

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May

Date: May 13, 2023 13:00-16:00

Venue: Room ME10, NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Presenter: Ariko Nishimura (Chita Shoyo High School)

Title: "Developing Senior High School Students'
Communicative Competence by Integrating Speaking
and Writing"



Abstract:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to teach English effectively. Skills Integration is one of the best ways to make CLT happen in the classroom because students recursively communicate with others about a new topic using different skills. I will demonstrate how my students integrated both speaking and writing skills and developed communicative competence through recursive practices. You will be my students and work on many tasks based on skills integration. I hope you can use some of the ideas in your classrooms.

Presenter: Eriko Mishima (Aichi Shukutoku University)

Title: "Cooperative Learning in a Required English Reading
Class: Developing the students' group cohesion and
willingness to communicate through cooperative
activities"



Abstract:

Student-student interactions can be a challenging element in college English classes for non-English majors due to their low motivation and unfamiliarity of their classmates. Moreover, the lack of opportunities to physically work together during the pandemic has contributed to the students' social isolation and poor academic performances. Now that we are back to face-to-face teaching, supporting students' well-being has become an important mission for college instructors, and encouraging cooperation in class might help improve the situation. In this workshop, the presenter will introduce several activity ideas adopted and modified from the Cooperative Learning (CL) structures introduced by Kagan (2013) to promote cooperation in class. Also, she will talk about the results of her AR focusing on the effects of CL on the students' Group Cohesion and Willingness to Communicate in a required reading class.

The number of participants: 34

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

(Ariko)

- Peer editing was interesting. What I learned was not to make editing complicated with lots of editing remarks – three is sufficient.
- ‘Introducing Japanese Culture’ was a lot of fun. I learnt that it’s important to make the situation and criteria of evaluation clear.
- I’ll use the activities in which students read their writings each other and put some marks. It’s good for them to check their own writings objectively.
- I really like the writing activity. I could use this in advance English class and afterschool program or in upper grades.



(Eriko)

- ‘Introducing group members’ was a lot of fun. I think this activity will be good in the beginning of each semester or year.
- Rally Robin & Missionaries – They have responsibilities to speak and listen to convey the information. I want to try it in my class.
- I think that having a group cohesion is necessary for group lessons. Introduction activity was good to build a good relationship among students.
- Cooperative learning, especially putting some group members into different groups.

2. What you learned from today’s workshop

(Ariko)

- I don’t hesitate to take more time for peer editing for my college course.
- I learnt that giving communication strategies encourages students to speak English. I also learnt that doing transcription gives students opportunities to monitor their own English. Self-evaluation will not make students nervous, so I think transcription is a very good way.
- It’s important to ask your partners open questions to keep conversation.
- CLT makes students increase motivation, so the repetition of meaningful tasks is important.

(Eriko)

- It helped me to know how to conduct literature circle. Even though it is explained how to do in many books, I have never got a clear idea of how to apply that.
- When we know we have to report about partners, we listen to them more carefully. That’s really good.
- It’s important to listen to partner’s presentation carefully and to repeat or summarize it.



- Through missionary, students are willing to talk about themselves and listen to others carefully. It can grow their attitudes.
- It was interesting to know about the changes of group cohesion throughout a year. I also feel the difference of students' motivation day by day. Therefore, I think it was interesting.

3. Questions and Answers

(Ariko)

Q (1): I think it's much easier to control and develop communication between students and teachers in small classes (up to 10 students). How would you apply your communication strategies in larger classes (35 or more students)? Also, I would love to hear more about the communication strategies you taught.

I also taught students in larger classes (around 40 students). Although I needed to adjust my teaching way in larger classes, it worked when I had students change in pairs recursively. As for communication strategies, I taught openers/closers, rejoinders, fillers, repetition, follow-up questions, etc. Besides, I used those communication strategies in a conversation so students could use them in class.



Q (2): How do you instruct grammar? How do you stay meaning focused?

I did not instruct grammar in the English Conversation class since the textbook was also meaning-focused. Besides, the class was held for 3rd-year students. However, I showed my students common errors after I checked students' essays so that students remembered the grammar.

Q (3): I think giving students communication strategies is a very good way to make it easier to keep talking each other. Using ambiguous adjectives like 'expensive' will make it easier and keep talking, I think; i.e. How expensive ...? or How much ...? What do you think about this?

I agree with you. Although I taught asking questions as CSs, some students did not ask questions. However, I also realized some students paraphrased topic words when their partners were silent. Therefore, using ambiguous adjectives will be a good exercise for both students; One may practice asking questions, and the other may paraphrase the words.

Q (4): Introducing Japanese culture is very interesting. On the other hand, explaining Japanese things is hard for JHS students and easily switch their code to Japanese. Any advice?

Introducing Japanese culture was one of the topics I made for this workshop. When I taught my students, the topic was to introduce their school. It was in the textbook, and I adjusted the textbook for my students in a meaning-focused way. You can choose some topics from the textbook and adjust them for your students. As for switching their code to Japanese, I have experienced those situations many times,

especially in larger classes. I usually explain to my students on the first day of the class that they do not have enough opportunities to speak English in their daily lives, so using English in class is essential for them to improve their English. Then, I sometimes explain the same thing before they have some activities in pairs. Besides, I allowed them to use Katakana English three times. I think it may be helpful for students to do game-like activities (limitation) and explain the same thing recursively.



(Eriko)

Q (1): Do you think activities you showed today would work for younger (elementary) students? What changes would be needed?

I believe that CL can be effective for students in any context, so the activities I introduced would definitely be one of the options you could consider including in your classes in elementary school. For example, you can just introduce RallyRobin with a basic question such as "What's your favorite...?". When you give students clear instructions including Active Listening and saying "thank you", you can expect all students talk and listen, then they could feel closer to each other. I did not have time to talk about the "Same Game", but finding something in common through easy talk (e.g. favorite colors, animals) and naming their team based on the commonality itself can be a fun activity for students from my experience. As we discussed in the workshop, younger students are most likely friends with their classmates already, so in that case, you might want to focus more on promoting cooperation, instead of putting too much effort on group building. Missionaries with easy topic could work for them, too!

Q (2): I got irritated myself by spending lots of time for instruction. Is it matter of habits: once students get used to it, they start more quickly?

I totally understand your frustration, as I have faced the similar issues as well still now! But once you introduce some structures like RallyRobin at the beginning of the semester, the time to spend on instructions will get shorter every time. It took a little while, but now whenever I say it's RallyRobin, my students face each other and get ready to talk and listen in my class. I think step-by-step instructions would be helpful for younger students, as you might have already tried. Also, I often use Japanese and put some Japanese explanations on my worksheet (not everything) when I introduce some activities for the first time in order to save some time. (It is great that they have more time in groups than listening to me, as spending enough time together is one of the important elements to build rapport.) However, I use L1 for instructions because I am focusing on cooperation. If you are focusing more on the



students' "language" development, I believe that it can be beneficial to explain the rules in the target language.

Q (3): I'm interested in Jigsaw. Can you explain about 'Jigsaw reading', please?

Jigsaw reading is one structure/approach of cooperative learning, which I think is especially useful when your students are dealing with longer texts. It is a technique that is similar to Missionaries, but usually, students work together on a smaller chunk of a text to be experts on, and then they move to a new group with students who are the experts on the other parts to share what they read. In this way, everyone gets the ideas of the complete text without reading all the text, like putting puzzle pieces together. I believe that Jigsaw is one of the popular group activities in many different educational contexts, and there are so many books and papers you can find to utilize the ideas into your classrooms!



Here are some books I have read for Jigsaw-related activities!

Anderson, J. (2019). Activities for cooperative learning: Making groupwork and pairwork effective in the ELT classroom. Delta Publishing.

Jacobs, G. M. & Kimura, H. (2013). Cooperative learning and teaching. TESOL International Association.

安永悟、須藤文、2014、『LTD 話し合い学習法』ナカニシヤ出版。

Q (4): I'd like to know more about cooperative learning. Would you recommend any good books to learn about it?

I have learned a lot about CL from the books and papers of Spencer Kagan and Johnson & Johnson. They changed my teaching drastically for good! Please refer my reference list, and there are many more resource books you can find in Japanese, too. I am sure that you will find some ideas you can use whatever context/content you are teaching!

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. A. (2013). Cooperative learning: Improving university instruction by basing practice on validated theory. Journal on Excellence in University Teaching, 1-26.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (2002). Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom (5th ed.). Interaction Book Company.

Kagan, S. (1995). We can talk: Cooperative learning in the elementary ESL classroom. ERIC Digest.

Kagan, S. (2013). Kagan cooperative learning structures. Kagan Publishing.

Next Workshop will be held on June 10th. Detailed information is here:

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