

NUFS Workshop 2018

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May

Date: May 12, 2018, 13:00-16:00

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 226

Title: "Developing Junior High School Students' English Ability through Extensive Reading"

Presenter: Noriko Kurishita (Gujo Senior High School)

Abstract: Although extensive reading (ER) is regarded as ideal input for fostering communication abilities, it has hardly been in focus in English teaching at junior high schools. One of the reasons is that it takes too long to prove its effects in terms of outcome. Adapting sociocultural theory, this workshop demonstrates how to elicit students' abilities fostered by ER through book talk and its related activities. After six months of practice, students significantly improved their reading ability as well as speaking ability. This suggests that book talk is necessary for junior high school students in order to maximize the effects of ER.



Title: "Developing High School Students' Communicative Competence through Students' Interactions and Teacher Feedback"

Presenter: Jun Wada (Seirinkan Senior High School)

Abstract: I felt it difficult to utilize MEXT textbook to make students interaction happen in class. Many students thought learning English as memorizing its rules and new English words. As a result, they had no confidence on writing and speaking in English. To cope with such situation, I implemented the idea of skill integration in my teaching. Opportunities are increased to interact with each other in class by using textbook. Also, I introduced basic conversation strategies such as rejoinder, shadowing, and follow-up question to make their conversation the one where they can develop their communicative skills. In this presentation, I will share how they have developed their communicative skills through their interactions and their reflections on their performance and how a teacher can provide students with feedback to facilitate their learning.



The number of participants: 38

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

- I want to try doing ER. I tried it before but I gave up because I didn't have the way to prepare the materials. Now I got the way and other useful methods today. I'll try it again.
- Book Talk – using the same questions is a very good idea to make book talk successful.
- Book talk and free writing – I may not be able to provide books for extensive reading soon, but I'm going to incorporate book talk and free writing by using textbooks or other materials. Then I can give students chances to speak with others and write some compositions, some chances of outputs.
- I'm interested in using the book talk strategy. I have never tried this in Japanese schools, but I always feel it necessary to expose the students in an English atmosphere. More readings will make them aware of more English vocabularies and phrases.
- I have been failing conducting ER at my junior high school. So today's workshop was really interesting. I will definitely try book talk this year. However, I don't think I can use one whole class hour every week for ER.
- I would like to introduce extensive reading. Our school has a lot of books for extensive reading but I don't have a chance to try extensive reading for ordinary classes. I tried it for the English club activities and special classes.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I learned that teachers' enthusiasm is the greatest key in making improvements in the students' ability.
- How to motivate students – I didn't come up the idea of the way to make students talk or write about books after reading books. I think the way I learned today is a very good method to use four skills.
- There are four competences to consider. Grammar is just one of them, but teaching grammar is focused on most of the lessons. We need to notice that we should focus on other three, too.
- I learned a good example of ER. I learned how to teach English effectively, especially for students' interactions and teacher feedback. I'll try out the method I learned today.
- Scaffolding was helpful when I explained the book story. It was very hard to explain but my partner explained the story while showing the book itself. I tried it and it worked well. Much easier to explain the story. This was a kind of scaffolding, I thought.
- I found that transcription by students is effective for them to find the parts for revision.
- The video of Jun's students showed the importance of communication strategies to improve speaking.



3. Questions and Answers

< To Noriko >

Q (1): How much did students enhance their complexity and discourse of speaking and writing through ER?

A: It is difficult to extract the pure effect of ER from the complexity and discourse of speaking and writing in this research. I instructed conversation strategies for the book talk based on ER. The improvement in their speaking and reading abilities is a result of the whole complexity of Communicative Language Teaching.



Q (2): Could you possibly tell me what kind of speaking test task students needed to take?

A: The students' speaking ability was tested in a paired conversation. Students were randomly selected to be paired and given a topic to talk about. The tasks for pre- and post-tests were related to topics that were dealt with in their MEXT-approved textbook. For example, they pick up three items which they think are necessary in case of disasters. The starting question was prepared, however, they had to continue asking and answering follow-up questions they come up with during the conversation to fulfill the task. The tests started with *junken* as experienced in my demonstration, and the winner opens the conversation. In this way, a natural spontaneous interaction was elicited.

Q (3): Could you clarify the correlation between Extensive Reading activity and their development on speaking, please?

A: The purpose of this research is to show how effective the ER activities such as the book talk are in order to motivate students toward reading with good quality. The improvement on their speaking tests is a result of the whole complexity of CLT as explained in question 1.

Q (4): How can students know the sound (pronunciation) by ER?

A: There were a relatively large number of students who preferred reading with sound assistance such as a CD when they started ER in the 1st year. Gradually, they had been moving away from the sound assistance. Although there were a few students who still preferred reading with sound, many students read without sound in the third year.



Q (5): Can we use ER in high school, too? If we can, how can I introduce it?

A: Certainly, yes we can! It will be more effective than in junior high. I would recommend introducing it with book talk as I demonstrated. That is the way to get the most benefits of ER.

Q (6): What 40 books should I buy first?

A: It is said that ORT (Oxford Reading Tree) series were a threshold even for adult learners. It starts with picture books only with titles as written words. Even though they were written for children,

grown-ups can enjoy them. If you buy the whole series, you will get more than 100 books. If it costs too much, you can get 40 books that match the learners' proficiency level.

Q (7): *I thought it costs money to gather all sorts of books in the library even I become a member of the ER association. I wonder my school cooperates or helps it. Do you have any advice?*

A: Ask any foundations which may provide research money. Ask your principal, your librarian and your PTA for the budget. Ask public libraries in your city if you can borrow some books. If you would like to know more about my story of how I struggled to get books, please refer to my article in *The New English Classroom*, vol. 580, December, 2017 (『新英語教育 12月号』 2017年, メトロポリタンプレス).

Q (8): *I would like to try free writing activity in my class. Did you ask the students about the improvement of their confidence?*

A: As I showed in my data, many students felt confident with speaking after the free writing activity. In this research, I could not show any evidence that they also improved their writing ability, however, I have a strong feeling they did judging from what they wrote in their book reviews. Many students reported that they liked free writing because it helped them talk about books.

Q (9): *When do you think is the best timing to start ER in junior high school?*

A: This IS a good question. I do not know. It is controversial among ER researchers. However, I think the sooner the better following the previous studies in CLT because input is essential for L2A. Why don't we start reading aloud even for kindergarten kids? It will foster their reading habit.



Q (10): *How did you learn to give so good lessons?*

A: I owe NUFS teachers a lot! I thank Yoshi and Duane who observed my class for giving me precious feedbacks. I thank Nancy and Juanita for useful advice when I attended NUFS workshops and AR session. Also, I learned a lot from my peers in the AR group at NUFS as my students did from their peers in my class.

< To Jun >

Q (1): *As for content-based feedback from the teacher, how often did you provide your students with comments on their drafts?*

A: Students usually have two chances to write their essays. It seems difficult for them to understand all the comments. Students basically use their peers' comments to modify their writing. After the final draft, I give them some small comments but I do not mention all the grammatical errors in it. I think it will demotivate them to write more. Many students in my school think they are not good at English, I try to give positive comments to them.

Q (2): *Through skill-integration, how much did your students improve their complexity and discourse of speaking and writing?*

A: When I started to change my lesson, most students had no confidence on using English. Little by little, they got used to speaking and writing in English. Through commenting with each other, they add some information and change their expression to make them understood. At first, they use only one word or two to communicate their ideas, but now they are trying to use simple sentences. How to encourage them to use more complex sentences and expression is issues to be solved. I think showing them some model conversation in which they can see the difference is one of the keys to improve their complexity of their speaking and writing.



Q (3): *You did not provide the final version of the sample student essay. I am just wondering what kind of development you found from it.*

A: Actually, the second one is the final version of the sample student essay. Through peer editing, they get comments about what information to be included and if their peers can understand their ideas correctly. Many students tried to add some information and modified some expression to communicate correctly. As for accuracy, most students feel hard to find their peers' grammatical errors, and even if they can, they tend to be hesitated to mention in their comments. I think both students' comments and teacher's feedback will be needed to improve both side of their essay. I think it is more important to encourage them to use more language to raise their fluency.

Q (4): *From what kind of lessons, did you change to the lesson we took today?*

A: Before I started to this Action Research, I teach English in very traditional way, that is grammar translation method. Although they had a little chance to use English in class, but they try to focus on their accuracy. I think it is because I graded their writing by the number of the errors they had in their writing. I learned that students improve their accuracy after fluency, so it is important for a language teacher to give a lot of chances to use and try English they learned in class.

It takes courage for me to change the lesson. Thanks to advice from professors and AR members, I could change my lesson little by little.



Q (5): *I think shadowing is sometimes impolite to people who speak English. What do you think?*

A: It is true that using shadowing so many times could be impolite to a speaker. I introduced Conversation Strategies (CSs) for them to have chance to negotiate for meaning. Before they learn CSs, they only asked some question and answered the questions. In such conversation they didn't have to listen carefully to speaker because they memorized all what to say. I think using CSs encourage them to concentrate on what a speakers want to say. When they try to ask some follow- up questions or use some rejoinders, they have to understand what a a speaker say during their conversation. However, students with lower proficiency or when the topic is a little difficult for them, it is hard for them to use follow-up questions or rejoinders instantly. Shadowing is one of the helpful strategies for such students to have time to think about what to say next.

Q (6): *I thought the most important thing to consider is that to choose the familiar topic to students. If the topic itself is too difficult, speaking activity won't go smoothly, of course. What would you do?*

A: The problem is that it is sometimes hard for me to find suitable topics from MEXT textbook. Some topics are difficult for them to talk about and some are not so exciting to talk about. I try to make the topic more familiar by changing it a little. For example, the topic “We Are the World” that I used in my presentation is basically a topic about world peace or humanitarian support. It is too difficult for them to talk about as a speaking activity. I changed it to “Your favorite song”. In that way, it is possible to manipulate the level of a topic. However, it has another problem. When the topic has changed a lot, the lesson cannot have a link between reading and speaking activity. Students cannot utilize what they read in speaking activity. I sometimes use another textbook which has a lot of interesting story such as “True Stories”.

Q (7): *I'd like to know how long you spend on each activity.*

A: It depends on the activity. It usually takes a lot for students to understand how to do in the activity if it is the first time. As they experience the same activity again and again, they come to be able to do more quickly. I try to use the similar lesson structure again and again so that I can avoid students' confusion. As for CSs instruction, I used whole semester to have them understand and practice to use simple CSs. It is often the case that students easily forget CSs after long holidays, so I used some time to review the CSs they learned in previous semester.

Workshop in May (AR Orientation)

Date: May 13, 2018, 9:30-12:30

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room 1

Title: Orientation of Action Research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

The number of participants: 10



Next workshop will be held on June 9th. Detailed information is on our web
(<http://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/index.html>)