November 25th, 2019

NUFS Workshop 2019

Newsletter No. 7

Workshop in November

"The Neuroscience of Learning"

Presenter: Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)
Date: November 16th, 2019, 10:30-14:30
Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-31

Abstract:

After almost a century of wandering in the dark, neuroscience is finally shining a light on how the brain learns language. Every month is bringing new discoveries and many are utterly unexpected. To name just a few, we have now discovered: a) how in just a few thousand years we could grow a brain that can read; b) why that boy who "doesn't get it" might be the smartest; how emotion is at the root of Everything (capital intended); and how a relatively new theory, Predictive Processing, is giving us a completely different picture of how the brain works.

The number of participants: 23

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

- Information gap game "Murder A and B" was interesting. I would like to make that kind of activity in my class. Students can be detectives. They will concentrate on solving the task.
- I was really impressed about all the instructions today, and the future issue is how to implement them in our classrooms.
- I really liked the TBLT murder activity. I know the focus was a little bit too extreme to the task rather than language, but still it's very enjoyable and indeed applicable to wide range of language focus.
- I was really impressed by neuroscience, for example students should stand up each 20 minutes against blood pressure. So, I would like to do some activities like today.
- In formation gap activity. As Curtis said, students at different level can join and keep talking.
- Tell a story – because it can be used with different levels.
- True or False activities – there's always something new to learn.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- Language learning and emotion is closely related. I could find teachers and students use predicting in lessons without being aware of it.

- I learned how brain/cognitive function can be applied to language learning or learning itself. All the things in the workshop will surely lead to better understanding and better teaching techniques.
- I learned useful theory to make students learning effective by using six skills, also to make students' memory strong.
- I learned how to motivate students to study language. I have to analyze students first, then I should make tasks for them.
- We need to think of effective ways how learners connect incoming and outgoing memories. We are more like a supporter for learners.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): I came across the predictive processing theory and it sounds quite interesting but I wonder if it's not just the speed of processing that we interpret as predictive. There was some research about reaction times that showed our processing speed far outpaced our reaction speed. I wonder if this isn't what's happening and our search for meaning is what makes us think we are predicting.

Kelly: This is an interesting idea and I don't think it conflicts with the PP theory. The point of PP is that we apply predictive models to the world before all or even any input has come in. The dark street example shows that, I think. Anyway, you have me thinking. Read this and tell me how the theory fits https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/04/02/the-mind-expanding-ideas-of-andy-clark

Q (2): You pointed out that teacher's duty is 'emotion analysis'. How can we analyze or measure emotion when we use some materials to teach English?

Kelly: Great question. And I am sure you know the answer. By emotion analysis, I mean is the lesson something that will move them or interest them. If the students are interested and engaged when they do the lesson, it has caught something of their interest, so that is using emotion (interesting) in materials. Even before you try out a new lesson, you probably also know what topics your learners are interested in, such as sports, shopping, TV shows, humor, or just sharing their experiences.

I used emotion analysis to prepare my speech. I guessed the brain True-false game would be interesting to you, you'd like having discussions, the murder mystery would make you excited by its challenge, and that the Paris Love video and final story would touch your hearts. All these things worked, so my speech was better than had I just did a "setsumeikai" about the brain.

Workshop in November (AR Discussion)

Date: November 16th, 2019, 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-52, A-62

Title: Group discussion on action research

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

The number of participants: 10