

Newsletter No. 10

Workshop in February

Date: February 23, 2019, 10:30-14:30

Venue: NSC, Room A-31

Presenter: Joseph Falout (Nihon University)

Title: “Continuing the Story: How Students Keep Talking”

Abstract:

Why bring stories into your classroom? Storytelling is a fundamental way that humans connect and make sense of ourselves and each other. Truths, mysteries, and wonders can be powerfully communicated by storytelling. This is how stories get students to care about the characters, their situations, and the language and other modes of expression used to convey stories. This workshop will walk teachers through teaching storytelling to their students by doing it together ourselves, such as nonverbal and verbal improvisation activities, collaborative and interpretive listening, puzzlers, and split stories. Teachers can adapt these structures to suit their students’ abilities and interests.

The number of participants: 25



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

- Split Story – This is an interesting activity because students have to listen to the teacher’s story and also they have to create the ending. It’s fun!
- ‘The King’s three hats’ is very interesting. Students will concentrate solving the question.
- ‘Catch the big fish’ activity is useful for JHS students to improve their listening and reading abilities.
- Mirroring Improvisation – It’s very useful for very low-level students. Also, it’s good to make the relationship between us and students. Good to use for ice-breaking, too.
- Word Grab in chronological order – It’s good to use for reviewing the stories of the textbook and to grab the main ideas of the story.
- Using the children’s traditional stories, because everyone knows the story and students will want to speak more.
- I’ve always been fascinated in storytelling, but honestly, had a difficult time including the activity in my class. I really enjoyed the mirroring activity because it creates a sense of collaboration among the students who think English class is boring.

2. What you learned from today’s workshop

- Pay attention, speak slowly and make simple sentences: these are the keys to teach effectively.
- Physical activities are good way to start studying.
- I had thought that story telling was a hard task of



learning a foreign language. But I found simple stories are nice and useful, I'll do that.

- Repetition orally and nonverbally is an interesting step for language learning.
- Being open to anything. This is the first step to improve ourselves.
- The power of storytelling. Today in order to retell the story, I needed to pay close attention to the structure, words and grammar. It was also interesting to create the ending of the story. I'd like to use these activities in my class. I can adjust them to my students.
- I really liked Joe's way of encouraging us and walking among us. His process step by step was also great.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Mirroring activities physically was interesting. I can understand three keys (careful attention, slow movement and simple movement) are important to communication. But mirroring storytelling simultaneously seems to be awkward for me. Instead of this activity, I think repeating/creating sentences one by one with a partner will be more meaningful and collaborating. What do you think?

A: Partners shadowing each other's sentences in storytelling or taking turns creating sequences of a story in sentence-by-sentence collaboration sound like great activities that are very much worth doing too. Each type of activity has certain advantages that other activities might not have, so knowing the purposes of a chosen activity is important for both teacher and students. One of the main purposes of the mirroring improvisations is to help people practice relating with one another. As Alda (2017) explains, mirroring in simultaneous actions or verbalizations means getting into sync with each other's rhythms, learning how to deeply experience another person's viewpoint, and building mutual empathy with one another.

Q (2): As Reiko-san said, the repetition for students could be "repetitive." My guess is, with class time in mind, three times is enough. With teachers, I suspect two times is more than enough. That would allow us to learn more activities from you, as it wouldn't require time to repeat.

A: Great advice, thank you. I'll cut down the number and length of repetitions the next time I workshop these stories with teachers. This shows how important it is to understand how your audience is reacting to your activities, so I appreciate getting feedback. This also means that, for teachers, knowing how students are reacting to your lessons is helpful for adjusting to their interests and levels. I have heard from other teachers that younger learners enjoy the repetitions, especially when saying them in chorus together. But for each group of learners, you really don't know until you try it and get their responses. One good way of inviting feedback is through action logging, which you may have heard about directly from Murphey's (1993) workshops at NUFS.



Q (3): I remembered a game called "Grandma's Going to the Supermarket." Can the students continuously create the story instead of one student finishing the story and the next student creating another different ending?

A: This seems to be the same idea as in the first comment about taking turns creating sequences of a story in collaboration. It sounds like it could be a lot of fun and meaningful for students to be creating their own stories in collaboration. I wonder how to scaffold the activity and adopt it for the EFL classroom. Students might be slow to create sentences or shy to do so on the spot. So perhaps try different ways to see what works best for your classes. Students might prefer writing their stories rather than speaking them, or making up their stories bit-by-bit as regular homework over a few weeks. Or perhaps they could write it in larger groups together on a wiki page. If you can make this activity work for your students, please report back to us the next time I visit NUFFS about how you did it.



Q (4): How do you find these wonderful stories? They are all amazing.

A: As for *Mama Panya's pancakes* (Chamberlin & Chamberlin, 2005), the authors Mary and Rich are among a group of amazing writer friends of mine who all used to workshop our stories together long ago. The puzzlers I got from Car Talk and I put my own twists and variations on them, so I'm still practicing my hand as a writer of stories. You might try writing your own stories too. Good luck!

References

Alda, A. (2017). *If I understood you, would I have this look on my face?: My adventures in the art and science of relating and communicating*. New York, NY: Random House.

Car Talk. Podcast. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510208/car-talk>

Chamberlin, M., & Chamberlin, R. (2005). *Mama Panya's pancakes*. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books.

Murphey, T. (1993). Why don't teachers learn what learners learn? Taking the guesswork out with action logging. *English Teaching Forum*, 31(1), 6-10.

Action Research Session

Date: February 23, 2019, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC, Room A-42, A-51

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Juanita Heigham (NUFFS)

The number of participants: 8



Workshop in March (for Action Research Group members only)

Date: March 30-31, 2019

Venue: Hotel Takeshima (Gamagori, Aichi)

Title: Final presentations of Action Research

Advisors: Duane Kindt, Kazuyoshi Sato (NUFS)