

Newsletter No. 3

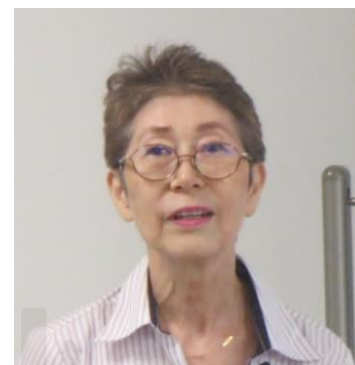
Workshop in July

"Guiding Students to Think Critically and Present Their Points of View in English"

Presenter: Junko Yamanaka (Aichi Gakuin University)

Date: July 8th, 2023 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)



Abstract: In EFL classrooms, exchanging opinions or points of view is true communication that can be enjoyable for students. It is also a good chance for them to know about world's important issues and to develop their critical thinking skills. The presenter believes that, with proper guidance and support, even lower-level learners can develop critical thinking, communicative and language skills all at the same time. This presentation provides a step-by-step approach to structure activities to guide students to think critically and present their points of view in English. Theoretical background, practical tips and students' comments will be included.

The number of participants: 33

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

- I really like the first mini-discussion activity with 'I agree/disagree'. I think it was a great idea to have the prompts appear on the screen one after another because it's very exciting and I could keep focus.
- Q and A with familiar topics – this can easily involve students into my class and enhance their speaking skills as well.
- I am interested in the activities we did today, but I don't think I can do them in public elementary school.
- I am doing research about integrating writing and speaking, and I had wondered what kind of content-based worksheets were appropriate. But today since I learned about critical thinking, I'll introduce exchanging opinion activities.
- Presentation – the step by step way may help EFL students to prepare presentation.
- I would like to focus more on discussion as it would broaden their perspectives on world issues.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- The importance of introducing activities/topics with debatable information – not just standard ‘everyone believes’ opinions.
- Critical thinking is not only skills but also attitude development. So realizing the difference open-mindedly is important. How to use a course book is also a very important key. Using the book the way following the instruction is not always the best way to do.
- I learned various ways that can be helpful in choosing a topic for my students after summer vacation. They usually don't have strong opinions about current issues, so putting/including these kinds of topics in lesson plans will be provoking their interest.
- I was not sure how this series of books are to be used. But I'm glad that it's what I thought. I like the flexibility of picking up the topics and even activities following the main input materials.
- The interesting topic is the good tool to start critical thinking while doing information gap.
- I learned how to make topics more interesting for discussion and how to help scaffold discussion.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): We have an advanced English afterschool speaking class. The kids are fluent in English, however the teachers just do speaking activities. I am all for integrating of all four skills. But, could we use this book with only speaking?

I think so. This book is used in speaking classes, as well as reading, writing and discussion classes. Students expressing and exchanging their points of view is an enjoyable and meaningful speaking activity. They listen to or read the text in order to get prepared or stimulated to express their views, so it is not a listening or reading lesson. If you want maximum time for speaking, you could spend minimum time for the dialog or monolog part. Advanced students can do that. However, other than the comprehension exercises, the activities in the book are dominantly speaking oriented, so this book is surely suited for “speaking” classes.

Q (2): Do you spend time in class or out of class fixing grammar mistakes?

Basically, I do not spend time for fixing grammar mistakes in class. When I used this book for a writing class, I had students write an essay as homework, and I did correct grammar mistakes and returned them. When I used the book for a discussion class also, before *Impact Issues* third edition came out, I used to have my students write a short paragraph stating their points of view. I collected them and roughly corrected the spelling / grammar mistakes and returned the sheets to them in their next class. I also typed



up some of their points of view and shared them with the class. Now with the third edition, having improved presentation pages and nice sample videos, I have my students do pair presentations at the end of the class. I give them small size sheets for preparation, like we used in the workshop. After their presentations I collect them. The sheets are going to be part of their grades. I read them after class, but do not correct grammar. I do not return them to students either. However, when I find common grammar errors, in the next lesson I tell the class about them.

Q (3): Why aren't there good reading materials which are adjusted to the textbook stage?

If you need reading material which is just right level to go with your textbook, why not use graded readers? There are fictions and nonfictions, many different genres and levels. Especially nonfiction graded readers cover many areas such as environmental issues, history, science, technology, animals, cultures, food, and others. Check into Cambridge Discovery series, Oxford Project X series and Bookworms series, Penguin Kids Readers, Seed Learning Readers and others.

Q (4): Do you let students prepare for lessons, for example by looking up words in advance? For students with low English proficiency, it takes time to understand even a simple question. I'd like to know how to approach to low level students.

I usually do not let them prepare for lessons. I take a “mystery tour” style. I do not tell them which lesson they will cover in the next class. I go to class and say “Today, we are covering Unit 2” for example. For lower levels, I give a lot of language support for their comprehension, including translations. For the main text, I give a worksheet with words and phrases in Japanese, and students find the equivalent of them in the text. This is to help their comprehension of the text with minimum stress and anxiety. As for directions in the text I can explain in Japanese, and True and False sentences can be first translated by students in pairs and then I roughly translate them to make sure. This way I use their L1 often, if it is necessary for them.



Q (5): In your ‘What do you think?’ activity, you said lower level students can do this with support by giving example reasons or sample sentences. I think this can also be useful for Eiken or other testing for HS students. Any suggestions?

I should think so. For Eiken, one possibility is that the teacher gives sample reasons for students to choose from, and another idea is that the students brainstorm and come up with a list of other reasons. If it is difficult for the students to do in English, they can give the examples in Japanese and the teacher can help change them into English. I like the idea that the students try to come up with other reasons, because it is a good training of “thinking” and “creativity” for them.

*Q (6): Japanese students are not used to think critically since their childhood even in Japanese language.
And so it's a good chance to give this kind of opportunity to think about issues starting from agree
or disagree.*

Absolutely. I sincerely hope that English teachers will successfully perform their “Heroes’ jobs!

AR Discussion

Date: July 8th, 2023, 15:00-17:30

Venue: Meieki Campus, MW 10, 11

Title: Group discussion on action research

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

The number of participants: 13



Next Workshop will be held on September 16th. Detailed information is here:

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

NUFS Workshop

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

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Secretary: Chihaya Sugiura