

NUFS Workshop 2006

Newsletter No. 10

Workshop in December

Date: December 9, 2006 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

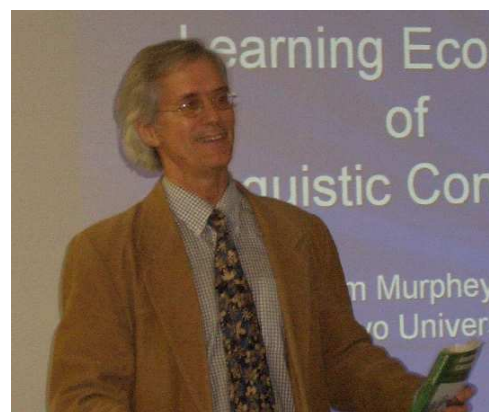
Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 3

Instructor: Tim Murphey (Dokkyo University)

Title: 'Ecologies of Linguistic Contagion: Participation, Performance, and Possibilities'

The number of participants: 32

Abstract: Hawkins (2005) suggests "the need for a shift in the teacher's role: from designing lessons to designing ecologies" (p. 79). Van Lier (2004) similarly holds that "The ecological approach to education asserts that ultimately the quality and the lasting success of education are primarily dependent on the quality of the activities and the interactional opportunities available to learners in the educational environment." Thus, a main question has been "How can teachers help students create environments in which interact so intensively that they carry on the interactions beyond the classroom, with others and in their minds, and "hothouse" their learning in such a way that they can better identify themselves as active L2 users with rapidly growing competencies?" We will look at the possibilities of increasing student participation and performance in the L2 through their connection with enjoyable activities that travel.



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

- Language Learning History: As an end-year report, I'd like to ask the students to write their language learning history, especially about extensive reading program. For my students, it will be better to write in Japanese. It's good to reflect their own learning history, and what's more, it's very good to learn from their friends, which can make a good learning atmosphere in the classroom.
- I want to use "Mentions" in my class. My students study very hard and get good marks on exams. But they are afraid of speaking loud because they don't want to make any mistakes. I believe this activity helps them to speak up without thinking about their mistakes.
- Mistake stories: It will lower the degree of students' fear of making mistakes in language learning situation and will create relaxed atmosphere. Besides it's fun to listen to other people's mistakes.
- Split Stories: Students listen to what the teacher says very carefully because they want to know what will happen next. But it's quite difficult to find interesting stories that we can split into two or three parts to make students keep their interest to know more.
- Retelling a Story: To memorize a story students heard is difficult, but to retell a story requires students to understand the gist of the story and have a chance to make speak out English.
- I want to try all of the activities introduced in this workshop. First I will try a mistake story. This

will help students to relax and make a comfortable atmosphere in the class. Another thing I want to try is task based on learning activity. I want to give at least one task a week to students.

- While listening to the story of Tim, I was thinking of my next English I introduction effectively. He said ‘visualization’ is more effective. So I’ll try to introduce ‘Momotaro’s Story’ before translation of the text. I’ll get students guess the story in English after timed-reading it. Then I’ll ask them to keep on using words to connect the stories.

2. What you learned from today’s workshop.

- I learned when people are relaxed, they learn a lot.
- Mistakes are not bad things. They are learning steps. Now I can say to my students, ‘Don’t be afraid of making mistakes.’
- Just explaining grammar and telling students to memorize it don’t mean teaching. Doing and performing are very important for them to learn English.
- Activities outside the classroom are very important, powerful and useful for the students.



- We should always think of ways to let them practice English.
- I should try to make the classroom atmosphere warmer. I hope my students feel comfortable being in my class.
- To be a good teacher is to make a lot of mistakes (learning process), and show them to their students with a humorous way. Teaching methods are important, but to explore human beings is more important for teaching.
- Teachers must learn to be a facilitator to increase opportunities for students to use English in different ways, where they can participate, perform and find possibilities and pleasure. Trying out any activities introduced today will help students motivate to learn English more.

3. Questions and Answers

Thanks for your questions. Let me say beforehand that there are no simple and quick magical answers. Most of the answers involve teachers’ learning something new and investing a bit of time.

Q (1): How can we teach 'reading' and 'grammar' all in English effectively? Should we avoid using grammatical technical terms?

TM: GOOGLE “extensive reading” and “scaffolding” and you will find many ideas about how students learn vocabulary and grammar easily when they read a lot of books at their level (90% comprehension). It works when teachers have a lot of materials for the various levels of your students and then giving them time to read and talk about what they read with others to inspire each other. It is not a question of avoiding grammatical terms, but rather letting them learn without necessarily having the technical term for what they know. Would you rather have students know what a “direct object” is or be able to understand a Harry Potter? People who drive cars often do not know about the parts of engines. Why should we expect them to know the parts of their languages.

Q (2): How can we make students realize that speaking and listening are as important as grammar?

TM: Invite your students (and yourself!) to consider that these are not separate things. Speaking and listening contain grammar and to do them well we need to use grammar well. Speaking and listening can lead to more natural grammar acquisition. They are intense grammar practice, just like reading. The great things about speaking, active listening and reading are that they force us to use grammar to make sense with language. Grammar explanations explain things (usually in Japanese) and can help us conceptualize things, but they do not get us to actually use the grammar. If teaching is only composed of explanations, then it is impoverished. After explaining, most students still do not understand. The understanding comes through using the grammar items in controlled exercises at first and then less controlled exercises and then meeting the patterns in natural conversation and reading.

Q (3): I want to share what I learned today with my colleagues. But they seem too busy to use new ideas in their classes. Do you have any advice for me or for them?

TM: This was why I gave you the ball. Put the ball on your desk and see who asks about it. Leave extra handouts around the photocopier machine. Offer copies of the handouts from the workshops you go to. Many will not want them but usually you find a few that you can collaborate with .



AT a LARGER LEVEL of THINKING: Teachers are too busy these days with added administrative and managerial duties. Japan still has 30% more students in a class than do all the other developed countries (except

Korea, who got their educational system from Japan). The irony of Japanese education is that it takes the best and brightest of university graduates and puts them into positions in which they are overloaded with too much to do and too many students to develop caring relationships with. I think part of the violence to self and others that we have recently seen in schools is because teachers often cannot give individual attention to those that need relationships. Teachers do the best they can, but it is just too much. I don't think things will change until teachers become assertive enough and say, "Sorry this is just too much". When schools higher more staff to do the administration and lower the class size to manageable levels, then teachers will be more open to trying new things and their work will be more enjoyable and I predict child violence will decrease.

Q (4): I am aware that interaction or use of English helps learning from my own experience and what I learned so far. The thing is how I can deal with other issues; collaborating with other English teachers, pressure from entrance exam, limited amount of free time. What do you think about these issues? What would be the first step to make change?

TM: See the answer to #3. Any teacher who takes their Saturday afternoon off to come to a professional development workshop is already an extremely concerned teacher and on the right track. You may not find teachers in your own environment that are open to further ideas, and that is why many teachers go to workshops, to find people interested in improving things. Still, we need to remain open in our environments and invite people to talk and share. Then there are the big level changes that perhaps need a petition for the government.

Q (5): How should I evaluate students in communication class?

TM: First let's look at how YOU evaluate your teaching: Are students given a lot of time to practice communicating? Are they taught strategies and given typical routines to get them started? How much are they talking each day? Are they being encourage to do self-talk in English and to interact outside the classroom? NOW THEM: an excellent way would be to do as Keiko Takahashi has done: Video them at the beginning of the semester and the end. Ask them to transcribe their tapes and do a self-evaluation (they are usually more severe than the teacher). This kind of evaluation is a learning-evaluation, i.e. they are learning to evaluate themselves and look at language and language learning in different ways. You can have some rubrics based on what you taught during the semester. [eye contact, says greetings, asks questions, shadows, gives rejoinders, etc.] This would be too labor intensive for teachers. But if students are doing it in a self-evaluation format, they can do this work and learn more through doing it, and you can avoid over work.

Q (6): Would you recommend some books for story-splitting?

TM: Two articles describe it

Murphey T. & Deacon, B. (2002). The never ending split story of hand over and take over. *The Language Teacher* 26 (2) 9-13.

Deacon, B & Murphey T. (2001). Deep impact storytelling. *English Teaching Forum* 39 (4) 10-15, 23. <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol39/no4/p10.htm>

Any books and stories you hear anywhere can be adapted to split story telling.

My two favorite books are

The Power of Personal Storytelling: Spinning tales to connect with others, by Jack Maguire (1998). New York: Penguin Putnam Inc. 253 pages.

This book gets my highest rating for practicality and entertainment for beginners and old hands. Not only will it convince you to tell your own stories, it will show you how to get to them, spice them up, spice up your own telling, and fall in love with storytelling. The quotes throughout motivate you to "Just do it!"

Another book that is great for language patterns is;

Simmons, A. (2001) *The Story Factor*. NY: Basic Books

Q (7): I teach mainly reading using a designated textbook to first year students of senior high school. Their level is not so high, and there are 40 students in a class. What activity should we take to involve all of them?

TM: (See answer 1 and 3 about big classes) Read! One thing researchers are puzzled about is that many reading teachers in high schools are still using yakudoku reading methods when we are not asking for translations or pinpointing grammar in reading passages on entrance exams or in real life. Extensive reading is what students need, not dissection. Most teachers teach students as if they are going to be non-driving mechanics rather than drivers of cars and other vehicles. The truth is most people do not care or need to know how cars work, they need to know how to use them. They only learn how to use them by using them. Get them to read. Read your textbook when you need for your joint term tests with your colleagues, but if you want students to learn to read and pass more entrance exams, get them to read a lot of things outside of class.

Thank you for your stimulating questions and a great time in Nagoya!

Group Session

Date: December 9, 2006 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya International Center

The number of participants: 21

Abstract: The participants made discussion about their lessons in the group. One of them showed a video of the students' presentation in a junior high school. They talked how they can improve their lessons.



Next Workshop

Date: January 13, 2007 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30, 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya International Center

Instructor: Eiko Ujitani (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: 'Teaching culture in English class at a Japanese junior or senior high school'

Abstract: Damen (1987) considers the knowledge of culture as the fifth skill for language learners in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However, teaching culture has not been paid attention to in English classes in Japan (Kawano, 1999). In this workshop, six methods to teach culture effectively as claimed by Kawano (1999) will be introduced and explained first. Then participants will be asked to create a lesson plan based on one or a combination of several methods addressed in the first part and it will be shared among participants.

I'm waiting for your attendance. Please send an email to Chihaya if you can come.