

Newsletter No. 9

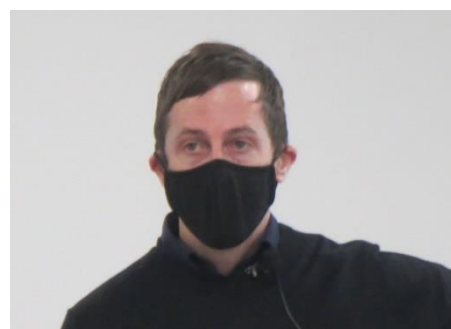
Workshop in February

“Promoting Language Learning Strategies in Our Classrooms”

Date: February 25th, 2023 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya) 6F

Presenter: Joseph Wood (Nanzan University)



Abstract:

Language learning strategies (LLSs) are useful tools to have when it comes to learning a language. Many of us use them but may not be conscious or aware of it when doing so. Raising our students' awareness of LLSs can greatly aid their learning of English as they become better at understanding how they learn best in their particular context. These strategies can help our students in deciding for themselves what works or what does not in terms of their own language learning. This workshop will introduce the concept and background of LLSs as well as discuss data from studies on them conducted by the presenter. Importantly, the presenter will also introduce activities that attendees can use in their classrooms to help promote the use of various learning strategies.

The number of participants: 38

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

- To explain the meaning of the words is an excellent way to learn and remember new words. I would like to use this activity in my class.
- Q and A activities will make students motivated to speak more and more. It's communicative and meaningful.
- I would love to try out writing activities in my class. I love that it only takes 10 minutes of class and I can see my students getting encouraged to write more. Also, I would love to do collaborative creative writing activity as well.
- Writing activities. In that activity, students can practice writing and connect them to what they wrote. I think it's a good one to develop writing and reading.
- Listening Bingo was interesting. The more I try that game, the more I think I can be good at it which means I am improving my English skill or learning strategies.

- Peer-listening activity. Students are only given a topic, write down 12 related words, and check if the words are in the dialogues.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- Like Joe said, some strategies work for some students, some don't. We teachers have to know many and introduce bit by bit so that they can find some really suitable one for themselves.
- In my school, each teacher has different educational goal, which, I think, makes it difficult for teachers to determine what strategies they use in their learning. I think it is important for teachers to have the same goal to promote students' communicative skills.
- Teaching and showing strategies in learning can be picked up by each student according to individual learning strength. It is teacher's job to broaden students' possibilities.
- The teacher's job is to introduce the strategy and encourage students to use it, but it's not to force them to do it.
- Do not ignore strategies. As a teacher who puts emphasis on input, I have relied on incidental learning too much.
- I am not much aware of my own language learning strategies. My teachers I think didn't teach us about this. I need to ask students to reflect on and improve their own language learning strategies.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Do you find it hard to model use of communication strategies when teaching? Which CSs do you use most as classroom teacher talk?

Some communications strategies are harder to model than others, but ones such as asking follow-up questions, interjecting, or getting time to think are easy (they're also three of the most useful, in my opinion, and ones I use a lot in class myself). For example, I might introduce asking follow-up questions and then ask a student what they did on the weekend. I'd ask them a few follow-up questions so the rest of the class can see the strategy actively being used and then have them do it in pairs. I could also have a student ask me a question so I could show them how to use getting time to think ("That's a good question...my favorite restaurant in Nagoya?...hmm. It's probably (restaurant name).") When introducing CSs though, I like to see if I can also find examples of them being used in TV shows or movie clips. YouTube is a great tool for that.

Q (2): How much class time do you spend teaching LsSs?

I don't spend a lot of time in class on general language learning strategies. Like I said at the workshop, I introduce strategies students could use in their free time if they're interested, but don't really "teach" them LLSs. When I find a useful or interesting app, website, or podcast, I often recommend it to my students and

stress the importance of learning on their own outside of class. For instance, I always recommend students to download the Anki app to help with learning vocabulary, but I don't force them to or check if they did or not. I also recommend students to download the audio for their textbook to their smartphone so they can listen to it and review the listening activities on the train or while walking around. I do spend a lot of time in class teaching communication strategies though (a subset of LLSs). After introducing a new communication strategy, I usually give students 20 minutes or so in class to practice using it and there's always time used in class to review those strategies later.



Q (3): How can we motivate or raise awareness of students in language learning?

Motivating our students and raising their awareness of how they can learn better is important. To help motivate students, I think telling them a bit about your own language learning history or struggles you had as a language learner is a useful idea. I tell my students about my Japanese classes or things that I've done to help me learn the language over the years. I think it's especially important for Japanese teachers of English to tell their students about how they learned English and talk about any obstacles they overcame. Hearing success stories like those could really motivate your students. Also, creating a classroom environment where students can learn from and motivate each other is essential. Good learners (with a good attitude) can really influence and inspire weaker students. I've had students say in interviews that they wanted to work harder at learning English after being partnered with higher-level partners in class.

Q (4): My target class is Grade 7. Any ideas how to arrange some of your activities for them?

I think many of the activities I introduced in the workshop could be easily adapted and used in a 7th grade classroom. For example, having students see how many follow-up questions they can ask their partner would be a good one. The questions don't need to be difficult at all and it would be a good chance for them to practice asking questions to each other.

The listening bingo prediction activity could also be easily adapted and used for junior high students. As long as you choose a listening that is close to their level it should work. Find an easy listening about shopping or something and have them think of words they would probably hear (money, store, clothes, credit card, etc.). Junior high students would probably know those words.

Also, the Using Longer Sentences activity would work. Have your students ask each other simply Yes/No questions, but don't allow them to answer with Yes or No. As I mentioned in the workshop, it's easy to make a game out of this. In a group, students quickly ask each other Yes/No questions and if someone slips up and answers with a Yes or No, they're out and the other students continue until one winner is left. It's a fast-paced and fun activity, perfect for junior high school students.

Q (5): Recently I noticed low-proficient university students struggle to understand all-English class instructed by a native speaker. I, as an observer, mumbled a Japanese word, which had helped diffuse an interactional strategy. The L1 is not to be excluded in this sense. What do you think?

When students are having trouble understanding something, I don't think it's a problem at all to let them their L1. I know some teachers are all about "English only in class", but I don't agree with that view. Often, if I introduce or explain an important project or final presentation students will need to do or give soon (and it's essential they understand), I will say afterwards "Okay, just so everyone is clear and understands what they need to do, you can discuss it with your partner for 5 minutes in Japanese."



Then I walk around the room and make sure that's what they really are talking about. While walking around I can also answer questions (in English or Japanese) that students might have.

Some students might not be brave or confident enough to ask for help in English when they don't understand something in class, so it's good to create an environment where they can ask their partner in Japanese for help once in a while if they need to. There shouldn't be a penalty for wanting to understand something better. Of course, for higher-level classes, I encourage them to ask their partners for help in English, but still, a little Japanese occasionally doesn't bother me at all (as long as students are talking about the task or assignment).

Sometimes shy students will come up to me after class though and ask me questions about assignments or projects in Japanese. That's fine too. Expecting lower-level learners to understand everything happening in a class conducted 100% in English just isn't realistic (in my opinion). My personal view is that some native English-speaking teachers need to chill out about only allowing students to use English in class and be flexible when it will help students understand what they need to be doing or understand the class content better.



AR Discussion

Date: February 25th, 2023, 14:45-17:30

Venue: Meieki Campus, MW 10, 11, 12

Title: Group discussion on action research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

The number of participants: 15



Next workshop will be held on May 13th.

Please check our website for the detail.

<https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/>