition. Below is my attempt to squeeze the Willises' six characteristics of an effective task into a one-sentence definition for you:

An effective *task* is an engaging activity that relates to language use in the real world, allows students free use of language with the focus on meaning and goal (a clear outcome) for learners to achieve, with success being judged in terms of that outcome.
(Please note: this 'unofficial definition' is just to show that the six characteristics proposed by Willis and Willis allow us to understand what "tasks" are, just as well as definitions could.)

Q (5): As for better activities for a group of four members. In junior high, we often ask students to make a group and it helps them to help each other but sometimes they don't work well. I just wonder what is the good method to help each other.

A: There is a good method! It is to make group activities that have the characteristics of the Willises' list.

~ Be sure that the task is interesting to students and that you give them a concrete outcome to strive for in a specified length of time. An interesting task and a time limit keep groups on track.

~ You must be sure they understand clearly what you want them to do. Giving a model is helpful.

~ The outcome you set should require each group member to contribute some information, idea, opinion, etc. to the group and each group member should write all members' input on their own paper. Tables are effective for this purpose. To see a great example, look again at the Movies task you did in the workshop. Go to http://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/action-research/index.html and scroll down to Miwako Kushiro's handout (report 7 in the 2010 book). Look again at pp. 1 and 2. On p. 1, each student writes their own information about their three favorite movies. On p. 2, each group member tells their own information to the other three and the listeners write brief notes on the p. 2 table. This table works well for any topic and any learners who can write even a little bit of English.

~The next step is to pair classmates who were not in the same group. They tell their new partner about one favorite movie of one of their previous group members, following the conversation framework at the bottom of p. 2. Notice that the title of the last activity on p. 2 is "Let's report what you got!" This conversation is the "report" step in the task, so it is the end of the task.

~Depending on the age of your students, you might want to do the second task on the handout: writing about their own favorite movie, drama, etc. P. 3 of the handout gives students a sample paragraph about one boy's favorite movie. This example helps students understand how to write such a paragraph. The two exercises that follow help students confirm their understanding of the content and its organization. After these scaffolding (supporting) steps, students do their 1st writing, get advice and questions from three classmates, draft an improved 2nd writing, get advice and a comment from three more classmates (see Peer editing instructions at the bottom of the page) and write their 3rd version. Lastly, they complete the self-evaluation. JHS students could succeed with the first task (the conversation), given an age-appropriate topic and vocabulary support, and upper JHS students could write several sentences about a favorite movie.

Brainstormed task topics

LISTING: Brainstorming and/or fact finding
e.g. things, qualities, people, places, features, things to do, reasons, questions to ask.

1. Questions to ask a celebrity [or any other category of people]

2. Ten places to visit [and why]

3. Five places you recommend to foreigners visiting Aichi

4. Five things you would like to do if you had an unlimited amount of money

5. Introduce our exchange students to Japan! Where to visit, what to do, what to eat

6. Ideal school: five features of an ideal school

7. Choose the most ideal school and list its ideal features.

8. Five reasons to attend clubs

9. Five good singers/bands/anime and their good features

10. Letter to Santa: five things you want for Christmas

11. Five New Year's resolutions

12. Five top drinks [cheap-but-good kinds of food, cheap-but-good restaurants, etc.]

13. Five top sightseeing places [in the world, in a particular foreign country, in Japan, in some place in Japan,
    in Chubu, in your prefecture, in your city/town/village]

14. Try to predict three things classmates will choose.
    Choose one thing you think no one will predict

15. A mind map of possible plans for winter break (as many ideas as possible)

16. A mind map of things that you would like to do in the next five years

17. Five reasons we should enter university

18. Five reasons we should not enter

Ordering and sorting: sequencing, ranking, classifying
e.g. sequencing story pictures or phrases, ranking items according to cost, popularity, negative or positive.

19. Rank ten foods from healthiest to unhealthiest.

20. Rank six Japanese restaurants from cheapest to most expensive.

21. List places you have visited from best to worst.

22. Order your Christmas experiences from best to worst.

23. Rank these ten school clubs based on your interest in them, from most to least interesting.

24. List expressions from most to least useful, in your group's judgment. Examples: "I wanna tell you…",
"Another reason it's special is…", etc.

25. Rank five good personality traits, beginning with the most important

26. Rank five undesirable personality traits, beginning with the most undesirable one

27. Order the popularity of job from most to least popularity.

28. Classify celebrities into three groups: has-beens, hot right now! And up-and-coming.

29. Rank current anime characters from most to least famous.

30. List five school rules in order from most to least important

31. List things we can do to help the environment, from most realistic to least realistic.

32. List qualities of an ideal boyfriend, girlfriend or lifetime partner, from "most important to you" to "least
important".

33. List the steps in cooking a dish or dessert you like.

34. Rank TV programs popular with JHS students in order from the ones you like best to least.

35. Rank problems that JHS students have, from biggest to smallest.

Problem-solving: logic puzzles, real-life problems, case studies, incomplete texts
e.g. logic problems, giving advice, proposing and evaluating solutions, predicting a story ending

36. Advice for someone traveling in Japan [a Japanese person / a foreign person]

37. What to do if you get lost in the Nagoya

38. The 20 questions game

39. Provide students with half of a, which they try to finish [a well-known story or an unknown story]

40. Treasure hunt using a map and/or clues

41. What can we do to make our school better?

42. Give advice to drivers not to use their phones while driving, including applications like PokemonGo.

43. SHS 3rd year students give advice to new 1st year students about how to prepare for high school live / how to succeed and be happy at high school.

44. Make a plan to survive zombie attacks [or prepare for a big earthquake, etc.]

45. What part-time jobs do you recommend for me?

46. Role play giving advice about health, relationship, money job hunting, how to study for test, etc.

47. Crossword information gap

48. NASA Game

49. Boueki Game 貿易ゲーム

50. Causes and solutions of water crisis

51. Make or find a story about a young criminal. Cut the ending from the story. Students read the story and imagine three possible endings. They choose the ending they predict is the real one and give their reasons. Lastly the real ending is revealed.

52. How to get a good job.

53. How to get up early in the morning.

54. How to live a happy life

References for slides

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lee, J.F., & VanPatten, B. (2003). *Making communicative language happen* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning.* Harlow: Longman.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

<Part 2>

Date: December 10, 2016, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Juanita Heigham, Duane Kindt (NUFS)

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 19

Workshop in January (Scheduled)

Date: January 14, 2017, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31

Presenter: Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)

Title: "Teaching Writing (Part I): Pedagogies for Five Stages of Writing / Teaching Writing (Part II): The Process of Writing and Writing from Within"

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