

NUFS Workshop 2007

*Newsletter No. 6**< Summer Workshop 2007 >**<Day 3>*

Date: August 8, 2007, 9:30a.m.-12:30a.m., 13:30p.m. - 16:30p.m.

Morning

Title: Extensive Reading in a High School Classroom

Instructor: Keiko Takahashi (Ikeda High School)

The number of participants: 21

Abstract: Our high school started extensive reading last year. We convinced our school and parents to purchase graded readers. I will explain how we started the extensive reading program in all English classes and how we managed problems. I will demonstrate how we incorporated extensive reading into our regular English classes. Moreover, I will show you how our extensive reading program affected students' overall English abilities.

**Afternoon**

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

The number of participants: 22

Abstract: Participants shared their favorite songs with focus on English rhythm. Then they shared their lesson plans in groups. Finally, they joined a performance contest (performing a movie scene in pairs without actions).

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

- Book review – If teachers recommend students to read some English books, sometimes it may not work well, but if classmates did it, they may start reading them. Sometimes classmates influence is more powerful than teachers'.
- 'A Magic Barber' – Through this activity we were able not only to read and listen to it but also to discuss the story. And that will make reading classes more enjoyable and interesting.
- Extensive reading: I never thought we can use 'extensive reading' at junior high school till I heard Ms. Takahashi's practice at her school. Now I began to think of using easier ORT for extensive reading. I should also give my students chances to read good books and enjoy reading books.
- I got an idea about extensive reading several years ago. However I didn't think I can access to



it. But thanks to this workshop, I began to realize that I can start with small things. I'm amazed that Keiko has stuck to extensive reading for 7 years. She never gave up carrying it out. Thanks to her, we can start extensive reading more easily.

- I want to introduce extensive reading to my class and make it as main project for the English course students. Keiko sensei's presentation was so convincing and informative that it seems like a sin not to learn from her and try it. I feel very motivated now.
- Performance contest – Even though we played and used the same dialogue of 'Back To The Future', some pairs played marvelously. They added their original taste in their performance. It was very interesting to compare them.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- Starting with very simple and easy things is very important. One of the teachers' job is to decide when to step up the level of materials. If we make a good choice on the material, activities are more likely to be successful.
- Grammar-based classes have already been out of date. I had to change my teaching methods. What Yoshi said "Routine makes our classes deskilled" was very impressive and stimulated me to study more.
- I learned many lesson plans from other teachers. There are many ways to teach with songs. I also enjoyed reading English books. It may take a lot of time and work to get many books which suits students' level, but extensive reading is very effective.
- Ikeda HS's great success story told us a lot of things. She has solved all the financial problems and teachers conflicts. We can learn from that.
- I didn't understand the relationship between extensive reading and in-class activities until today. Now I understand the purposes and feel it easier to start extensive reading.
- I learned where I should put stress on the lyrics. It's based on not the actual song and the phrase or sentence. So grammatically I can put stress. I have energy to continue teaching at my school in the second term. I should not be afraid of the failure. I should try new things when I believe they're nice and necessary.
- I learned a lot from other teachers' lesson plans. They were well organized and had good ideas. I will 'steal' or make use of them for my classes.

3. Questions and answers

Q: Even if teachers tell students not to use dictionaries and to try to get the general idea or guess unknown words from the context, some of them will not follow it. How could we persuade students not to use dictionaries while reading?

A (Takahashi): The key is to introduce MANY EASY BOOKS to students. It is important to tell students to keep reading many easy books in the beginning of the program. I found that students can start reading without dictionaries after they have an experience of reading MANY EASY books. Here are some comments from my students who enjoy extensive reading.

- I don't need dictionaries as long as I can follow a storyline.
- I just stop reading a book if there are too many unknown words to follow a storyline.
- If I use dictionaries many times, I cannot enjoy reading. Or I'd rather say that I forget to use dictionaries if I enjoy reading.

There are three points emphasized in our ER program for students to select easy books.

1. Start with very easy books and prepare only easy books in the beginning.

In a first lesson, students read 20- to 50- words books without using dictionaries. For example, Oxford Reading Tree (Stage 1+and Stage 2) are good books for a first lesson. If students feel that the books are too easy, that level of the books is a good start. Some students want to read more difficult text than their ability level because they believe that they can learn more and that reading easy books are childish. For those students, we bring only easy books in the classroom.

2. Three Golden Rules

We emphasize that reading difficult text with the help of dictionaries is not the purpose of Extensive Reading(ER). Thus *Three Golden Rules* are introduced. They are;

- 1) No dictionaries while reading.
- 2) Skip over difficult words.
- 3) Stop reading when it is boring or too difficult.

I tell my students to skip over difficult words instead of guessing the meaning of words. Of course, most of students can guess the meaning of a word from the picture or the context if there are only a few unknown words in a book. However, they can be more relaxed to hear the words "skip over". The third golden rule seems difficult for students, so I should encourage students to change a book if it is difficult. As they read more and more books, they gradually find that they will be able to read a book they stop reading if they try it again a month later or so.



3. Read 100 easy books.

Students are encouraged to read 100 easy, short books in the beginning. Teacher can be a good model, so I also read the same easy books with students. When students see a teacher enjoy reading such easy books, they can be more confident in reading EASY books.

Q: I understand that the first necessary step to introduce extensive reading is to buy enough number of books for students, and it is not easy to be cleared. Is there any way to introduce extensive reading without enough budgets?

A (Takahashi): There are several ways to overcome this problem.

1. Students buy one or two books and then everyone can share them for one year.

When we started extensive reading (ER) program three years ago, we didn't have any budget for books. Thus, we collected the money for two books (1200 yen each) from the students. Then we bought different books and shared them for one year. At the end of the year, the students chose two books and took them home. We also asked the students to donate the books for ER library if they wanted. As a result, about one-third of the books were donated in each year. Collecting money for two books was an

easy start because students used to buy two side readers for summer and winter vacations. Thus students and parents didn't feel that they paid extra money for ER programs. Instead, students liked this idea that paying the money for two books and reading much more than two books.

2. We can request a librarian to buy graded readers for a school library.

Last year, we requested a librarian to buy ORT (stage 5 to stage 9) books. Once librarians recognize how students enjoy reading those children books or graded readers, they are willingly to give a hand.



3. We can read simplified stories through Internet.

There are many useful sites for kids and we can use those sites for ER. Here are some example sites I found for my students.

- a. <http://www.kids-space.org/> is the site of kids, by kids, for kids. Shelf III is a storybook (folk tales) created by young international story tellers.
- b. <http://www.e-hon.jp/index.htm> is "Digital Ehon Site", where students can read Japanese folk tales with sound files.
- c. <http://web-japan.org/kidsworld/folk/issun/index.html> is "Web Japan" site, where students can read Japanese folk tales.
- d. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-stories-short.htm> is the site for kids British Council offers. In a "Story" section, students can read short stories with sound files.

Q: I still feel something strange about the rhythm practice of songs. It's much easier for me to practice the rhythm with the same rhythm of the song. (But it doesn't mean singing. It's hard to explain.) I think it's because of the difference between kinetic people and musical people. What do you think of it?

A (Yoshi): As I said, some songs are suitable for rhythm practice, while others are not. As English teachers, we need to choose a suitable one for our students. For example, "Imagine" is easier than "Hero." It may be easier to practice the rhythm to the music. However, it is a singing practice rather than a rhythm practice. To get used to English rhythm, which is accent timed, students need to be familiar with the beats that have the same length between them.

Q: We learned about 1) reduction, 2) disappearance, 3) liaison, 4) assimilation. However, I think these sound changes can vary by the context. I wanted to discuss more about the context behind extensive listening or reading. Could you tell me any suggestions?

A (Yoshi): I don't understand your second point. As for your first point, I agree with you. These are basic rules and there are some exceptions. Sometimes, a singer emphasizes some words, which may result in a different rhythm pattern. However, basic rules can be applied to most of the songs.

<Day 4> (Mid-term Presentation of Action Research)

Date: August 9, 2007 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room

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

The number of participants: 14

Abstract: Each participant made the mid-term presentation on his/her action research, and had a discussion.



Workshop in September (Schedule)

(Part 1)

Date: September 22, 2007, 10:30 a.m.-14:30 p.m.

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 1

Instructor: Philip Suthons (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: "Using Movies to Create a Near-Immersion Experience"

(Part 2)

Date: September 22, 2007, 14:30 p.m.-17:00 p.m.

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 1

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

Topic: Group discussion

Please email Chihaya (chiha143@nufs.ac.jp) if you can attend.