

**NUFS Workshop 2024**

## *Newsletter No. 1*

### **Workshop in May**

**Date:** May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 13:00-16:00**Venue:** Room ME10, NUFU Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)**Presenter:** Matsui Megumi (English School)**Title: "How Junior High School Students Improve their Speaking and Writing Skills in English through Focus-on-Form Instruction"****Abstract:**

Focus-on-Form Instruction (FFI), contrary to the traditional grammar teaching such as explicit grammar explanation and mechanical drills, requires learners to attend to both form and meaning. Learning through FFI, learners are expected to improve both accuracy and fluency in their language use. The results of a year-long action research (AR) showed that first-year junior high school students at an English language school improved their speaking and writing skills in English through FFI. In this workshop, the participants will experience FFI as students and receive the practical examples of FFI that can be used in various educational contexts.

**Presenter:** Fujimoto Takayuki (Iwakura Sogo High School)**Title: "Developing Senior High School Students' Motivation through Focus-on-Form Instruction and Performance Tests"****Abstract:**

Teaching grammar is one of the most important issues in English education. In schools, students are usually given explicit explanations and drill-like practice. Lee & VanPatten (2003) affirmed that "traditional instruction consisting of drills in which learner output is manipulated and the instruction is divorced from meaning or communication is not an effective method for enhancing language acquisition" (p.137). However, it is not easy to attend to both meaning and form at the same time, especially for beginners. To solve this problem, Ellis (2015) proposed the focus-on-form. I will explain what focus-on-form is and how I assess students' writing and reflection, which is now the focus of discussion among teachers. I also share how students develop their motivation through this communicative grammar instruction.

## The number of participants: 43

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

(Megumi)

- I didn't know the 'Focus-on-form' method and I learned a lot from today's presentation.
- I want to use peer-editing because I have never done it. I only checked their writing.
- The activity where you guess your partner's answers. That was nice that you checked who got what scores. That competitive aspect could encourage them to do it again.
- I want to do 'Fun essay writing'. I think it's important to check an essay again and again.
- Megumi showed 'Model Dialog'. It was a good idea because in the dialog she put 'reaction' and 'shadowing' words. I'd like to use them.



(Takayuki)

- Writing Essay activities are great illustrations on how to give students step-by-step guide by giving a lot of input, allowing them to notice and express their opinions in their own output.
- He made the drill into meaningful one. We have to focus on both forms and meanings.
- 'Ondoku meter' is helpful so I would like to introduce it in my reading class.
- To get students to write a long essay, Takayuki divided the writing in many parts.

### 2. What you learned from today's workshop

(Megumi)

- I learned the importance of allowing students make mistakes in both speaking and writing and address these mistakes in corrective feedback.
- I learned from her class that activity is important to motivate students. I'm going to add more activities in my class.
- FFI is divided into two; one is Planned and the other is Incidental. I understood how to use them clearly today.
- I learned how to make the activity clear and familiar to my students.

(Takayuki)

- I learned that even for high school students, FFI works well, even if the grammatical structures they learn are more complicated.
- Great suggestion to have writing and speaking together, to avoid use of complicated words or terms that the students are not familiar with.
- I like your worksheet to make students write three improvements. Students can notice their changes.
- The rubric he made was easy to understand by both students and other teachers.



### 3. Questions and Answers

(Megumi)

*Q (1): I like 'My guess' idea. I wonder if some students want to arrange their own way. How can I manage their freedom in the framework?*

You can extend the chart or box and let students make their own topic and choices if you want. You can arrange like this if you have some extra time. For my other planned FFI lessons, I sometimes give some freedom and make more fun.

*Q (2): I think it's better to have students think how 'want' and 'want to' differ. What do you think?*

I think you can decide if it's better or not. You can ask how they are different when you notice your students are confused. Or you can just focus on a new grammar item first. It's all up to you to arrange because you are the one who knows your students best. You can decide how you do it.

*Q (3): Sometimes students use rejoinders in a wrong way. How do you correct that?*

When I catch errors, I usually introduce as common errors after the practice or activity. I share those errors in the whole class so that everyone can review and practice together.

*Q (4): How would you implement FFI with a textbook that focuses more on vocabulary than on grammar?*

You can add vocabulary section before communicative activity (or before step 4). Then, you can create activities using vocabulary students learned.



*Q (5): Does Focus on Form teaching fit well with New Horizon materials?*

Yes. I don't use New Horizon textbook in class, however, the order of grammatical rules I introduce through FFI matches that of the textbook (New Horizon).

*Q (6): What is 'fun' essay?*

It is 'fun' because students enjoy the process of creating their own writing products. Also, it is in part a collaboration with classmates, because students get some good ideas and feedback from peers. When students write an essay or eisakubun, they usually consider it an individual work, but it is actually not when you do "fun essay writing." I think Yoshi sensei named it that way, but as its name shows, many students find that the process of writing is fun through this activity.

*Q (7): Your system (focus-on-form) sounds very good, but I am curious about its effectiveness when it is the main system used for teaching. In today's presentation, it was in addition to regular English classes at school, I thought.*

To answer this question, I think we need to think about what our goals are. "Regular English classes at school" in Japan still focuses on learning grammatical knowledge. If you think "gaining knowledge" is your students'

ultimate goal, then you might feel FFI is something additional. FFI is an approach for teaching grammar communicatively. Also, we cannot talk about second language acquisition only through FFI. It is not that simple, but FFI is one way for learners to attain “proficiency in their language use.” From this perspective, we can say that FFI is effective as a main approach. As my students’ improvement showed, FFI can enhance students’ speaking and writing skills in English, while it is said that Japanese junior high students still have difficulty communicating in English through regular English teaching at school.

***Q (8): How much do students actually contribute to the reflection/revising/peer-editing portion? Do they underline a little or a lot? How do you encourage your students to contribute more?***

When my students do peer-editing, they usually make active contributions, however, it did not happen overnight. You might want to read a comment from one of my students: *“At first, I was worried and nervous about others reading my writing because it is embarrassing. I think my writing skill is poor. But now, I like peer-editing a lot because I was able to get a lot of different ideas for my essays. If I had thought about ideas all by myself, I could not have added more sentences, but after reading comments from my classmates, I was able to add a lot more sentences and I was surprised.”* Japanese students are not used to doing this type of activity, so some students might hesitate to give feedbacks to peers at the beginning. However, once they begin to feel the power of peer-editing as the activity proceeds, they gradually start taking the initiative in working on this activity.



(Takayuki)

***Q (1): Could you tell us more about retelling in a writing activity?***

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn the structure of essay writing and to know some useful expressions.

1. Students read the sample essay.
2. Students answer the comprehension questions.
3. Students complete the graphic organizer.
4. Students practice reading aloud with their teacher.
5. Students practice reading aloud using the Ondoku meter.
6. Students retell the essay using the graphic organizer they wrote.

***Q (2): Is there a reason why you chose presentation as a speaking test instead of conversation?***

I think students need different kinds of performance tests. We have conversation test in English CommunicationI class. That is why we have presentation test in Logical Expression class. I think conversation test is more important because they can have more time to interact with their partners.

***Q (3): How do you deal with low level students who cannot understand English well?***

There are some students who do not write the essay well. When students write the first draft, I usually give them time to think and write in class. I talk to those students and give them some advice. There are many useful expressions, and they have a sample essay on the worksheet. They can write their first draft with them. I also give them time to talk in pairs about their first drafts. I think the students can find many ideas and expressions in these activities.

***Q (4): I love the app 'Ondoku meter'. I tried and knew the app focuses on accuracy. In that case, students rather go for accuracy than meaning. How can I handle this?***

Give them time to talk to their partner. I mean, my students have retelling activities after they practice reading aloud with the app. I think it is important to have activities that focus on both accuracy and fluency.

***Q (5): The evaluation ratio at my school is 50% paper test and 50% speaking + writing. I don't think that is a judge of their true ability. What do you think?***

What skill do you want to measure? Do you want to focus on knowledge? Or do you want to focus on how much your students can use English? The ratio of assessment should be decided based on the goal of the class. I think both knowledge and how much they can use their knowledge are important. In other words, in my opinion, 50% of each would be fine.

***Q (6): When high school students use 'machine translation', which app do they use? How do you know this?***

I have never asked my students which app they use. I can guess that they used the translation app because their essays have some difficult words that they may not know.

***Q (7): Can we measure the attitude of proactive learning by sentence length?***

I think it is important to think about what the goal of this class is. I want students to write more words in their essay. Also, I think when students put their opinion, reason, examples or explanations, they use the target number of words. Although it depends on the students' level, if the students can write enough words already, the number of words is not necessary.

***Q (8): Is it hard to integrate your worksheets into the curriculum? Does the curriculum come out of your worksheets?***

I make a worksheet based on the textbook. I apply the topic and words and phrases from the textbook to the worksheet. Therefore, it is not difficult to integrate my worksheets into the curriculum.



***Q (9): How do you utilize your common errors page?***

- 1 Students make a group of 3 or 4.
- 2 The teacher gives them a worksheet without answers.
- 3 Students correct the sentences and share their answers.
- 4 Students come to the teacher and check the answers.



***Q (10): How would you implement FFI with a textbook that focuses more on vocabulary than on grammar?***

As for vocabulary, we also need to teach form and meaning. This means that we can use FFI in the classroom where students learn vocabulary. One thing that is different from grammar teaching is that students need to memorize the words and their meanings, and then students encounter the target vocabulary in context.

***Q (11): I wonder how you convinced other teachers to do this style of teaching?***

I showed my colleagues the lesson plan and worksheets. In Logical ExpressionI class, there are 6 teachers for the class, and each class is divided into two classes. Until we finish the first midterm test, we teach one class together, team teaching. When new teachers are transferred to our school, we have this class together and we can share what and how we teach in this school. I think the most important thing is to show our class and share the idea.

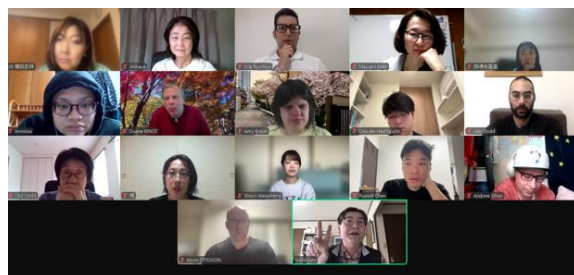
**AR Orientation**

**Date:** May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 9:00-12:00 (Zoom)

**Title:** Action Research Orientation

**Advisors:** Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

**The number of participants:** 13



***Next Workshop will be held on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Detailed information is here:***

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

**NUFS Workshop**

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