

## *Newsletter No. 10*

### Workshop in February

**Date:** February 24, 2018, 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** NSC College, Room 31

**Presenter:** Lemuel Mauricio (Teikyo-kani Elementary School)

**Title:** "Cooperative Learning: How can You Make it Happen?"

**Abstract:** Cooperative Learning promises a plethora of social and academic gains. Teachers around the world continue to implement cooperative structures in their classrooms. But perhaps the most important question is: How do we make it work? This workshop will introduce Cooperative Learning as an alternative to the traditional language teaching method. Understanding the basic principles that differentiates cooperative structures from traditional activities will help you unlock the potential gains of implementing this exciting approach. I will show you how you can be sure that your activities are genuinely cooperative by answering 5 critical questions. Together, we will experience cooperative structures that you can use in your classes. It is as easy as PIE(S)!



**The number of participants: 24**

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

- ‘Numbered head together’ – I have had students to talk in pairs. They just shared their ideas using simple conversation strategies. The activity I learned today can expand a role of students. I think students can develop the skills to solve a problem using English in groups.
- At the moment, my classes are too small to take advantage of most of today’s activities – however, I will no doubt be teaching larger groups in the near future and am particularly interested in the ‘List’ activity and ‘Graffiti’ activities. They allow for any number of meaning-bearing activities that can be modified for nearly any ability level.
- I want my students to try to make a report or a mind-map using different colored pens.
- I really liked the graffiti idea. Being able to see who wrote what would be a big help. It could be good for motivation.
- Cooperative Activity – I didn’t know about what kind of activities are good and effective for my students. I learned that PIES activity is interesting, but it will be difficult for my class, it consists of more than 40 students, to keep their motivations.
- Numbered Head Together is an activity that I can use at university and I want to adjust to my context. The general PIES activity is a good structure to teach groups.



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

- I was able to have concrete belief in the concept of 'cooperative learning'. I'll try to review what I've done for this school year and try to come up with an action plan.
- Cooperative learning needs a lot of work but students can learn a lot with fun. I thought communicative teaching is difficult because of big gaps between students' levels. But this can ever be better for teaching if we did it in the way of today's workshop.
- I learned a lot of PIES activities. The principle is great. I want to make activities based on this principle and give students lots of chances to interact with classmates. Teachers' ideas and instructions are keys to successful learning for students.
- I'm very impressed by the PIES Analysis – its clarity and usefulness make it a great tool for analyzing how cooperative our classroom tasks are.
- I might think how the materials of 'Hi, Friends', textbooks of MEXT, are able to fit 'cooperative Work'.



## 2. Questions and Answers

*Q (1): I am very interested in adopting Cooperative Learning in my teaching, but can imagine the potential road blocks in trying to establish this type of classroom. Could you write from your experience what problems you noticed or remember when first trying this yourself that ease the way for those of us wanting to try ourselves? Knowing what pitfalls to avoid would be great.*

A: The biggest issue is preparation/planning. Aside from being time consuming, it takes time for you to be able to predict what could go wrong. Planning also involves, being able to adjust your planned activity to any situation that might occur on the spot.

The Ss spoke more Japanese than English during the activities. I listened to the students' conversations and introduced gambits or expressions that they can use.

Team-formation was a challenge because I didn't have a good idea of the students' abilities at the beginning of the year. I watched my Ss and wrote simple descriptions of each student on a notebook focusing on personality, motivation and ability.

*Q (2): Do you track changes in motivation due to cooperative learning activities that are done in your class? Do you track those changes on a micro or macro level?*

A: I did track the changes in the level of motivation of students in my AR class. I did a pre-Cooperative Learning survey to serve as my base. I periodically monitored the students' motivation and showed the changes throughout the year. However, since my tool (questionnaire) is anonymous, I was not able to track the changes on a micro level. It would have been interesting to see how working together as a team affected each students' motivation. I assured the students anonymity to get honest answers because that's what I thought was best at that time.



***Q (3): I have classes of 30 students and I am planning to group them into 6. Do you think groups of 4 is the best and why? If you know about '6 thinking hats', I would like to know your perspective on the method.***

A: I will divide the class in 6 teams of 4 and 2 teams of 3. The teams with only 3 members can be a group of 6 in activities that requires pair work.

A team of 4 is ideal because it allows for quick pairing without having an odd one out. Although a team of 6 also does the same, it takes more time to finish an activity because there are more members. Having fewer members mean spending less time in a particular activity. This opens up more time for other activities.

6 Thinking hats can be used in a Cooperative Learning activity. The hats act as lenses and/or guides on how the students look at a topic. The 4-member team can metaphorically wear the same hat or different hats as they solve a problem or discuss a topic. Incorporating 6 thinking hats with Numbered Heads Together, Jigsaw and Graffiti will give the students a more in depth idea of whatever topic you have. Might be best for Upper Intermediate and Advanced Level students.



***Q (4): 'The Learning Pyramid' shows 90% is 'teaching others'. Does 'teaching others' mean teaching others with only English? I believe some students like teaching others, but explaining with English is so hard for them.***

A: I usually ask my Ss to pair up and review the recently learned target sentences or talk about the meaning of a word or a phrase. I usually have this in Japanese. The reason is because I want the Ss to be able to express themselves as genuinely as possible. Although there are ways for Ss to accomplish this in English, I didn't have enough time to give them the tools to do so.

***Q (5): I'd like to know how it goes in a real classroom. Please tell me more showing some examples. And ... when teachers do 'cooperative work', it's very important to make activities and the goals which motivate students' interests. How do you make the activities?***

A: I believe that what happened during the workshop is how it is in the classrooms. Imagine the students talking about simpler things like favorite colors, fruits and what they want to be in the future. I deliberately introduced challenging topics because I know the audience could handle them, but in class we need to make sure that the topics are interesting and appropriate for the Ss level. I believe that we can transform any activity into a cooperative learning structure by assessing them using the PIES Analysis. Planning is key! Happy planning.



## **Action Research Session**

**Date:** February 24, 2018, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** NSC College, Room 41, Room 51

**Advisers:** Kazuyoshi Sato, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

**The number of participants:** 16



## **Workshop in March** (This workshop is for Action Research Group members only.)

**Date:** March 24-25, 2018

**Venue:** Kanzanji Sago Royal Hotel (Hamamatsu, Shizuoka)

**Advisors:** Kazuyoshi Sato (NUFS), Nancy Mutoh

**Title:** Final presentations of action research