

Newsletter No. 5

Workshop in September

Date: September 15, 2018, 10:30-14:30

Venue: NSC College, Room 31

Presenter: Brad Deacon (Nanzan University)

Title: “Tools for Active Learning in the EFL Classroom”

Abstract:

Are you a teacher looking for ways to brush up your teaching skills, motivate your students more, and recharge your batteries with like-minded colleagues? If so, then this workshop on Active Learning (AL) is for you.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) have defined AL as “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (p. 2). How specifically teachers create AL opportunities in their classes, though, needs to be understood in greater detail, as it has been shown that teachers frequently struggle to cohesively integrate their methodologies, content, and goals within an AL approach to teaching and learning (Nishikawa, 2015).

In the first part of our workshop, we will look at what AL is, why it is important, and how to add several new tools to our teaching toolbox to help our students to learn more actively. Specifically, we will practice ways to involve our students more in AL processes that span the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In addition, we will visit ways that students can become more active through activating their agency, curiosity, critical thinking, dialogue, and bodies to develop more interactive competence.

In the second part of our workshop, we will continue to explore AL through reflecting on the results of a mixed methods research project that was conducted by the presenter in which university students express their preferences for more AL in their classes, particularly in lectures. Students overwhelmingly reported their desire to have more active classes rather than just having conventional teacher-centered 90-minute lectures. We will then consider more practical ways for teachers to involve their students more actively even within traditional contexts such as lectures.



Bonwell, C.C., & Eison, J.A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nishikawa, J. (2015). *Introduction to active learning*. Tokyo: Meiji Tosyo Syuppan.

The number of participants: 36

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

- Double-entry journal – I think it’s easier for students to understand how to formulate their own thoughts without stopping at purely reporting someone else’s words.

- I think the sequence the group work is effective; thinking by one-selves, share the answer in a group and talk with people in other group. Students might enjoy talking this style.
- What I know / what I want to know / what I learn after DVD was interesting.
- I'd like to use the charts with KWL and Quotations-commentary in my reading and communication classes. Those are the forms I have never used in class. They would help the students organize their ideas and comprehension levels. I'd also like to use the various methods introduced to enhance students participation to activities. Some of my students are too shy or unmotivated to participating in pair and group discussions. I learned that those small tactics might really change the atmosphere of my classrooms.
- Think – Pair – Share. It is sometimes hard to have the students engage in communicative activities, but this activity is simple to use in many contexts. I would like to use it in reading activity to make the section more communicative.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I learned that this teaching structure increase students awareness to try to communicate with each other. Senior high school students often feel hard to have their own opinion, but discussing with other students leads to their confidence to have their idea and speak up.
- I learned that making good discussion questions is important for active discussion. I learned group of three is good.
- I'm surprised to know the fact the students remember very little of what they read. Through today's workshop, I could feel more involved in class and want to learn more with others. It's fun to exchange ideas!
- "AL doesn't work but it's YOU who make it work.": this gives me energy to continue what I'm doing, to do research to prepare materials and to be engaged in more learning as a teacher.
- The importance of AL. I actually do some activities in the class but I'd like to increase the amount and time more to let students have chances to teach each other to fix their knowledge.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): What's the difference between Active Learning and Collaborative Learning?

A: My understanding is that Active Learning is basically any teaching approach in which students are engaged and learning actively. Cooperative Learning involves putting students into groups to accomplish specific tasks and each student has a clear role within the group. As I see it, Cooperative Learning is a kind of Active Learning.

Q (2): I usually have students brainstorm in pairs by making an idea map. KWL seems also effective. During the process of writing, which is coming first, idea map or KWL?

A: By idea map, I wonder if this is similar to a Mind Map? If so, then both of these graphic organizers are useful tools to use during the



writing process. Personally, I would prefer to use the KWL to activate schema and stimulate curiosity (especially through student-generated questions) about a writing topic first. Then, I would invite the students to zone in on a specific aspect of the topic (possibly suggested by doing the KWL) to make a Mind Map.

Nice idea to have students in pairs during their brainstorming. That gives them an immediate audience. Writing is tough enough to do alone and working together can help to give them a real audience rather than an imagined one during the process.

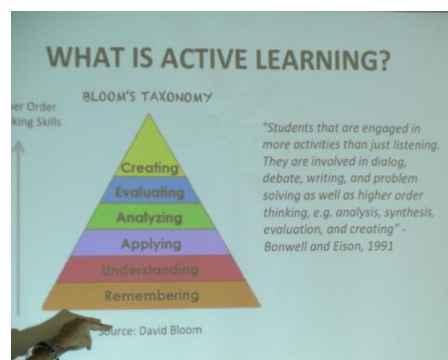
Q (3): What are the points you have in your mind when you plan an active learning class? What should you be careful in making a class procedure?

A: In general, I aim to provide a learner-centered experience. While teaching, I focus on student engagement and learning. Those can be different things because students can be engaged but not learning much. It requires that I am present as a teacher to notice these points. More specifically, I give attention to what Bonwell and Eison shared as the Five Conditions of Active Learning. Those conditions are: 1) Students are involved in more than listening; 2) Less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students' skills; 3) Students are involved in higher order thinking; 4) Students are engaged in activities; and 5) Greater emphasis is placed on students' exploration of their own attitudes and values. How this looks in one of my classes is that the students are actively practicing the four skills, they are using critical thinking, they are actively engaged (most of the time), and reflecting on their learning experiences.



Q (4): I'd like to know how to implement AL in coordinated course or TOEIC class.

A: As a fellow course coordinator, I would suggest using those Five Conditions from Bonwell and Eison as a start to examine the course that you are coordinating. It might be useful to ask the following questions, which connect to these conditions, to reflect on your program: 1) How are students involved? (What are students doing?); 2) What skills are students developing? ; 3) What higher order skills are students developing?; 4) How are students engaged in activities? What activities are they engaged in? How are students involved?; and 5) What opportunities are there for students to explore their attitudes and values more deeply? Through reflecting upon such questions, program coordinators and teachers can gain greater awareness into their practices and identify ways to make adjustments to provide opportunities for deeper engagement and learning within their courses and classes.



Action Research Session

Date: September 15, 2018, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room 41, 51

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt (NUFS)

The number of participants: 10



Next Workshop (scheduled)

Date: October 13, 2018 10:30-14:30, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room 31

Presenter: Junko Yamanaka (Chukyo University, Aichi-gakuin University)

Title: “Utilizing Children’s Power of Indirect Learning for Language Acquisition”