

NUFS Workshop 2007

Newsletter No. 10

Workshop in December (Part 1)

Date: December 8, 2007, 10:30-14:30

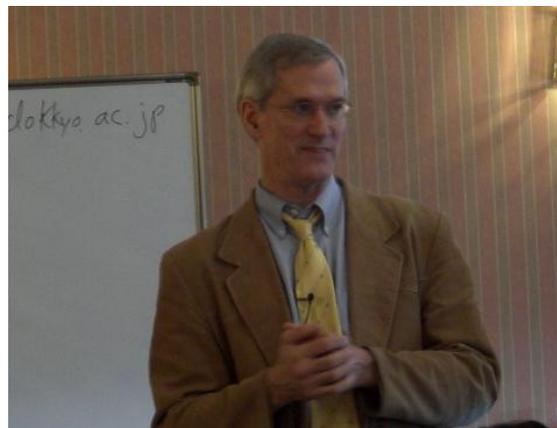
Venue: KKR Hotel Nagoya, Kiku-no-ma

Instructor: Tim Murphey (Dokkyo University)

Title: “What Works in JHS and HS English classes? According to University Students And Ways to Give It To Them”

The number of participants: 17

Abstract: Murphey (2002) reported on the results of 100 university students' advice to their JHS/HS teachers. This year Elwood et al. did a replication study among 440 students in a variety of departments in four universities (reaping the wisdom of crowds) saying what they liked, what helped, and what they wanted more of. This information will be shared with teachers and implications discussed. Furthermore, active steps will be taken to look at What Works in Creating Identities as Users of a Language? In the afternoon session we will experience and create sample activities and materials that can work.



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

- I'd like to use 'one word conversation'. Even if students don't have rich vocabulary, they will enjoy conversation. And when they feel that they want to use more words or they want to talk a little longer, they will try to remember more words by themselves.
- 'Counting numbers from 1-50 with emotions', 'Shadowing' and 'Mentions' – all those activities are easy to introduce even to the beginner level of students.
- TPR is good for students because they can use their body, speak English and enjoy it. Shadowing conversation makes them feel good while they are talking each other because their conversation goes fluently.
- Counting numbers from 1 to 50 pretending conversation with feelings. I'll use this activity when I introduce new words. Repeating is boring and students don't learn. But pretending conversation using the new words will be fun and as they repeat the words, it's easy to learn them.
- Dictation – I did dictation before in my class but not as interactive and fun as Tim did today. I guess it's very appropriate for my students since they are encouraged only to listen to three sentences and the words are very simple.
- There are many activities I want to use, especially TPR, Shadowing and Mentions. For the first grade students, I want to use TPR, because it's easy for them who are still beginners to learn English. For all grade students, I want to use Shadowing and Mentions. Shadowing helps students to speak English more fluently. Mentions help them to speak English positively without worrying about making mistakes.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned 'interactive' is a very important issue for making class. Usually in my class, students work individually, so I really have to change it.
- Tim's workshops always tell us what is important in human communication and relationship.
- We teachers want to listen and introduce students' voices. Lacking of time is a reasonable reason for us not to do that. They are ignored in most cases. I want to go to see my 'horses' mouths'.
- 'Love You Forever' is a very moving story. I agree with Tim's idea that we need love in our classes. I'd like to hear the students' voice more.
- Curiosity can be a good motivation of learning. (Telling a story to the students and let them imagine what's going on afterwards. At the ends the last part of the story is given to them.) Recycling is good. Repeating the song, the story, etc can help students learn them by heart without any hard work.
- It's always good to know what are students' likes and dislikes in class. I never thought that they don't like grammar and translation, which we always do in class.
- It's not so important for students to speak or make difficult English. It's important that students can interact with small words and exchange their information.
- What impressed me most is the list of 'How do we get them to participate?' I was really surprised to know that there is a big difference between 'read' and 'say while doing'. Also, playful, song, interaction: these three words will help me make effective lesson plan and would be a good scale to measure my class.



2. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Do we need every English class to be musical?

A: Ask your students, "What are the first thing you do when you go into your room (their territory)?" I bet nearly everyone one of them will list turning on some music as one of the things they do. Music is part of a young person's life much more than adults realize. Putting on BGM during pair activities make the environment more like a café and relaxes people – it can make it a playful environment for interaction (remember the research is saying students want more of three essential things for effective learning (playfulness, song, and interaction). Every class minute does not have to be about song and music but it is nice to have a song of the week that you play at the beginning and end of every class so that the songs get stuck in their heads (I know several JHS and HS teachers who do this regularly – at first they choose the songs, and then they ask students to choose songs and give the lyrics and a CD to the teacher (saves you trouble creating material). SO, the quick answer to the question" Do we need every English class to be musical?" is no. And you also do not need to make every day of your life happy, joyful, interesting, and a learning experience either – but wouldn't it be nice if you did?

Q (2): What parts on the scale are most useful for very low level students? What strategy is good for low-motivated and non-academic students?

A: The left side of the scale makes interaction with language learning easiest. It is easy to follow TPR instructions and move our bodies as our model is doing. The language is simply attached to the movements

but when we ask students to repeat the words and motions with us, they begin to get it. There is a lot of research to show that people remember things better through moving their bodies and using gestures. Singing is also an easy way to use language like native speakers and identify with that use. They do not have “create” any words or meanings but they can use the words in a group to interact and feel something together as a group (a form of interaction). Self talk or Self Sing are private ways to practice and rehearse with no threat of being fully exposed. Then mentions begin the creative process, but this can be done slowly. How much you can get students to do these will depend on your activities and encouragement and how much you show them and tell them about near peer role models who do it (that will get them to try it more). My students at the university all do these activities but some find they like some better than others or the strategies fit them. Males typically learn well moving and playing games, while many of the females get hooked on singing and self talk.



Q (3): I find some of my students do not like communicative activities. So it is very hard to introduce them. What can I do?

A: Even I do not like communicative activities if they are scary and I do not feel I have a good chance of success. Teachers need to ask themselves if they have assured students that it is safe to make mistakes and if they have provided the tools they need to succeed in the activity. I am a strong believer in letting students know what they will need to talk about a week before they do it so they can write down their thoughts and practice in their own minds. Another way to help them realize what you want them to do is to make videos of students doing the activities well and enjoyably. Then they see it is possible and they have near peer role models. If you cannot do that, at least do several demonstrations with students as your partners so they can see how it might be done. Another good idea is to put yourself in their shoes and imagine how you will feel being asked to do the activity—ask yourself “What else would I need to do it well?” It may be writing a few questions on the board, etc.

Q (4): When teaching shadowing, is it better to start with complete shadowing or partial one?

A: Even with advanced learners, I usually start with complete so they get the idea and the feel of it better and understand how things can echo in their heads. When I have started with partial shadowing they often feel confused about what part to shadow (which is not so important – we usually just do the last few words or any unknown words, or the main idea). Many end of not shadowing at all because they are busy try to decide what to shadow rather than just letting it happen naturally. So, when I teach shadowing to people I teach them complete first and then selective (partial) and then interactive (in which they add rejoinders and questions). The Shadowing video from NFLRC shows this sequence and many teachers have told me they show this to their classes and imitate it (go to <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/index.cfm> and type “Murphey” into the search box).



Q (5): I always use the textbook for the shadowing activity. Before shadowing, I make students read the text over and over again so that they can understand the story. So some of them have already memorized the text and can do shadowing without listening to the CD carefully. Is this way of shadowing still effective?

A: I would challenge you to reverse the sequence and notice what happens. Play the CD before they have read the text and ask them to just to shadow the sounds, even without knowing what they mean (they will still be curious about what it means – and you can ask after shadowing once to guess what it means and tell their partner). Then have them shadow it a second time and see if they have caught even more of the words (ask them to note down words and phrases they can catch.) Then, let them read the text book and see how much more they understand. Then do any explanation you need to do further for them to understand the whole text. Finally, let them shadow the whole thing one more time. What I think will happen: students will be very curious and may only understand 20% of the text on first shadowing, but it is like a game and the second time they will catch more and note more. Reading the text will clarify more to them and they will be curious to read it and find out if their guesses were right. Then after all is understood they can shadow again with the feeling that they have really come to understand it and learned a lot.

Why do this way? First of all, there is research which implies that especially in EFL situations that when students read before listening they apply their own accents to the passage as they sub-vocalize (read out loud in their heads) the text and that this reading imprints their faulty pronunciation on the words (katakana English in Japan). The more natural way to learn a language is oral first and then attach the written form to the sound of the word that we have learned. Too much reading before speaking ties many learners into a pronunciation trap. Secondly, in much of Japanese pedagogy of English, it is assumed that people must understand the meanings before they can say something or use it. This is false. You can repeat things and not know what they mean, purely at the auditory level – in fact it makes it easier to concentrate on the sound without meaning. For students, being curious about meaning makes it more exciting. If teachers explain all the meanings and all the grammar before students even see the material, there is little mystery left in the material. Reading can be like a game in which we figure out meanings—teachers simply telling students translations does not teach them how to read. Practicing reading alone at home with a bad pronunciation is bad practice which hurts later. Let them listen to the CD at home 5 times and shadow.—each time trying to figure out more. Let English be an enjoyable mystery rather than a boring explanation with no discovery.

Thanks for the questions and helping me to think through these things again.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Tim Murphey mits@dokkyo.ac.jp



Workshop in December (Part 2)

Date: December 8, 2007, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya KKR Hotel, Kiku-no-ma

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

The number of participants: 15

Abstract: The participants discussed their own monthly report in groups. Yoshi and Nancy joined the groups and gave them some advice.



Workshop in January (Schedule)

(Part 1)

Date: January 12, 2008, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 1

Instructor: Brian Cullen (Nagoya Institute of Technology)

Title: "Tunes and Tales for Tired Teachers"

(Part 2)

Date: January 12, 2008, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 1

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

Topic: Monthly report and group discussion

Please email Chihaya (chiha143@nufs.ac.jp) if you will attend this workshop.