

## NUFS Workshop 2016

# Newsletter No.6

## Workshop in October

### <Part 1>

**Date:** October 8, 2016, 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Minami Bldg. Room A-31

**Title:** “The Impact of Learner-Centered Instruction: Empowering Students in the Classroom”

**Presenter:** Danielle Lott (Aichi Gakuin University)

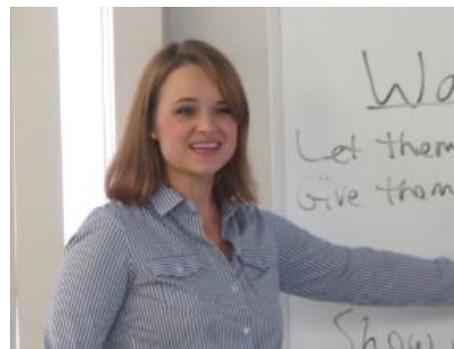
**Abstract:** According to Robert Croker, student-centered teaching

“focuses on the learner and learning rather than the teacher and teaching.” This empowering, communicative approach can make lessons more interactive and effective. But what happens when students are given more control in the classroom? Can they hold their own, or will everything fall apart?

This workshop aims to answer these and other questions, such as:

What are the benefits and pitfalls of student-centered teaching? Is it right for me and my teaching context? And what are some practical techniques to get students invested in their own learning?

Please bring a lesson plan that you would like to improve. I hope to see you there!



**The number of participants: 27**

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

- “Not it!” – Now I have an idea to make it suitable for my junior high students! Definitely I can try from next week!
- Pair work and group work shown in this workshop are easy to implement and can increase the chance for students to interact with each other more.
- I would like to do both ‘Speed Racing’ and ‘Not it’. However, I would like to adjust them to focus more on meaningful output. They seem fun for students and easy to set up.
- I would like to use more students created material. Coming up with material is tough. The level will be appropriate and they will be interested in it.

### 2. What you learned from today’s workshop

- Importance to know what students want and they need. There are many ways to know it. Making students involved in planning lessons will motivate students.
- A lot about how students are able to teach each other. I thought it would yield the opposite result of what research showed.



- In order to create student-centered learning situation, there are good activity to use. I would clarify teacher's and student's roles in classroom.
- I learned that when the focus is on students instead of the teacher, they speak more and use a lot more strategies while negotiating for meaning.
- 'Learner-centered teaching' is very useful, but it's difficult to make use of it as 'input activity'.



### 3. Questions and Answers

***Q (1): Is it difficult for young learners to do student-centered due to the lack of language ability? Advanced learners can do many activities in English, but how about lower level students?***

A: I think that learners of all levels and ages need practice to get good at student-centered lessons. In fact, young learners have a natural confidence and curiosity that really benefit this approach.

For lower-level learners, we just have to work with what they can do. We also have to help them with what they can't do yet.

It's a good idea to start small and simple with communicative pair work, group brainstorming (as we tried in the workshop), or cooperative learning techniques. In the beginning, I would allow much more Japanese, as long as ideas are being shared. Over time, I would ask them to use more English, and I would provide support by teaching communication strategies.

Lastly, I strongly recommend taking a look at Sean Reid's and Lem Mauricio's action research if you can. They've had a lot of success with younger learners and student-centered techniques.

***Q (2): My context does not allow me to meet my students often. How would you set up the class to be student-centered with only one meeting a month and students conditioned to be in traditional classes?***

A: That is a challenge. I think that the answer to this question depends on the age and ability of your students. For younger students, please check my answer to question #1. For older students, you could try creating a learning community, which is even more important in classes that meet infrequently.

I would start by involving them in the planning of the course by asking them about the topics they like and the goals that they have. You could also try creating newsletters. Each class, you can have students reflect on what they've learned. Then you could take advantage of the month you have to create newsletters out of the ideas that they shared in their reflections.

***Q (3): Please recommend articles, top 2, and activities, top 5 to further prepare (read scaffolding) us to go into our classrooms and create student-centered environments.***

A: I think that more than the activities we choose, the most important thing to remember when creating a student-centered environment is the balance of power. Most activities can be tweaked to give students more control. That being said, I believe that some activities are naturally more learner-centered than others. I recommend think-pair-share, group brainstorming (as we tried in the workshop), pair and group debate, peer-teaching, peer-assessment, and self-assessment. These are my staples.

For an excellent overview of learner-centered teaching, you can check out this site, developed by the

director of the Teaching and Learning Center at the University of Sciences in Philadelphia. You'll find plenty of articles and studies linked there.

<http://www.usciences.edu/teaching/Learner-Centered/>

For books, try:

Brown, H.D. (2003). Teaching by principles. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Weiner, M. (2002) Learner-centered teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



***Q (4): As for written feedback on students' essays/drafts, you told us that you had only checked their common errors and the target grammatical points. However, I am just wondering if you had also commented their contents. Process writing approach can encourage learners to focus on their contents, and I remember that some research show that written feedback about contents is effective.***

A: I agree! Written feedback on contents can be very effective. Please let me clarify. What I meant was, I do not give written feedback nor spend class time on all grammar mistakes that students make. I believe that excessive grammar correction is not useful because most students can't use it to improve. It can be overwhelming and demotivating. So when it comes to grammar correction, I only focus on common errors and target grammar. However, I do also comment on contents as often as possible.

***Q (5): How would you make a balance between returnees and non-returnee students? In my teaching contexts, returnees tend to dominate their conversation.***

A: I see this a lot, as well. I do two things to make sure conversations are more balanced between learners of different levels.

First, in speaking tests, rubrics are very important. I would give high but not perfect marks to students who dominate a conversation. As students use these rubrics in self-assessment, they come to understand that balance is important, and over time they tend to become more considerate conversation partners.

Second, in activities, I make sure that all learners have something that they must contribute to complete the task. For example, if the final task is to make a list of vocabulary for a test, each student could be responsible for researching one word or idiom before class. In class, they could do their best to teach their word to many different speaking partners. Next, they could report back to their home groups and share the words that they learned to create a list. Lastly, the teacher could make copies of these lists and distribute them to all groups.



***Q (6): Is there any good reference to make good slides?***

A: The best advice I ever received about making good slides is Guy Kawasaki's 10/20/30 rule: make no more than 10 slides for every 20 minutes, and always use a 30 point font.

If you'd like more information on how to give presentations, you can check out this link:

<https://www.quora.com/How-do-I-improve-my-presentation-skills-2>

***Q (7): Who is Robert Kleinsasser? What is CLT? What does it stand for?***

A: Robert Kleinsasser is a scholar and researcher who we are lucky enough to have as an adjunct professor in NUFS' MA TESOL program.

CLT stands for “communicative language teaching.” In this approach, the main goal is spontaneous communication. Fluency and expression are considered more important than accuracy. Learners naturally pick up grammar through using the language rather than memorizing grammar rules. If you want to learn more about CLT, this book is a great read:

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

***Q (8): Please give us MOAR.***

A: If you'd like to hear MOAR from me, I'll be presenting the full results of my action research on November 28<sup>th</sup> at the International JALT Convention, which will be held at WINC Aichi, Nagoya.

**<Part 2>**

**Date:** October 8, 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: 18**



**Workshop in November (Scheduled)**

**Date:** November 12, 2016, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31

**Presenter:** Joseph Falout (Nihon University)

**Title:** “The Power of Appreciating Others and Their Efforts: Motivating Students to Speak and Write”

**Please send an email to Chihaya ([chiha143@nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143@nufs.ac.jp)) to attend this workshop.**