NUFS Workshop 2013

Newsletter No. 8

<u>Workshop in December</u>

<Part 1 >
Date: December 7, 2013, 10:30-14:00
Venue: NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya)
Presenter: Matthew Shaefer (Rikkyo University)
Title: "Communication Strategies - Making conversations
    more natural, engaging, and fun"

Abstract: As language teachers aiming to improve our students' abilities to share ideas, information, and opinions, we need to provide both the opportunities to practice communication and the tools needed to make that communication successful. These tools are known as 'Communication Strategies' (CSs), and they help students to become more involved in their conversations by encouraging them to listen more carefully and by allowing them to share more meaningful content. In this workshop, I will demonstrate a variety of awareness-raising and acquisition activities for CSs, and present research data showing how they can increase students' interest in taking part in communicative interactions.
The number of participants: 36

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

- "Conversation strategies checklist", "A Place I like" – have students talk about themselves, "Showing interest with the gestures".
- I would like to try the activity wherein we used communicative strategies checklist. It was not only helpful for the speakers to use as much Cs as they can during the conversation, but it was also a good listening exercise for those who are evaluating and checking.
- "List 3 things that ~ " activity is very interesting. Thinking about three things is very meaningful for students, and talking about it will make students excited. Students will be able to use many kinds of CSs while talking about it.
- Using fillers because they do not know any expressions of fillers, and it's necessary to keep their talking and conversations smoothly and naturally.
- I liked the conversation speaking test. I think that the speaking tests that I have done have tended to be too structured (i.e. The students memorized the material prior to the speaking test.) I like the idea of having a free conversation.
- The way Matt introduces each conversation strategy is nice. He said one thing at one time. I realized the way I teach CSs to my students is maybe too much at one time. I have to make it little by little.
- I want to try some of the handouts I got today. It is easy to understand and I could definitely try it in my class.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I have a clearer idea of what communication strategies are. They are those behaviors that help us understand one another and make sure we understand and are understood.
- 'Fillers' and 'shadowing' etc. are very simple and easy strategies, but Japanese students need to practice and drill them before teal conversation, otherwise they'll fail the conversation.
- I learned that there are many CS's that can be confusing. The content, intonation and modeling of these CS's is very important to get the students to understand its real/true meaning and hopefully be able to produce it when the opportunity comes.
- Encourage risk-taking in students. I teach conversation strategies, but I don't let them experiment with them as much as I could.
- I learned how valuable it is to use communication strategies. I teach younger learners and it is difficult for them to use these. But I guess I have to choose the easier one and try it in class.
- This workshop showed valuable information about conversation strategies. It gave us an overview to make the conversation more genuine and authentic.
- I loved the size of the worksheets. They came in bite sized pieces of information that seem like they would be clear and keep the students focused.

3. Questions and Answers

1) Do you explain the purpose of communicative strategies in L1?

No, although I think it is OK to do so. The awareness-raising activities I showed are designed to help students understand for themselves why the Communication Strategies are useful for their conversations. If you prefer to have the students discuss the answers to the awareness-raising questions (e.g. "Which response do you think is best?") in Japanese, or even give them the questions in Japanese, I think that is fine. The main purpose is to have them understand the "Why?" of using CSs as quickly as possible before giving them many opportunities to practice the "How?".

2) How do you explain the students when you record videos?

The students had already had experience of recording their own conversations into computers so they could listen back to them and transcribe them. The video camera did not seem to make them anxious or to affect their performance.

3) It is difficult for my students to make and ask questions and answer in English. Do I start to have my students make WH-questions?

I think lower level students need a lot of scaffolding to make Follow-up Questions. They could start by working in pairs or groups to think of different questions to ask about a chosen topic, and then asking the questions to other pairs or groups. I don't think it

matters if they are WH-questions or Yes/No questions – whatever they are comfortable with. After they have practiced a lot with pre-written questions, they can start to try making spontaneous questions during conversations.

Also, I remind students that one-word questions are fine (e.g. A: "I like playing soccer." B: "Where?" A: "In the park." B: "When?" A: "On Sundays."). It can be very difficult to create a full question during a conversation because they have to think about grammar, pronunciation, etc. If they think of the WH-question words as pieces of vocabulary, it might be more comfortable for them to use them while speaking.

4) Have most university students received training in CS at junior or senior high?

In my experience, no, most university students have not received any kind of CS training. However, it is very easy to spot the ones who have! It is also very interesting to note that some of the students who have not received CS training still start to use some CSs (e.g. Shadowing) when they are asked to participate in an extended discussion. I think this is because they must find ways to communicate even when there are breakdowns in communication. It is important to mention, though, that not all students do this – most of them do need to be trained!

5) Do we teach the CS's side-by-side the Target Sentence for a particular class hour? Or do you suggest that we teach it separately?

Most of the research into CSs seems to indicate that it is better to first introduce them separate from the target sentences. In other words, allow students to focus only on using the CS as much as possible, without having to think about anything else. Once they seem comfortable using it, you can start to integrate it into whatever target sentences you like. The basic structure of a lesson plan would be to start with a heavy focus on the CS at the beginning of the lesson (or series of lessons) and to end with a heavy focus on content. The activities throughout the lesson, therefore, would show a gradual shift of focus from CS to content.

6) I wanted to see how your actually assessed the pair in the last video clip. Could you show us the actual rubric you used and what the score was like?

I used a speaking test rubric, which the students were given a copy of before they took the test.

However, I should point out that I was constantly revising the rubric and changing it. I think the most important principle for the rubric is to not test anything that you haven't covered in class. So, for example, we didn't do any kind of structured pronunciation practice, so I did not score them on their pronunciation.

Conversation Test Rubric

SPEAKING SKILLS:					
FLUENT / 流れるように あなたのパートナーと 3 分 30 秒間、詰まることなく流れるように会話をする。					**Fillers:** *um* *uh* *well* *let's see*
1 *not very good...*	2 *try harder!*	3 *OK*	4 *good*	5 *excellent!*	
UNDERSTANDABLE / 相手に伝わるように あなたのパートナーが理解出来るように適切な言葉、文法、発音、身振り等を使う。					**Loud voice** **Explaining** *never mind...*
1 *not very good...*	2 *try harder!*	3 *OK*	4 *good*	5 *excellent!*	

LISTENING SKILLS:					
INTERESTED / 興味深く あなたのパートナーの話を興味深く聞き、理解しようと努める。					**Show interest:** *oh, I see* *me too!* *great!* *wow!* **Shadowing**
1 *not very good...*	2 *try harder!*	3 *OK*	4 *good*	5 *excellent!*	
CURIOUS / 好奇心 あなたのパートナーの話を好奇心を持って聞き、いろいろ質問してみる。					**Follow-up Questions** *Pardon?*
1 *not very good...*	2 *try harder!*	3 *OK*	4 *good*	5 *excellent!*	

p.s. Some of the participants asked me about the source of the "Ball" video I showed. Here is a link to it: http://vimeo.com/47149346

Or you can go to vimeo.com and search 'ball'.

The procedure I used during the demonstration is almost the same as I do during a lesson. I tell the

students that they will watch the video twice and then work with a partner to try to remember as many of the different balls that they saw as possible. I let them take notes during and after watching the video to help them remember. A similar activity could be used with almost any short video clip, as long as the students know what they are looking for.

<Part 2>

Date: December 7, 2013, 14:00 -17:00
Venue: NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya)
Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS), Robert Croker (Nanzan Univ.)
Abstract: Monthly reports on action research
The number of participants: 12

Workshop in January (Scheduled)

Date: January 11, 2014, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)
Venue: NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31
Presenter: Masami Maeda (Obu High School)
Title: "How to Apply Drama Techniques to ELT"

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