

NUFS Workshop 2008

Newsletter No. 3

Workshop in July

<Part 1>

Date: July 12, 2008, 10:30-14:30

Venue: NSC College, Bld. IIS, Room 51

Instructor: Suzanne Bonn (Sugiyama Jogakuen University)

Title: 'Learner Training: How Teachers Can Support Students in Their Learning'

The number of participants: 28

Abstract: How can teachers assist students in becoming better learners? One way is to create a classroom of autonomous learners through learner training. In this workshop, we will discuss factors which may affect language learning and consider a variety of learning strategies that can aid students in becoming more effective English language learners. Participants will gain a greater understanding of learner training strategies through activities and materials, and are encouraged to reflect on their own contexts in groups and share ideas about how to implement learner training into their own courses.



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

- I was interested in the activity 'guessing in context'. Actually I didn't know the exact meaning of some words, but I could understand their meanings through the activity. It was an impressive way for me.
- I'd like to make use of the way students talk about their own learning style one another so that they could have a chance to find something advantageous for them. Also I'd like to make devices my lesson plan to supply alternative strategies in order to foster the independent attitudes of the students toward learning.
- Last year I learned 'Portfolio Activity' from Suzanne and I started it after that and keep on doing this year as well. And I'm now really amazed that several activities she introduced us today are the ones that I'm planning to use at this coming summer extra activity for my reading course. To name several ones, Questions to know what types of learners, Quiz results, Scanning & skimming training using realia like advertisement and newspapers, Predicting activities, and so on. Suzanne's instruction is always easy to follow and useful. I'd like to use One minute topic conversation in my class.
- Grouping words: I teach 1st grade JHS and they're struggling to learn vocabulary. It helps a lot, surely. Predicting: it's interesting and good practice to use many vocabulary.
- Connecting sentences is the best one for me today. Students must have a reason or a source to memorize many words. Just memorizing many words that don't relate in the meaning will be boring. Sp when we have to put similar meaning words in a sentence, it's meaningful and I think students try to speak out the words as many as possible.

- I want to use strategies of categorizing new words and connecting sentences. At high schools, it's usually up to students to learn new vocabulary, and teachers don't usually provide them ways to cope with lots of new words. I think students need a lot of help to memorize new vocabulary. Connecting sentences seem to let students work on reading materials more actively. This strategy helps students look for the main idea as well as detailed information. This will make students think more.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- Motivation is one of the crucial points to improve students' language skills. Students' reflection on my class will be effective to change the way so they are encouraged to study more independently. Also, self-reflection & goals will be applied in my class.
- I was impressed with the words; "Good readers depend more on themselves than on dictionaries". My students are 3rd year of junior high, so I think I can tell them this and they can understand it. We junior high teachers push them saying "You should study hard for entrance exams!" However, now I really feel like raising students who can learn language autonomically.
- There are many aspects of training – vocabulary, speaking, reading and son on. I have to use new ways of teaching through today's workshop. I also take care about learning plan because some students tend to concentrate only on grammar study. They have few times to read and to talk or to do other activities. So I'll show the students learning plan.
- "Don't underestimate my students' ability of learning English" is how I feel after this workshop. I enjoyed doing activities introduced today. I will implement these activities in my class. When the students have fun, the time will fly away and they feel like studying more.
- I've learned that there are several levels of learner autonomy. Some activities or action are connected with learner autonomy, but I haven't noticed it. If teachers are not aware of the learner autonomy, students cannot be aware of it. I'm confirmed that I have to be more aware of learner autonomy. I'll stop just giving activities to students.
- I realized that students sometimes should be given time not only for having pair words but for sharing the ideas of how to improve English abilities each other. I have never had my students make a learning plan in detail. But I thought this way is necessary especially for the 3rd year students who have known that they have to keep studying English after they graduate from junior high school. They are going to study English at least for a year in senior high school. Making learning plan will let them reflect how they studied. It's a good way.
- I learned that students' learning preference should be taken into consideration. English teachers should not only provide knowledge but also help them acquire their own learning styles. It's also important for teachers to let students aware of which strategies they are using and which they are not.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Are there any good ways to get authentic materials, such as a menu of a restaurant, which is suitable for reading training?

To get a restaurant menu, I recommend asking a restaurant directly if they have one you can have, or lots of restaurants post their menus online (that's what I used when I made the handout for this workshop). Here are some websites that might be useful for finding menus:

http://www.allmenus.com/locations/selected_cities/

<http://menupages.com/>

Q (2): What activity would you suggest using for teaching Japanese to a foreigner? Are today's activities just as useful if you reverse the target language from English to Japanese?

Since the activities we did in the workshop are for language training, I believe they can work in all languages. Remember to think of your students' level and adapt the activity to what is appropriate for them.

Q (3): Are there some good books about paragraph reading for senior high school students? If there are more, I'd like to know reading strategies or new waves of reading strategies.

I'm not familiar with textbooks that are specifically for high school students, but there's a new 3-level series I highly recommend for strategies training. It's called "Cover to Cover: Reading Comprehension and Fluency" by Oxford University Press. In it, the authors describe a variety of reading strategies, which you can introduce to your students and then have students use these strategies with readings at their level (or a bit challenging). Perhaps you could ask Oxford for some examination copies so you can see what the different strategies are.

Q (4): Could you tell me if there are some tips about involvement and intervention of learner action? How far should I intervene with students while they modify and adapt their goals and content of the learning program?

The key factor in student and teacher involvement of the curriculum is striking the right balance between the two. As a teacher, it's important to make sure that the curriculum set by your school is being followed, but it's also important to take into consideration your goals as the teacher and your students' goals. If you can find the right balance of all of these factors, then you will be on your way to pleasing all involved: administrators, yourself, and students.



Q (5): I am still nervous when I speak English in the classroom. I feel I cannot speak it logically sometimes. How can I have confidence?

Confidence is something that comes with time. It is not something you learn, but perhaps something you can train yourself in. It's in your mind. Perhaps you can do some activities that will help you gain confidence in your speaking – meet with friends or colleagues for English-only talking time over dinner or coffee, speak with certain friends in English only on the phone, watch a movie or TV show in English and then have a short discussion in English with a friend. Try to think of ways you can incorporate English into things you do on a daily basis – instead of reading the news in Japanese, read it in English; instead of talking to your students in Japanese during English class, talk to them in English only. Good luck to you!

<Part 2>

Date: July 12, 2008, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Bld. IIS, Room 51

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

The number of participants: 27

Abstract: Group discussion



Workshop in August (Schedule)

Date: August 4-6, 2008, 9:30-16:30

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Instructors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies),
Miwako Kushiro (Kagamihara High School)

Title: “Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Theory and Practice”

Please email Chihaya ([chiha143\(at-mark\)nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143(at-mark)nufs.ac.jp)) if you can attend this summer workshop.