

## NUFS Workshop 2007

*Newsletter No. 5**< Summer Workshop 2007 >**<Day 2>*

**Date:** August 7, 2007, 9:30a.m.-12:30a.m., 13:30p.m. - 16:30p.m.

*Morning*

**Title:** Extensive Listening, Part 2: Graded Readers and Children's Books & Songs

**Instructor:** Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

**The number of participants:** 21

**Abstract:** Extensive reading and listening flood learners' minds with English that is easy enough for them to understand and enjoy. This type of extensive contact with English causes it to stick in learners' memories because of its meaningfulness, quantity and repetition. In Extensive Listening Part II, participants will use graded readers and children's books & songs to experience various extensive listening techniques. Additionally, they will learn ways of getting students to do extensive listening outside of class by tying it to in-class follow up activities.

*Afternoon*

**Advisors:** Kazuyoshi Sato & Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

**The number of participants:** 22

**Abstract:** Participants will make an activity by using a children's song. Also, they will experience literature circles in groups.

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

- I'm interested in ER using 'Oxford Reading Tree' series. In the elective class for third year students, we teachers can do that. As for reading, I'll start with reading the easy article in the newspaper with Japanese article. My textbook is not suitable for learning authentic English. So I'll try ER.
- Chants: Using chants in teaching grammar is important because it's repetitive. So, it's easy for them to acquire/remember.
- I'd like to use 'Grammar Chants for Children' at the beginning of OC class as an appetizer. It's fun for even teachers, so why can't students enjoy it.
- I'd like to use extensive listening. I can use children's reading books with CDs for high school kids, because I found that listening to the stories is rather difficult and fun. I also learned a new way of dictations. I found that they can do longer dictation after shadowing. In that case, they can understand more about the contents.
- Movie activity – It's a great idea for students to choose the scene and make a handout. They will be very excited to try it out because it's their favorite scene. Also this activity saves us time for

making a material. This is a great idea for both students and teachers.

- Literature Circle – when I read the handout and listened to the explanation for the first time, I felt it seemed hard for junior high students. But during the seminar I thought it again like that it's a group work so if I choose the materials and make some other roles that fit to the students, this way will work well in class.
- Literature circle – We enjoyed discussing more than we did yesterday probably because we prepared for it sufficiently enough and also the topic was appropriate. I realized literature circle will be more successful if we consider topics and time for preparation before getting used to it.
- In today's literature circle, our group was able to have a lot of discussion, especially about our personal experiences. I want to use literature circle using a passage that my students can find interesting and relate easily to themselves.



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

- I've learned it's about time for teachers to throw away their textbooks. The potential impact on extensive reading and listening to our students looks enormous. It's so frustrating we have to teach with censored textbooks while we know there are for better materials outside school.
- In the literature circle, I knew what was expected as a discussion leader. And I realized how to do that after I experienced that role. I found that students need experience more than explanation.
- During the activities, it is important that students are the main actors, so they can personalize the sample utterances and interaction. Teachers are just facilitators.
- The level of the materials is important for extensive reading and listening. We need to use the materials that students feel easy for extensive listening and reading. Otherwise, they would fail even if they used their favorite materials or movies.
- I've found that books for children are much more useful than I had expected, because we have a child in our heart at any age.
- Today we experienced rhythm practice and literature circle again. I felt they were easier than the one we did yesterday. I think if students practice again and again, what seems to be difficult for them may become easier.
- When I heard the word 'ER circles', I felt it was too difficult for my students. But now I can do something with discussion. In a group each student has a duty like 'passage person'. That system makes discussion easier, because every student can notice what he or she should do.
- I had a chance to listen to different levels of CDs for ER, and I learned that the level of ER and the one of EL are not the same. For most of the students, EL level is lower than ER level. I'd like to introduce the CD materials which are much lower than the ones I have now.



## 3. Questions and answers

**Q: I found it is very difficult for me to find stresses in a song. Are there any easy ways to find out? I'm stuck with my favorite song "We are the world"!**

**Q: It's difficult to indicate stressed syllables with dots. After I listen to the CD many times, I can sing well. But I can't write dots correctly.**

**A (Yoshi):** There are some songs that are suitable for rhythm practice, while others are difficult for rhythm practice. As teachers, we need to introduce an easy song for rhythm practice first. Then, as students get used to the rhythm, we can introduce other songs which have more sound changes. In general, we can predict stressed words before listening. As I explained, content words are usually stressed. However, there are some exceptions. As you listen, you will figure it out. To be honest, I sometimes change a few stresses after I have introduced the same song again.

**Q: When you make blanks in a song for a listening activity, how do you choose words in them?**

**A (Yoshi):** I choose several content words because they are usually stressed and important. I usually have my students listen twice. I mean in the second listening, I stop the CD or the tape little by little so that students can focus on those missing words. Then, I check the answers. There are many other ways. For example, you can tell your students to guess the answer by reading Japanese translation before listening. Or you can create several mistakes (lyrics) on purpose and tell the students to point them out after listening.

**Q: I think about the way to use reading circle activity using the textbook in my lessons of JHS. But the text consists of so many new words and new grammar points. Is it a bad idea to do reading circle using the textbook "New Horizon"?**

**A (Yoshi):** If the text is too difficult and not interesting for your students, it is not suitable for literature circles. The main goal is to enjoy reading and share comments, and not to learn new grammar points and vocabulary. I would rather recommend "True Stories" or "Graded Readers" for junior high school students. I am sure that it is possible for third-year JHS students to try literature circles with good preparation. They can learn how to engage in discussion (it is OK to look at their notes). As a result, they will develop their English skills, too.

**Q: If we let students select the materials which they want, that is great. But what if students will not select any material? Unfortunately, this situation happens. Hence, selection of materials is quite important to involve students in the class.**

**A (Nancy):** Yes, as you say, every student must have material in order to take part in the activity. I wonder why some students don't select any material when they are given the freedom to do so? I can imagine the following cases.

1. Lack of interest: Without interest and motivation, selecting material probably feels like a nuisance. Would it help to offer such students two specific kinds of materials that other students in the past had chosen and enjoyed? Then you could ask the student to choose between the two. Making a choice between two is still a selection. If the student has a little more interest, maybe he or she just needs a suggestion of 2 or 3 titles and advice about how to find them.
2. Lack of confidence: You might tell the class that you can help any student who wants some advice or ideas about selecting material.



Then face to face you can offer a number of suggestions and ask about what kind of content would interest the student. Maybe also offer ideas about where to find materials.

**Q: What is the definition of *extensive* reading and listening, as compared to *intensive*? We feel confused.**

**A (Nancy):** A number of participants seemed to have this question or feeling. Briefly, *appropriate types* of intensive (that is, language-focused) activities can set the stage for successful extensive reading and listening. This is called *scaffolding*, which means giving learners a supporting framework. With this support, they are more likely to succeed on their own with extensive reading and listening.

You've experienced such activities in the last two days. Learners discover that they can understand and shadow movies, so they have more confidence to use movies extensively on their own. Through literature circles, they confirm that they can understand stories in graded readers, so they have more confidence to trust their 'solo reading' of such books. Songs, jazz chants, etc. are a pleasant way to improve knowledge of English sounds – especially how they change, link, disappear and have different amounts of stress. With this knowledge, students have more confidence to attempt and succeed in extensive listening. These activities can be seen as the 'warm-up' that increases learners' motivation to try extensive reading and listening and also increases their chance of success.

The two basic requirements for learning a language are a desire to learn it and exposure to the language.

In traditional intensive language teaching, there has been both a lack of exposure and lack of opportunities to use newly-learned language for communication. In communicative-style intensive language learning, students have frequent chances to practice communication in class. But classroom hours are limited, so learners still lack exposure to large amounts of comprehensible English. Extensive reading and listening are the only solution for students living in EFL countries such as Japan.

