

Newsletter No. 6

Workshop in October

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

Venue: NSC College, Room 31

Presenter: Junko Yamanaka

(Chukyo University, Aichi Gakuin University)

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

Abstract:

Young children are naturally good language learners. They have great instincts, skills and characteristics that help them learn another language. It is therefore a very good idea for teachers to exploit the children's natural abilities for learning in foreign language classrooms. In this session, we will focus on children's capacity for indirect learning, and explore ways to make the most of it. Effective approaches, games, activities and materials will be introduced. The presenter believes paying attention to ‘indirect learning’ is important for all language teachers, not just for TEC teachers, as it is an essential part of language acquisition mechanism.

The number of participants: 18

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

- I'd like to use the drawing game, introducing shapes. It's because we experienced a big gap while trying to tell our drawings.
- CLIL lessons – because ‘new course of study’ says to cultivate the students the way of watching and thinking.
- The specific games and stories would be out of place in my teaching environment, but the principles that make them effective are applicable in any classroom. Use of art, creative writing, and music can be used in a variety of course types in order to harness imagination and interest while promoting communication.
- Bingo activity. Older students can give questions.
- I'm now dealing with college students who major in early childhood education. So everything I learned today should be introduced in class for the future kindergartens and elementary school teachers. However, these students are so reluctant to speak out, so I'm giving them opportunities to do speeches and presentation in class.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- CBI can provide students with many opportunities to use the target language in an authentic situation, however, it is essential to prepare realia.
- 'Don't teach the language, teach something in the language.'
- If it's not enjoyable in L1, it's unlikely to be enjoyable in L2.
- I learned it is thrilling to have the students guess the things by showing a picture or a material little by little, while you are moving the cover – they try to use many many words to answer.
- I sometimes talk with elementary school teachers who are not English teachers. I want to show them Bingo games, guessing games for them to teach English.
- I was able to learn the process of how you can make simple games and activities more active and meaningful. Telling a lie is effective, which I am personally not good at.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): I would like to know how much time you spend on the activities in the class and how would you arrange your class.

A: When I taught elementary school 1st and 2nd graders (six or seven students) I used to teach 30 minutes, and another 30 minutes was taught by a native speaker. I remember I spent about 5-10 minutes for each game or activity. In each lesson, after some homework (workbook) check time, I used at least three different games or activities. In each lesson, multiple activities are needed. Children's attention span is short, so you need an "Okosama-lunch" style lesson plan, that is, a little bit of many attractive things. "One long activity for the whole class time" should be avoided. This is also important from the "multiple intelligences" point of view. You need to try to activate different kinds of intelligences among the children so that any child in your classroom would have a happy and proud moment some time during the lesson.

Q (2): Today, indirect learning is discussed only for speaking and listening. Any tips for the reading and writing?

A: Extensive reading is a very good example of indirect learning. While the learner is absorbed in the story, their attention is focused on the content of the story, and the language part becomes secondary or subconscious, and this can help the learner acquire the language naturally, without much anxiety. Therefore it is important that students find many easy and interesting books that they can get absorbed in. As for writing, "timed-writing" or "free writing" activity is a good example. The primary goal of this activity is to write a lot, regardless of quality. That is, the more words students write during a short time (like 10 minutes), the better. The teacher tells students that they don't have to worry about grammar or spelling mistakes. The teacher just records the number of words they have written and do not correct their writing. This allows students to focus more on the content (what they want to express) than form. After weeks of this activity, students' writing amount increases, and very often their quality of writing improves too.



Q (3): Is autonomy-based approach another name of task-based instructions?

A: I am not familiar with “autonomy-based approach” and to be honest, concerning “task-based instructions”, I feel my concept of “task” might be somewhat different from what experts propose. How experts define “task” is still not very clear to me, and therefore I do not feel confident to answer this question. If I may comment in general terms, “autonomy-based approach” seems to be a broader concept than “task-based instructions (“approach” is a bigger concept than “instruction” anyway), and probably in the autonomy-based approach, “tasks” to enhance autonomy are proposed. Again, I need to study more in order to answer this question, and sorry, this is all I can say at this point.



Q (4): I supposed it would depend on learning/teaching goals, but is story-based approach an approach to focus on comprehensible input more than output?

A: Stories are excellent source of comprehensible input. I would say the primary purpose of using story books would be for natural language input. However, a lot of output activities are possible with stories. For example, after students have known the story very well, they can act out by using a simplified scenario. There can be many other related activities too. Just like content-based approach, you can relate the story to art, music, social studies, science, etc., where you can plan different kinds of output activities for your students. Stories can make you creative, so I am sure you will come up with many ideas.

Q (5): How do you maintain and regenerate your energy levels?

A: I get energy from the audience! Your enthusiasm, interest, curiosity, smiles, excitement...all are my source of energy!

Action Research Session

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

Venue: NSC College, Room 41, 51

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

The number of participants: 8



Next Workshop (scheduled)

Date: November 10, 2018 10:30-14:30, 14:30-17:00

Presenter: Stephan Ryan (Waseda University)

Title: “Motivation in English Language Learning”

Venue: NSC College, Room 31