

NUFS Workshop 2007

Newsletter No. 12

Workshop in February (Part 1)

Date: February 9, 2008, 10:30-14:30

Venue: NSC College, Room II-S 41

Instructor: Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: “Brain Maps: Getting all those good ideas organized”

The number of participants: 21

Abstract: Is your memory of some of the 2007 workshop presentations getting a little fuzzy? Or maybe you missed several times? At this last workshop,

participants will “revisit” the key concepts and great ideas from the 2007 presentations. You will also use several “mind tools” - mind mapping, Bloom’s Cognitive Taxonomy and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) - to integrate workshop ideas into a useful whole. Through the lens of these mind tools, participants will reflect back on the old teaching year and set some personal teaching goals for the year ahead.



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

- Mind-mapping – because we can use this techniques in many ways. Such as developing ideas from central topics, organizing ideas, classifying crucial problems and recalling information and so on.
- Reading Circle – Students can have a chance to speak, read, write and listen. It might be difficult for the students in my school, but if I simplify the roles, they could work. During discussion the story, they also get others opinion. That makes them understand the text more. During writing draft on their roles, they have to write their thought, then they can expand their vocabulary, too.
- There are so many activities that I want to use, so it’s hard to choose. Especially what I’m interested in is ‘shadowing’. It’s very useful for beginners. It is because they can understand properly if they repeat what speakers say. Many Japanese tend to say ‘yes’ even if they don’t understand. That’s why repeating phrases can make less misunderstanding and help them to keep conversation.
- Extensive reading – This activity’s goal is to read books as many as the students can and make notes to recommend the contents to other students. Also students are recommended to read 30,000 words in the year. I think it’s good for them to get to know that reading books is really fun. Once they get accustomed to read books, they are willing to do so not only in-class, but also outside the class.
- Jigsaw reviewing – I could try asking students to remember what they learned in junior high school.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I re-realized that I have learned a lot from NUFS workshop but have forgotten some of them. With the help of group members, all those forgotten memories came back to me with clear pictures.
- Bloom's taxonomy gives my perspective to plan English lessons successfully.
- In every activities I reflected today, the students can get have chance to 'use' English .Only though the 'traditional way', ii is not effective for them to get their ability improved. With the ideas, I'd like to create the activity in which the students can enjoy and communicate their own thoughts.
- I had forgotten the content of the workshop I attended. Today I talked with other teachers and I remembered some good activities and the purposes of the activities.
- 'Forgetting Curve' truly show my present condition. I forgot a lot about what I learned. Each teacher talked about what they have tried to implement in their lessons and it was quite interesting to know how they interpreted those ideas presented in the workshop.
- The importance of reflection or reviewing after a period of time. I found the memories are easy to fall off without looking back occasionally. Some workshops I did attend failed my memory about which I could not tell others in detail. In addition, to grasp the idea or notion of the workshop is also crucial for me to keep that in mind.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): When I talked about 'Portfolio' today, I found that I didn't understand what 'Portfolio' is. Please give me further explanation.

A: We discover whether we have understood something when we try to explain it to someone else, don't we! In my graduate school days, I found that student study groups were really helpful. Both "explainers" and listeners benefited equally.

Suzanne Bonn outlined the following points in her handout about portfolios. (The specifics should of course be adjusted to fit each group of students. Suzanne's portfolio example was for a university writing class, so she required considerable extra writing. For secondary students, part or all of the reflection could be in Japanese without losing the value of rereading, selecting and reflecting. And/Or the amount of required reflective comments could be reduced.)

The main point is that the portfolio is a "selected sample" from the work that a student did. The selecting process is valuable. Students select a few pieces of work that show their improvement and strengths in English.

The model of portfolio that Suzanne introduced has these "value-added" parts:

1. General introduction to the portfolio

In the overall introduction students reflect on the whole semester or year: for example, their own goals

for learning English, their strengths and weaknesses in English, how their feelings about English changed (or didn't) during that time and which pieces of work they chose to include in their portfolio.

2. Introduction ("Cover Note") for each piece of work

This contains, for example, the reason for choosing this particular piece of work, an explanation of what that assignment was and how it was carried out, what the student learned by doing it, how the student feels about this piece of work, how he or she might do this assignment differently another time and how this assignment reflects or connects to the student's current school life and/or future.

3. Self-evaluation

Finally, at the end of the portfolio, the student comments on what s/he learned about the English language or language learning process during the course, what s/her learned about the process of making a portfolio, what parts of the portfolio-making process were enjoyable/not enjoyable, in what areas of English ability s/he has improved most and which still need the most improvement.

Q (2): Could we have a session on planning for the year ahead? (writing a syllabus, goal setting etc)

A: Good idea. In fact, Saturday's workshop was intended as both review and help with planning for the new academic year, but more would probably be useful.

Goals

For planning goals, reviewing the definitions of communicative competence and communicative language teaching are the first step. The goal is to help students increase their communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic – review the handout for explanations). That means they do need to learn grammar and vocabulary, but also socially appropriate ways of expressing thanks, requests, apologies, etc (communication functions). They need to know how to cope, even when their English isn't up to the task, by using circumlocution and how to deal with lack of understanding or misunderstanding.

Assessment

The form of assessment shapes students' efforts. Continual assessment, each class or each week, encourages students to learn steadily and also reveals incomplete learning while there is still time to catch up. Summative assessment (end of term exams) does neither. Making assessment procedures explicit to students at the beginning guides them in how to practice and study. Using assessment methods that are multi-faceted and assess communicative competence make "studying for the test" a good thing.

Balance activity types

Because of the forgetting curve, students need multiple chances to recombine and reuse once-learned language items. Activities that regularly integrate the four skills in natural



communicative situations are the most natural way to accomplish this. Bloom's taxonomy reminds us that students need not only to *recall* and *understand* grammar patterns and vocabulary, but also to *apply* that language knowledge to communication situations, to *integrate* newly learned language into previously-learned language and to *create* their own new conversations and writing. SILL reminds us of the many good learning strategies that our teaching activities should guide our students to add to their repertoire.



Specific Activity Ideas

The February workshop's review of ideas from 2007 workshops was not enough in the case of workshops you missed. For those, you can turn to the Workshop Lending Library. It contains DVDs of the presentations and a collection of presenters' handouts. You can borrow and return these by mail. The online Newsletters help you decide which workshops you want to catch up on. Presentations from 2007 covered a wide range of highly effective learning and assessment activities. The Lending Library also has many resource books in both Japanese and English with very many more. And as everyone experienced at the last workshop, fellow participants have many useful stories to share about activities and assessment methods they've tried out...straight from the horse's mouth!

Workshop in February (Part 2)

Date: February 9, 2008, 14:30-17:00

Venue: NSC College, Room II-S 41

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

The number of participants: 18

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



The workshop on March 29 and 30 is for action research group members only to make their final presentation at Irigo Garden Hotel.

NUFS workshop 2008 will start in May. We look forward to your registration.