

NUFS Workshop 2006

*Newsletter No. 4**<Summer Workshop, Day One>***Morning Session**

Date: August 1st, 9:30-12:30

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Instructor: Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: Teaching Reading Passages and Dialogs – Alternatives to the Yakudoku Method

The number of participants: 18

Abstract: An important question for teachers is how to use textbook reading passages and dialogs more effectively. In the *Yakudoku* method, activities focus largely on translating, memorizing vocabulary and doing grammar exercises. Participants in this workshop will experience a variety of alternative activities based on junior and senior high school textbooks. Some activities aim to increase learners' comprehension at the whole-text discourse level by using the English passage and Japanese translation as "paired texts." At the sentence level and word level, learners use the newly-encountered English in all four skill modes, in activities that range from controlled language-practice tasks to freer application tasks.



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

- Survey and Questions. Because these activities will catch students' attention and activate their schemata about the topic. By giving Japanese translation, students will have less fear and pay more attention to understand the text.
- Activities using Japanese translation and English text. Text (discourse) processing activities make it possible for students to participate positively in class and give them more satisfaction because they can have more responsibilities for each activity and they can attain more clear idea of the text.
- I've long been thinking of how to use Japanese translation for reading activity effectively. But I had no idea of scaffolding. Then today I've found that giving the students handout of Japanese first, especially when the contents are difficult, can let them grasp the whole or general idea of the contents.
- Q and A. Various types of questions can be given to the students from the teacher's side. Depending on the level of the students and the target of the class, we teachers are to prepare various questions on the text.
- To have a purpose when giving a 'cloze' test. I have given a cloze test without seriously thinking of its purpose. I've found new possibility of a 'cloze' test.
- In the first lesson of the new unit, I'd like to ask the students to have the imagination after they looked at only some pictures or some words in the textbook, because their motivation of the unit will increase, I hope.

- Comparing Japanese text and English text. By explaining J-text first, students would have their purposes to read the E-text. It's a good way to motivate students.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned that there are many ways of understanding the meaning of texts. In junior high school level, students have less vocabulary, so some ways may be difficult. But in the last part of the ninth grade, I want to try many ways. Translation method tends to let students passive, but in today's ways, they can't be passive. They have to think more.
- Nancy's lecture was an eye-opener to me. I learned how to use Japanese translation script as warm-up activity. In today's workshop, I tried to find out English counterparts very seriously after reading Japanese script. So I think I should pay more attention on how to organize activities according to the students' cognitive levels.
- I learned the difference between 'text discourse processing' and 'translation'. Students are passive when we use 'translation' method. When we use 'text discourse processing', we can make students understand the story effectively.
- Students are to learn the outline of the story with various approaches. Translation can be some help for the review and checking. However, with key words from the text and paragraph analysis, we can step forward without translation.



3. Questions and answers

Q: If a question is given to students and they don't understand the meaning of the question, what should the teacher do? Translate the question into Japanese? Make it into an easier question, such as a "yes – no" question?

A: Please help students understand your original question. A yes-no question can be a 50-50 guess and can be answered without the student needing to demonstrate understanding. To help students understand the original question, you can try to restate it in easier English or you can tell them the question in Japanese.

Q: Junior high school lessons are very short and have limited content. If we give the whole translation at the beginning, then what can we do for the rest of the lesson days?

Q: If I use SQ3R, they can do the survey and questions, but the translated version seems unnecessary. What do you think?

Q: I think whether the translation should be given to students at the beginning or not may depend on the ability of the students. What do you think?

A: It sounds like your students will understand the meaning of the whole lesson passage very easily (too easily?) if they have the translation. The question is whether this 'instant comprehension' is a good or bad thing! I see 2 choices. One is not to give them the Japanese text so that most of the lesson days can be used for students to discover the meaning of the passage through translation and comprehension questions. The other is to use the lesson days for language practice, application activities and creative language use activities. The latter would give students a higher level of learning. In the latter case, you need to develop practice, application and creative activities at their level. One thought: give them lists of interesting and easy words and phrases to select from as they do the activities. An added advantage is that they will learn more English. Maybe we can work together during this workshop to develop such activities. In the end, you

are the best judge of whether ‘text processing’ activities like those demonstrated today are useful or not for your students. If they can quickly get the meaning of the passage without using the Japanese text, they can go directly to practice, application and creative activities without using the Japanese text.

Q: How are students motivated to do silent repeated reading.

A: By setting some specific goals. Examples: keep a record of your reading times. Try to cut the time it takes you to read the passage silently. Ex: The teacher can calculate the time it would take to read the passage at a rate of 200 words per minute (wpm). I understand that 200 wpm is the approximate necessary reading speed in order to score 500 to 550 on the TOEIC. Students can also be told to mentally connect the current thought or piece of information in the passage to the *next* one as they read. That will keep them focused on the meaning and tend to increase their speed also. The motivation must come from within the student since silent reading isn’t something that can be externally monitored.

Q: What do you think of giving the Japanese passage when they begin a new lesson? Now I do that.

A: I think you mean to hand learners the translated passage, but not do any activities with it, is that right? In that case, it’s a resource for them to use privately in understanding the English passage as needed. Some students will probably make good use of it and some will not.

Q: After finishing this method that I learned today, I would like to let the students listen to a model CD, chunk by chunk, without looking at the textbook. And in pairs, have students translate E to J and then J to E after adding to the slash in the context, to confirm if they understand. Do you think this is effective or not for learners to get communicative skill?

A: The activity you describe sounds to me like an intensive ‘language practice’ activity. By all means, please give it a try. Motivated students may find it an entertaining challenge that makes them feel like professional interpreters! It may not directly contribute to their communicative skills per se, since there’s no communicative purpose I can see (such as conveying information to someone, planning something, resolving a misunderstanding, etc.). But to the extent that it helps them master the vocabulary and structures, it helps them face future communicative situations with a better command of the words and structures.

Afternoon Session

Date: August 1st, 13:30-16:30

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato & Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

The number of participants: 18

Abstract: The participants were divided into six groups of three and each group chose one lesson in the textbooks they brought. Then they discussed how to make a teaching plan for the lesson. It must be based on the Diagram of Cognitive Levels (Bloom’s Taxonomy) and be practical in the classroom, including Goal, Objectives, Procedure, Today’s lesson plan, and Assessment. They had a very hot discussion.