

NUFS Workshop 2010

Newsletter No. 8**Workshop in November**

(Part 1)

Date: November 13, 2010, 10:30-14:30**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 31**Instructors:**

Michael Rector (bisaidaiichi Middle School),

Title: "Open Ended"**Description:** "I will present activities that I am developing in my action research for scaffolding open ended conversations for beginners with focus on form utilizing student invested materials."

Keiko Takahashi (Motosu-shoyo High School)

Title: "Building an Extensive Reading Community"**Description:** Although extensive reading (ER) has been gaining popularity, little research has been done to document its effect on reading skills and overall language learning for high school students. This workshop will show you how students made progress in their ER performance through classroom interactions. You will participate in some of the interactive ER activities which can help students build a reading community. Then the following questions will be discussed: 1) how students changed their attitudes toward reading through peer interactions; 2) how ER influenced students' reading fluency and affected their overall English proficiency.**The number of participants:** 26**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- Michael's family conversation worksheet and card. I think that activities that allow the students to be creative are very fun for them and make the material easier to learn.
- Michael's 'self-introduction' with pictures. Usually I tell the students to introduce in the first part of school year in every grade. It's boring for the students just to listen to peer's presentations. In Michael's plan, students can walk around, find a partner, and introduce with their pictures. That's good.
- I want to use materials students made. I've tried to work out many kinds of materials, but students can make useful materials.
- I tried 'Reading Circle' last year, but because I didn't the idea very much, I failed. Today Keiko sensei shoed us very interesting and useful handouts, so I will try again.

- Literature Circle exercise is really exciting. I'd like to change the role of students to apply to class in junior high school. I really enjoyed reading, discussing and playing the role. We could deepen the understanding through this activity.
- I'd very much like to use the post-reading discussion activities. Unfortunately the texts we use are quite difficult and most of the class reading time is taken up with just helping the students understand them.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I realize again that sharing real information and our opinion based on the thing is fun and meaningful. Giving a responsibility for students train students to be more independent. Good questions inspire students' thinking. Judging from this fact, students can be more aware of producing good question to hold a good and long conversation as a strategy.
- I learned that I should give more demonstrations before I let students try an activity. Michael gave a lot of input by doing several demonstrations.
- Michael's presentation reminds me of importance of structured input and input activities. I recently tend to skip this activity to save time and that's not really good. It's the most important step.
- I tried extensive reading in an elective class. Some students got bored with individual reading. Book talk can motivate students to read more books.
- I have been interested in extensive reading but I have never tried. Today I got some ideas about how to introduce extensive reading in classes. Thank you very much.
- To decide the class size and careful readiness to the activity is essential. Also evaluation is another issue. To let the students hand in the worksheets is frequently required.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Do you give each student their own personal grade report from your class? Students may like to see your assessment of their work throughout the term. It may be a lot of work, though. Doing this may encourage to do their homework.

A (Michael): I do not have a class. I visit each English class once a week for the 1st year students and less often for the other two grades. The grades I give on individual projects should be included in their English grade. Where I to write reports I would be writing 1000. This is too many.

Q (2): I found that when we had a team competition, some people were eager to raise their hands to get a point, but others were just watching. Some active students tend to dominate answering in this kind of game. Do you do anything to have other students raise their hands?

A (Michael): One of the JTEs I work with came up with the idea of having the students who have not yet asked questions stand up. I would then call on only those standing up. In one class some of those students asked many more questions after their



first question. However, I don't think it is important to have all students speak these kinds of games. As long as the students are actively listening and trying to guess the answer for themselves the activity will function as input for them. Also the students asking questions are often spokespersons for their groups. I often observe other students telling them what to say.

I only worry if there are a lot of students who are not paying attention. I think students often stop paying attention when they can not understand the language they are hearing. Rather than force them into output they are not ready for, it would be better to provide some easy input activities before playing the game.

Q (3): What publisher is the best when it comes to giving away free sample graded readers?

A (Keiko): As for Graded Readers series, the followings are popular among students: 1. Foundations Reading Library (Thomson) 2. Cambridge English Readers (Cambridge) 3. Oxford Bookworm(Oxford University Press) 4. Penguin Readers (Longman) 5. Macmillan Readers (Macmillan) 6. Black Cat Graded Readers (Black Cat Publishing) Except Black Cat Publishing, these publishers have their own offices in Japan. They will send you several free samples if you request.

Q (4): The students at my high school had very low literacy skills. Reading one paragraph takes one hour! Can you suggest how to start ER in an environment of emerging readers?

A (Keiko): How about starting with picture books with a few words on a page? For example, Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) series are popular at our school. Students (both strong readers and weak ones) start to read those books which have only 20-40 words in length. You don't have to worry about giving such children books to high school students. Since those Leveled Readers (for example, ORT) have the same characters appeared in each book, students can enjoy a big imaginary world as they keep reading. (To keep reading is a key.) Also we need to give an orientation when we first introduce ER in our class. The idea of reading easy books is quite new to students.

Q (5): I'd like to know how to grade the students in extensive reading classes. / How are your students evaluated on ER? Do they have any formal tests such as term tests?

A (Keiko): The assessment plan of ER class:

- 1) reflection reports (4 times a year) 35%
- 2) monthly reports (5 times a year) 10%
- 3) reading log 15%
- 4) projects (book review, creating the ending, making a picture book, etc) 30%
- 5) term-examinations (once a year) 10%

If students become autonomous readers who can share the joy of reading with classmates, they can get good grades. Reflection reports, monthly reports, reading logs can show how and what they are reading. In order to write a reflection report, students have to read books, which works well in ER classes where each student read different levels of books. They cannot cheat. As for term-examinations, students bring a class reader with them and answer discussion questions. They can use dictionary when they take term-examination.



Q (6): How do you scaffold the book talk activity?

A (Keiko): -I give a handout of sample ‘Interactive Book Talk’ where students can see examples of answers.

-I encourage students to show the pictures in a book so that they don’t have to explain everything. (Show and Tell)

-In the beginning, students ask only simple questions. Then gradually they are encouraged to ask questions such as ‘ Why do you like this book?’ ‘Why did it happen?’

- Using class readers, I introduce group-competition games so that students can get used to the questions and answers used in book talk activity.

Q (7): You have a wealth of books! How did you acquire them for your classes?

A (Keiko): The school where I worked until last year developed a good system to make a budget for ER materials. Students pay 1,000 yen a year, and we bought ER books with those money. Then we set up ER library in an English room, which is getting larger and larger year by year. Every year, we explain and report our ER program at the PTA meeting and get consent of the parents in order to collect money. Parents are now willing to pay 100 yen and happy to see their children enjoy reading.

Q (8): In my class, when students do literature circles (even after doing them several times), they don’t have an active discussion. They just read out what they prepared at home. Mostly their answers are short even though the questions are good. What should I do to have them speak more actively?



A (Keiko): Yes, I had the same problem. Literature Circles (LC) worked well in one class, but it didn’t work well in another class.

Here are the things I learned from my experience.

- 1) Students who can have an active discussion can reflect their performance well. They can also set a goal for the next discussion and have an positive attitude during the discussion. It is important to have students become reflective learners. Making good reflections and sharing reflections in class is vital.
- 2) Students need to have LC many times. It takes time to get used to the jobs of each role and to learn discussion skills.
- 3) Team-building activities can help students learn cooperative skills. Before trying out LC, students spend time to have fun team-building activities.
- 4) Giving mini-lesson is effective. For example, introducing the job of each role one by one, learning how to make good questions, learning conversation strategies.
- 5) If they read again and again in order to prepare their role sheets, they can actively participate in LC. In order for them to do so, students who have the same role can get together to prepare the role sheets. Once they get used to preparing role sheets, they can do it at home.
- 6) Choosing easy and interesting books is important. Make sure that students have no difficulty to get the surface meaning of the book so that they can be comfortable enough to go deeper in their discussion. That means, I don’t introduce LC with easy books until students can easily read books which have more than 5,000 words.

Most of the Japanese students have never experienced literature circles in Japanese as well. It's quite challenging for them to do in English. What are the problem with your students? Please observe them carefully and I'd like to share what we learn from their performance.

(Part 2)

Date: November 13, 2010, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 31

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

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 14



Workshop in December (Scheduled)

Date: December 11, 2010 10:30-14:30, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room31

Title: "Using Video in the Classroom"

Instructors: Mathew White (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

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