

Newsletter No. 6

Workshop in October

Date: October 11th, 2025 10:30-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Title: "Linguaculture: Teaching English as a Living Language "

Presenter: Joseph Shaules (Keio University)



Abstract:

Many teachers think that culture is a separate topic from language learning. We will see, however, that from the brain's perspective, language and culture are two parts of a larger linguaculture whole. This has important implications for teachers. We will explore the importance of teaching English as a living language, and of understanding the psychological challenges of language learning. Participants will reflect on their beliefs about language and culture learning, and share tips for increasing learner engagement.

The number of participants: 39

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

- I want to try the feeling graph for outlining things. Based on the graph, students can share their feeling of this week to practice past tense.
- Maybe not an activity, but I want to emphasize more that culture and language is very connected to experiences and ask students to reflect on their experiences as it relates to what they're learning.
- I think it was interesting to think about language through experience. I hope I can help my students create community and learn through experience.
- It's natural for students to resist learning new vocabulary. They may feel that learning a lot of foreign language is difficult. However, if students understand this, and focus on the benefits and enjoyment of learning, I think this resistance can be alleviated.
- I want to share my misunderstanding experiences with my students. They will understand learning language is not only learning 'code'.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I had a different understanding of 'living language' in the sense that it changes and evolves with time and cultures, but today I learned the linguacultural definition which is more personal and has deeper meaning for the individual.
- As teachers, being honest is good because there is not perfect class. This also motivated me to continue to encourage students and lower the resistance in students by creating an environment that boosts motivation.
- Although through my teaching experience, I was convinced that there is a deep connection between learning languages and understanding cultures, it was an eye-opener to learn about the linguacultural theory and understand the foundation.
- Learning languages requires cognitive and intuitive occurrences. To master, we need a lot of trials and errors, and experience is the key.
- I have been teaching English for more than 30 years, but there are not so many lessons I can be satisfied with. You taught me and made me realize the importance of profound intelligence as a teacher.



3. Questions and Answers

1) My first-year students I teach in an after-school context are recently totally discouraged due to their low school test score. It was about a grammar point such as third person 's'. I don't have a clear idea how to encourage them. Any advice?

Build a trusting and personal relationship. Let them know that you are on their team and that you will support them. This is a tough challenge as they likely have very conflicted feelings about learning English, and probably don't really want to be in an after-school situation. Also, once you've fallen behind your classmates, it's very difficult to have a positive learning experience. I think the first step is to recognize that this is as much as psychological challenge as an academic one. Talk to them about their feelings about learning. Try to find learning activities which give them a sense of accomplishment. Let them know that many people also feel similarly. They will make efforts to the degree that they learn to trust and like you.

2) Preparing for entrance exam is not language learning, but I think the government goal you showed us was more like mentioning about 'language learning'. What are effective ways to fill in the gap?

Very big question! Help learners see that this kind of learning is different from language practice. Sometimes it's necessary to get through test-taking to move on to more engaging learning. Be honest and share your learning experiences with students.



3) With AI's instant translation on the way, how would you sell languaculture to students who feel they didn't have a choice in learning English?

Human beings resist things which feel forced upon them. That's natural. If students talk about instant translation, that is simply a pretext to avoid this pressure. Start conversations about the students' feelings and experiences with learning. The issue is not AI, it's resistance.

4) If you're exposed at an early stage, what does the resistance look like if it exists?

Interesting question. Young children typically acquire language naturalistically and don't experience resistance in the same way as older learners. But being put into a foreign environment can be psychologically difficult (e.g. put into a local school in a foreign country) and children may feel highly stressed. The psychological needs of the child are the most important things to keep in mind.

5) What advice do you have for ALTs who are the foreign objects in the foreign language classroom?

This is a real challenge. It takes a lot of practice to learn to manage a Japanese classroom. It's tempting to emphasize being friendly and personal with students to connect to them. Unfortunately, it's easy to become the "foreign object" in this situation. The solution is more tightly structured activities where your nationality or looks don't matter. Use out-of-class interaction for personal relationship building and friendly conversations. Also, your active engagement as a Japanese learner helps make you human and gives you another point of connection with your students. Good luck.



6) Even the aim of the class is communication, culture, etc., as long as the aim of students in high school is entrance exam, their motivation for learning English is mostly for entrance exam. That's the reality of Japan. What do you think?

It's easy to blame the education system for motivational challenges. That's not, however, how students see it. They believe that English is meaningful and think it would be cool to speak English, but they probably think they are personally failing and don't understand the difference between exams and communicative practice. The question for you is: What do you say to your students about the learning goals in your class? What is your motivation for teaching English? How has it helped you grow? If you are unsure of these things, then you will feel helpless whenever your students are unsure what the deeper meaning of learning English is. Sometimes, the problem is not just student resistance, but teacher resistance towards the big challenges we face. Being a good language teacher is even more difficult than learning a foreign language.

7) Linguaculture is very important when we teach English. What do you think of English educational policy projected by Japanese Education Ministry? I think it is too temporary and insufficient.

I think MEXT creates ambitious goals without providing a clear way to accomplish them. Unfortunately, MEXT policy is influenced by the particular educational philosophy of committee members, and suffers from always wanting to sound new and trendy. MEXT policy is like a textbook . . . it's a resource for us to use, but we often have to find creative ways to adapt it to our context.



AR Discussion

Date: October 11th, 2025, 14:30-17:00 (Room MW01, 02)

Title: Action Research Discussion

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

The number of participants: 16



Next workshop will be held on November 8th, 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