

Newsletter No. 8

Workshop in December

“Going beyond the Fish Bowl and Preparing Our Students for the Open Seas”

Presenter: Kensaku Yoshida (Professor Emeritus, Sophia University)

Date: December 9th, 2023 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)



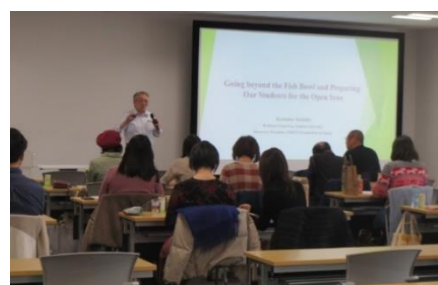
Abstract:

In this workshop I will begin by taking a brief look at the history of English education in Japan. I will discuss the problem of espoused objectives presented by the government and the reality of the EFL environment in which we live. Although English education in Japan is still conducted very much within the boundaries of the Fish Bowl, there are many new developments--especially in the areas of AI, ICT, etc.-- which are forcing us to reconsider this myopic view of English education. In this workshop we will discuss these issues and see what has to be done to remedy the situation.

The number of participants: **37**

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

- I'd like to try 'process writing' in my class. I used to have the students write their essays after each lesson. This time I plan to have them write the essays first then do peer-editing or speaking activities, then have them write again.
- I would love to introduce those simple communication strategies to my younger students, and to add retelling, summarizing and discussion to reading activities for high school students.
- Small talk – I'm telling students there are many ways to express their opinions at class, but at an English test, students are always required to answer correctly – only one answer. I always feel dilemma in this situation.
- I want to use 'open seas' activities. I've tried something like that before, but just once or twice in the period. I'll do this many times in the lesson as many as I can.



- Regarding clarification, changing intonation – I encourage my students to say ‘You mean ...’ in the vocabulary quiz. It would be more effective if I add ‘You mean ...?’ for their uncertainty.
- The activity suggested by the course of study that have students exchange opinions and discuss pros & cons.

2. What you learned from today’s workshop

- I learned Fish Bowl activity is not bad. The problem is that teachers are satisfied with doing only this activity. ‘Can’ is more important than ‘know’. ‘Can’ will become self-confidence.
- About the AI topic it was very interesting talking about the different ways people are using technology. I may not feel as strongly about it, but I do agree it’s an important topic for the future to consider.
- Actually, we live in a ‘fish bowl’ in Japanese schools. The point is how to get our students out of the bowl in many ways we can create. We need to get together to discuss it.
- I learned a lot about Japan’s English Education history. Now I have a better understanding on why Japanese students have difficulty in learning English. There are a lot of factors. But after recognizing the root of these problems, I can now apply practical ways to address them using both of the fish bowl and open seas approach.
- I learned English should not be taught ‘grammar as grammar’. IT’s important to give chances to notice. I need to make worksheets which are out of the fish bowl.



3. Questions and Answers

Question 1: I want to know your thought on assessment method in the communicative approach.

In the communicative approach my belief is that assessment should be based on the idea of additive assessment, i.e., assessing not what a student cannot do but what he/she CAN do. The communicative approach adopted by MEXT is based on Can do statements—not Can’t do statements. Communicative assessment should be motivating and not demotivating.

Question 2: What is small talk? How do you do it?

Small talk is simply talking about anything you think might be of interest to the students. It can be based on expressions and structures you will be introducing in class, or it can be something that has nothing to do with the content of the class. Small talk is used to get your students’ attention before you start the class.



Question 3: I have my college students discuss and debate in Japanese, otherwise they stop talking in a few minutes. After the discussion time of 5-6 minutes, they present the group conclusion in English. Do you recommend the discussion language should be in English?

If the students have the proficiency to conduct the discussions in English, fine. If not, mixing English and Japanese (translanguaging) is also good. Also, as you are doing, getting the students to conduct the discussion first in Japanese then present in English is fine.

Question 4: In the first half, I understood that: (1) One of the reasons traditional teachers can't be beyond their teaching beliefs is 'equality'. (2) 'How to grade equally' can second their translation methods, for example. (3) Geographical issues affect how open-minded teachers can be to 'pluralism'. What do you think?

- (1) I don't understand what you mean by 'equality'.
- (2) I'm sorry but I don't understand what you mean. If you mean using a fish bowl method, where there is only one answer, then, I guess you can say it would be easy for teachers to grade the students, but is that what you mean?
- (3) What do you mean by geographical? Are you suggesting that teachers teaching in rural areas are not as open as teachers teaching in urban areas? If so, I don't necessarily think so.

Question 5: The presentation skill is highly prized at my school. We have an English presentation which the parents come to see a script English presentation. How effective is that compared to regular classroom observation?

I don't know what you mean by script English presentation. Are you asking if parents observing a prepared class is better than observing a class with no special preparation? If that's what you mean, I have no answer.

Question 6: What do you think of AI and teaching the use of AI (like Google translate and ChatGPT) in elementary school?

I think it could be very useful. It all depends on what you want to do with the AI.



Question 7: Should elementary school English teachers integrate all four skills at the same time?

I don't know what you mean by "at the same time". Integration of the skills should come naturally. You don't have to include reading or writing if you're conducting a conversation.

Question 8: Do you have examples, guidelines or advise on creating a sound curriculum on elementary and junior high school English classes, especially for private ones?

It all depends on what kind of class you're talking about. There is no 'general' curriculum where there is no focus.

AR Discussion

Date: December 9th, 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 January 20th in 2024. Detailed information is here:

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

NUFS Workshop

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Secretary: Chihaya Sugiura