

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May

Date: May 10th, 2025 10:30-14:30

Venue: NUFs Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Presenter: Watashima Shiori (Chukyo University)

Title: "Developing Young EFL Students' interactional Competence through Activities integrated with Music "



Abstract:

For many years, the integration of music into Foreign Language (FL) teaching has been an interest of many language teachers. This study explored the integration of music into EFL teaching to enhance young learners' interactional competence (IC) and reduce Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Conducted over three years with elementary school beginners, the study employed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), emphasizing focus-on-form instruction (FonF) and communication strategies (CSs), with implementation of several music-based activities. In this workshop, several activities with music will be presented, which aim to create scaffolded opportunities for learners to develop their IC while supporting memory retention and creating a motivating classroom.

Presenter: Tajima Yuria (Nanzan Girls' Senior High School)

Title: "Developing Japanese Senior High School Students' communicative Competence through Skills Integration"



Abstract:

It is said that integrating the four language skills is significant since the skills are rarely isolated from one another in authentic situations. Therefore, I practiced skills integration in my class to develop students' Communicative Competence (CC). The results of yearlong action research (AR) showed that skills integration improved students' engagement in learning English and their CC. In this workshop, I will demonstrate how my students integrated both speaking and writing skills and developed CC through recursive practices. You will be my students and work on tasks based on skills integration.

The number of participants: 41

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

(Shiori)

- I want to try 'kaeuta' for my special needs class. For young learners and special need students, enjoying sounds, rhyme and rhythm of English is useful to study English.
- Yes. I'm a high school teacher. Any activities with music may be easy for them. But the activity that students fill in the blanks of music seems to be challenging and interesting. So I want to use it in my class.
- The integration of music into foreign language is interesting. Students can learn the rhythm of English sounds and sentences at the same time. IT's good to have this kind of practice in junior high school lesson.

(Yuria)

- I had struggled with the reading part in my class. I would like to use the way that you introduced today. Especially reading practice is very effective to have students read smoothly.
- Pair shadowing practice – For a teacher with many students, shadowing practice is hard to listen clearly. Aso, for some students, it's easier to skip the practice.
- I want to try using the shadowing activity where one student read and other shadow with out looking. Because I think it's good for reading and listening practice. I also like the follow and listen while teacher read and underline words you can't pronounce.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

(Shiori)

- It is very interesting and effective for young learners to use songs for having communication strategies in conversation. As for teaching grammar, three steps (input, noticing, output) are important.
- The music can lower the barrier. And that you can remember the song without understanding the meaning.
- The worksheets you made were amazing. Also your lessons using music can help your students have fun and learn English. I want to try them in my lessons.

(Yuria)

- I learned a lot about incorporating difficult skills in a low level classroom Particularly shadowing.
- I'm currently using three-part framework to create worksheets for my students. I would like to see your ideas in my sheet and see how they work.
- Using communication strategies through reading part is very useful to acquire communicative competence.
- Using T/F questions in pre-reading was interesting. I'll use it. I learned there are many types of reading aloud.

3. Questions and Answers

(Shiori)

Q (1): Would you do the same activities (ex. 'How's it going/How's the weather chants) for high schoolers, or just for young learners?

Yes, I would introduce the conversation strategies song to all learners. What I might do is to modify the choices of which conversation strategies to introduce, depending on the age group. I believe that starting

a class with music could set a positive tone for the lesson, and if I can teach something, such as conversation strategies, through music while helping the students relax, it's like two birds in one stone!

Q (2): Do you sing a song with your students to let them get exposed to English?

Yes, I do. I believe that music can be a great scaffolding tool (i.e., “just-in-time support that gives students the pedagogical push that enables them to work at a higher level of activity” (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018, p. 3) for language learning. As I introduced in the workshop, I implement several activities with music in my class, such as introducing conversation strategies, target grammar, teaching English rhythm, and teaching reading and writing. When I use a popular song in my class, I always play the song and encourage students to sing along at some point (e.g., at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the activity), depending on what I want the students to do.

Q (3): I'm curious about how music would impact students in a larger class. I learned so much from the presentation, from how music affects us to how to use music in the classroom.

One of the limitations I had with my research was the amount of data that I was able to collect. I only had three to four students in my research class, so I was not able to collect a vast amount of data to generalize my findings regarding the effectiveness of music in the development of the learners' interactional competence. However, I believe that the class size is not an obstacle to implementing music activities in a language classroom, as we experienced in the workshop with more than 50 attendees, as long as the activity is not structured to focus on individual performance (i.e., students would have to perform the song on their own one by one). I have not yet explored how music can be implemented as an output activity communicatively, so if you have any ideas, please let me know!



Q (4): I want to know how to match English words to each musical note.

When I make *kaeuta* (i.e., lyrical adaptation), I try to put one syllable or one word on one or two notes. For example, the *kaeuta* that I made with *Furusato* has four target grammar sentences : (1) What's in it?, (2) Where is it from?, (3) Aichi is famous for cabbages, and (4) Why did you choose Aichi cabbages?

The first line (What's in it?) has three syllables within the sentence, so I placed it into the first measure of the tune. The second line (Where is it from?) has four syllables, but I divided it into three to match the tune (“Where,” “is it,” and “from”). Connecting the second and the third syllables (“is” and “it”) and placing them onto a short note came out perfectly because they are unaccented, which means that they would be shortened when spoken. Sometimes I cannot avoid irregular syllable count (字余り *-jiamari*), as you can see for the third line (“Aichi is famous for cabbages”), but as long as the tempo of the song is slow and simple, you can make do.



Q (5): If students request songs, what should I be careful about?

There are three factors that I always try to consider when choosing a song for class: (1) tempo, (2) appropriate words and/or phrases, and (3) appropriate content.

I try to avoid some songs that are too slow or too fast (i.e., rap songs) because they could create more tension and apprehension. However, some of my students enjoy challenges, so it is important to find what tempo your students enjoy the best. As for the appropriate words/phrases and content, I always try to choose a song based on what kind of message I want to give to my students. I understand that it is easy to connect with and fun to sing songs about heartbreak. I have a long list of breakup songs that I would share with my friends, but students can find those on their own. Also, it is important to avoid songs with language that is not appropriate for the classroom.

Q (6): The English accent is different from the Japanese one. I think it's difficult to make 'kaeuta' from Japanese songs. How do you choose appropriate songs?

I recommend starting with some simple and short songs. I find it easy to do the lyrical adaptation (*kaeuta*) with a song that is simple and short, which is why I chose Japanese folk songs for my class. The points of using music to teach English are that it is easy to enunciate and easy to remember. Murphey (1992) states that “to sing with vocalizations is significantly easier than speech” (pp. 6-7). It means that musical elements (i.e., rhythm and notes) help learners achieve pronunciation and fluency easily. If we choose a melody that includes too many notes, it would be hard for the students to follow and learn it. Also, it is hard to make *kaeuta* if the song is too complicated.

If you want to read more about my research, the report for the third year of research is up on the NUFF Workshop website, so scan the QR code to access it easily!



Reference

Gonula, T., & Loewen, S. (2018). Scaffolding technique. *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, 1-5.

Murphey, T. (1992). *Music & song*. Oxford University Press.

(Yuria)

Q (1): In your small talk activity, do you have students follow script each time (like what you showed about breakfast) or is it done naturally after you taught them the steps?

I have three pair talks for one topic. First, I allow them to look at scripts. Then, I ask them to try not to look at scripts as much as they can. For the last time, they cannot look at anything. Until the one lesson finishes, I have this cycle in every class so that students can talk during the tests.



Q (2): Were the speaking tests like the recordings with classmates or done with teach

Only students take the speaking tests. I choose pairs by lot.

Q (3): How do you teach vocabulary?

I have vocabulary input and output activities. When the topic got more difficult, I introduced some useful phrases for fun essays.

Q (4): How do you teach grammar in a sentence.

I just spend about five minutes on the grammar explanation in one part. I pick up some and explain them. I try to make the teacher talk for less than 15 minutes in one lesson.

I also use common errors. I check students' essays and show mistakes that many students make. (I changed some parts so that students did not recognize the mistakes were their own.) Then I ask students to find errors and write the correct ones with partners.

AR Discussion

Date: May 11th, 2025, 9:00-12:00 (Zoom)

Title: Action Research Orientation

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

The number of participants: 10



Next Workshop will be held on June 14th, 2025. Detailed information is here:

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

NUFS Workshop

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

57 Takenoyama, Iwasaki-cho, Nisshin-shi

Secretary: Chihaya Sugiura