

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May

Date: May 11 2019, 13:00-16:00

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 226

Title: “Developing Junior High School Students’ English Ability through Focus-on-Form Instruction and Communication Strategy Training”

Presenter: Junko Kanzaki (Tokoha Tachibana Junior High School)

Abstract: In response to limitations of traditional grammar teaching, a new communicative grammar teaching called focus-on-form instruction (FFI) has been developed. FFI refers to a teaching approach which “overtly draw students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication” (Long, 1991, p.46). In addition to FFI, communication strategy (CS) training plays an important role to motivate beginner learners to communicate in the L2. This student-centered instruction is effective for junior high school students to improve their language skills. The speaker will demonstrate FFI including CS training and show the results of improvement of her first-year junior high school students’ communicative competence.



Title: “Developing High School Students’ Motivation through Focus-on-Form Instruction and Performance Tests”

Presenter: Takayuki Fujimoto (Takahama High School):

Abstract: Teaching grammar is one of the crucial issues in English Education. In schools, students usually have explicit explanations and drill-like practice. Lee & VanPatten (2003) affirmed that “traditional instruction consisting of drills in which learner output is manipulated and the instruction is divorced from meaning or communication is not an effective method for enhancing language acquisition” (p.137). However, it is not easy to attend both meaning and form at the same time, especially beginners. To solve this problem, Ellis (2015) proposed a focus-on-form. I will share what is the focus-on-form and how students develop their motivation through this communicative grammar instruction.



The number of participants: 49

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

< Junko >

- For 1st graders in JHS, I will use one-minute small talk at the beginning of each class.
- 3-minute talk and communication strategies – I learned that by telling students about communicative roles in conversation explicitly, they will enjoy having more natural conversation.
- The strategies for conversation can be used in any kinds of conversation. So I'd like to introduce them into my class.
- CS planning activity. It will help students pre-plan and understand how to continue conversation and lead topics. The recorded performance test seems great for them to see their own growth.



<Takayuki >

- I think the way to combine writing and having conversation is good because students can improve their English skills in some kinds of ways.
- Fun essay and peer review – I learned how he uses several techniques to help students output more English and also to motivate them.
- Free writing is a very good way to improve both writing and speaking.
- I'd like to use some ideas in my class – especially the worksheets for writing. They are very helpful both for students and teachers.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

< Junko >

- 'Iitai', 'Kikitai' and 'Moriagetai' are so important to have conversation.
- I was able to understand the difference between planned FFI and incidental FFI and how to make activities based on FFI.
- I learned that if teachers can give enough scaffoldings, students can improve communication abilities.
- It's very important to make things relevant to students, and the rule 'make your partner happy' is very easy and effective to keep talking.

< Takayuki >

- Even if the level of students is low, teachers will make it possible to motivate them and improve their abilities.
- It's nice to know your style of the worksheet for w¥free writing. Students can know how many words they are writing automatically.
- Teachers should prepare many small steps to make students get used to speaking.
- I learned motivation is the key to success for students to improve their English. Good atmosphere is a must.

3. Questions and Answers

< Junko >

1) Do you give an effort to increase English instructions in your class (from April to March)? If so, how do you do that? / Do you think English should be used in the handouts? If so, I'm wondering if lower level students can understand the instructions.

Yes, I do. However, it does not mean I instruct everything in English. I use Japanese to confirm grammar rules because Japanese is their effective tool to understand new things. In terms of increasing English in class, I increase my English to give them ample input and to support their output activities. I employ the cycle of planning- action- observation (research) – revision. What I do in April is to list up the words and phrases that I want to use in class. Then I use them over and over in class and I gradually increase English. To make my class friendly to everyone, there are my own principles for employing English. Firstly, I use some easy English which is often used in Japanese. Secondly, I use visual aids such as pictures or my gestures. Thirdly, I observe students very carefully if they are with me or not. Fourthly, I often give surveys if they understand my English or not. Lastly, when I use English to explain the rules of activities, I write English and Japanese together on the worksheet. I carefully give them a lot of hints when I use English.

2) How do you collaborate with elementary schools?

Unfortunately, I have no experience in collaborating with elementary school teachers. But if I was asked to collaborate with English teachers in elementary school, I would like to introduce Moriagetai to elementary pupils.

3) What kind of things do you test students on their paper test at a mid-term test? Do you ask them to answer grammar questions?

In terms of grammar teaching, I view grammar is a tool to support communication. Accordingly, I test students if they can use the grammar rules correctly in written forms in paper tests.

4) How do students learn the pronunciation of singular s, es, ies?

I view the pronunciation of singular s is a rather small matter in speaking tasks because the pronunciation does not bother information exchange in speaking tasks. Accordingly, I show some examples of [s][z][ts] and [i:z] to teach pronunciation. Usually, students are interested in how to read s in their production and ask how to read them to me while they are preparing or practicing their English.

As for teaching grammar, I do not expect students to understand perfectly from the beginning. Rather I make them to use the grammar and notice the gap of their interlanguage (their own developing language, sometimes with errors) and the targeted language (English), then let them correct it in communication. There are lots of timing to teach singular s in different ways. For instance, students can notice the grammar forms in written forms easily in reading and writing tasks. Written forms are rather easy for students to confirm the grammar rules because written forms do not disappear, and they can use more time to think.



5) When do you make your worksheets? How long does it take to make one worksheet?

It took about 1 hour or more to make one at the beginning. After I developed my principles in my worksheet, it became shorter. It seems a big effort at the beginning, however, the worksheets can be revised and used easily from next year. Preparation is one of the most important parts of teaching so that it is an effort worth doing for me. Another idea is to collaborate with other teachers if you have multiple numbers of teachers who are teaching the same grade. Research shows that collaboration accelerates the improvement of English teaching and reduce the burden of each teacher.

6) I think using 'Moriage-tai' reaction is wonderful. Do you introduce it in the early period? How do you introduce it at first?

Yes. I introduce Moriagetai from the beginning. I teach grammar and vocabularies in communication. So students are taught affirmative and negative forms as Iitai, interrogative forms as Kikitai. I introduce simple Moriagetai such as "Ah-huh." "Okay." "I see." Then I also introduce "Really? Me, too." in between Iitai. In April to May, students learn how to express their favorite things, such as food, pet, and sports. The first interaction consists of only affirmative forms Iitai and Moriagetai. The example dialogue is as follows;

A: I like dogs. (言い隊)

B: I see. I like cats. (言い隊)

A: Oh, really? Me, too. (盛り上げ隊)

B: Yes.

When Kikitai is added in Iitai and Moriagetai, the conversation becomes more natural.

A: I like dogs. (言い隊)

B: I see. I like cats. (盛り上げ隊+言い隊)

A: Oh, really? Me, too. Do you like dogs? (盛り上げ隊+聞き隊)

B: No, I don't like dogs. (言い隊)

A: Oh, no.... (盛り上げ隊)



7) I thought it needs at least two examples when introducing how to use singular s. Otherwise, some of the students would use singular s only when 'He' is used as a subject. Students might not come up with the idea there are three patterns: He, She, It. What do you think?

Yes, it can be revised according to your idea. One thing I have noticed from my action research is that junior high school students have already developed their cognition in a certain way. It is possible for them to find a rule from small numbers of examples. So, teachers do not have to show everything as examples. Rather, I always care if I have given them enough time of output. Make input simpler and shorter as possible, give students more time to produce their English.

8) What can be the best way to deepen their conversation, deeper than the perfunctory one?

I view this question is how we develop "communicative competence" of students in the English class. Students need to be given ample knowledge and training of communication continuously. In my research, I observed my students used their familiar linguistic resources whatever popped up in their mind in their

communication at the beginning. Accordingly, the topic scattered unnaturally such as asking about animals, pets, or food. They need more linguistic knowledge, better strategic competence, and experience of communication. Gradually they fixed the unnatural conversation into the more natural conversation through communication activities, however, there were still rooms to improve them as better ones. The competencies which are important for beginner learners are grammatical (Iitai, Kikitai) and strategic competence, (Moriagetai), then they developed discourse competence (topic development) through communication experience. With those reasons, I believe the English class has to give students ample knowledge of the language and also ample opportunities to use language continuously.

9) In your handout, all affirmative and question sentences are included. Do you use that handout for the introduction of their-person singular s?

Yes. Interrogative forms are used in the worksheet, however, I focused only on affirmative forms for answers. I made this worksheet to make students focus on affirmative forms to decide their answer. When the focus is on meaning, students do not pay too much attention to forms. They just understand they are asked questions. I find no problems using interrogative forms in this lesson. Rather, I use the interrogative form beforehand intentionally because it can be a preparation for learning the interrogative form in the next lesson. However, my intention can be both positive and negative according to how the teacher teaches English. If more emphasis is on forms in everyday class, students tend to pay more attention to forms than meaning. In that case, it is possible that if the new form is used in my way, it may confuse students.

10) Are all speaking test recorded?

Yes, I recorded all the performance tests. I also suggest you record students' outcomes from everyday activity. The outcomes of students tell you a lot of things. It shows how students have developed their communication ability, how language is learned in the class, and there are also a lot of hints for the next class.

To all teachers.

Thank you very much for coming to today's workshop. I have learned much from this workshop. Your questions are very good feedback for me. I cannot help respecting all of you coming to this workshop because we teachers have so many jobs other than English classes so that we need to make lots of effort to come to the workshop. I hope you have learned something from the workshop and our sample activities have somewhat inspired you to teach English.



< Takayuki >

1) Did you see that your students writing skill has improved in Eiken?

Unfortunately, my students do not take certification exams such as Eiken or GTEC but I believe that their writing skill might have improved.

2) How do you manage to instruct follow-up questions and sentences in your class?

I introduce from one or two words follow ups. (e.g. Why? When? What book? Where? How often?) And, I usually go to the classroom a little earlier and I write some follow up questions on the blackboard. I also write some sentences and give students time to think what question can be asked next. Students need time to come to use Follow up questions. It really takes time.

3) Who makes handouts for the class? Only one teacher? / Are there any books or resources you recommend to help plan or FFI lesson?

Yes. I made the all worksheet for English Expression I of 1st grade. It sounds quite tough but I made them based on フォーカス・オン・フォームでできる!新しい英文法指導アイデアワーク.

I downloaded the handouts from the books. Actually, most of my ideas come from this workshop.

4) The teachers who have not studied FFI are not so interested in it. How did you get their approval and cooperation?

I have many students' production such as posters and videos of speaking test. I show young teachers (not only English teachers!) those students' production. They usually get interested in them. And if one teacher get interested in those production, it come to an issue among the teachers.

5) I want to know the year-plan of your class.

The table below is the goal of time and words and the topics. Mid term tests and term tests have 2 lessons from the textbook.

	The goal of time	The goal of words	Topic
May	1:00	60	Self-Introduction
June	1:00	70	My memories
October	1:30	80	My favorite music
November	1:30	90	My hobby
February	2:00	100	Movies

6) I did free writing in my class, but I didn't collect them. Did you do peer editing or give students common errors?

I never check the free writing, either. Students have peer editing and common errors only for essay writing.

Free writing has some rules; no dictionaries, no erasers, and don't stop writing. This activity focuses on their fluency.



7) What are the difficulties when you share the worksheets with your colleagues? I work at the school where worksheets are shared, but sometimes it's hard to use and prepare.

If we have problems on the worksheet (e.g. grammar errors) it is hard to share that immediately. And, even we use the same materials, teachers use them in a different way. To solve these problems, we have a weekly meeting where we share the information what happened in the previous lesson and what worksheet we use next class. To communicate with colleagues is the most important.

8) How do you decide the duration of each activity – 5 mins/2mins/1mins? I always wonder what is the most suitable. Any tips?

I am also wondering this. I think it depends on what the goal is. If teachers want students to talk longer or write more, the time should be slightly longer. And, if the goal is on fluency, it should be shorter.

9) I'd like to know how often and at which timing you have students do free writing and fun essay.

My students have free writing at the beginning of every class. Although in other schools it is impossible to have it in every class, I think students need to have this activity constantly. And, ideally, students have a chance to talk about their writing. It is difficult to spend so much time but this is so effective way. As for fun essay, students make a poster before each test, 5 times in a year.

10) I want to use English a lot in class, but I don't have enough confidence in my English skills. How can I solve this problem?

Every people around the students can be their model. That means students see the attitude of not only students but also teachers. I want my students to talk a lot even though they make many mistakes. I do not care how many mistakes they make. What the most important is if students talk positively or not. Thus, teachers should use English in front of them. We, teachers, are also language learners. We make mistakes.

11) What the ration(percentage) of the performance test in your assessment?

Speaking Test 20%

Fun Essay 10%

Mini Test 10%

Attitude (homework) 10%

Exam 50%



12) Do you think English should be used in the handouts? If so, I'm wondering if lower level students can understand the instructions.

Students usually worry about what is going on at that moment. If students do not understand the instructions, students look around and realize what they should do. Like this, students have many skills to follow the class. I think it happens in even Japanese instruction. Therefore, English should be used in the handouts. However, if we think many students cannot follow the instruction, the Japanese might be used.

13) Sometimes it's hard to do pair/group work because some students are just not really willing to actively participate in free speaking activities. How do you deal with those students, especially at the beginning of the year?

As high school students are shy or having not enough confidence, they reluctant to speak English. Those students need some supports. I think students need to see the models. We showed the videos which took last year. I am not sure it works in every school but I often show the seniors' production, posters, and speaking test. If students can imagine that they can make success in the activity, this would be a power for them. Also, as we learned in this workshop, Communication Strategies (CS) is essential for students especially beginners. Students come to have a positive attitude toward communication.

Workshop in May (AR Orientation)

Date: May 12, 2019, 9:00-12:00

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room 1

Title: Orientation of Action Research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, (NUFS)

The number of participants: 10



Next workshop will be held on June 9th. Detailed information is on the web:

<http://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/index.html>