

*Newsletter No. 6**< Summer Workshop 2008 >***“Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT):  
Theory and Practice”***<Day 3>*

**Date:** August 6, 2008, 9:30-12:30, 13:30-16:30

**Morning**

**Title:** Form-Focused Tasks in a High School Classroom

**Instructor:** Miwako Kushiro (Kagamihara High School)

**The number of participants:** 28

**Abstract:** How can we teach grammar by using tasks? What would happen to our students if they learned grammar through tasks? Miwako has been using tasks in teaching grammar in her high school English class. Instead of using mechanical drills in the textbooks, she taught grammar communicatively through tasks. She has found that students learned grammar much better through tasks. She will demonstrate some of the form-focused tasks she developed and will show the results of student outcomes.

**Afternoon**

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

**The number of participants:** 29

**Abstract:** Participants will make presentations and share their lesson plans.

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

- I've wanted to teach students how they should live using meaningful English sentences or activities. Today I could find out the hints in Minwako's handouts and teaching procedures. Especially, there are many wonderful hints in her handouts about 'Lesson 6 助動詞' I could learn how to work out many kinds of tasks and how to organize them efficiently.
- Not being at drawing, I have been avoiding using the ideas of picture. I have just made my mind trying that kind of activity. I can imagine that students love that.
- I enjoyed Form-focused Tasks today. Students usually write letters, so drawing according to instructions can catch students' interest. I love the way to each, such doing activities and



explaining the aim of them. It is very easy to understand.

- I want to use the picture activities that Miwako introduced. I think these kinds of information gap activities will aid a lot in students understanding.
- The way of Miwako to have students exercise grammatical points is suggestive. I want to reconsider my way of approaching the grammar class, especially the process between 'input' and 'output'. Was very much impressed about how dedicated she is to her class.

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

- Students need some steps before going on to output activities, and I learned structured input activities are very important for learners. Thanks to Ms. Kushiro, I was able to see many samples of activities.
- The goal is very important. I usually end activities only by interviewing each other, etc. Now I think I need one more step: for example, reporting the opinions they got, etc. After listening to reports, students can rewrite their opinions, etc.
- Just teaching high-stakes is really rude. Everything which is done/taught in a classroom should have a reason why and should be supported clear backbone.
- I learned how to include tasks in high school grammar class. I also realized that I have to work super hard if I am going to teach students in task-based style. There is no easy way out.
- I learned so much about making successful lesson plans based on a classroom textbook, which can be quite boring for students otherwise. I got so many good ideas from other teachers such as using dictogloss, scaffolding techniques, information gap activities and pre-reading activities.



## 3. Questions and answers

### Q (1): Could you explain some more differences between task and communicative activities?

A: I understand the relationship between a task and communicative activities as follows. A task is an activity in which learners try to achieve a goal (similar to things we do in our daily life, at work, at school and so on) through communicative activities (interacting in the target language). So the focus is on meaningful information exchange, rather than form.

### Q (2): There are many units in my textbook. Usually the goal of each unit is to express some ideas in English. I think tasks focused on grammar are needed for my students. We only have three classes a week. Which should I put more stress on task focused on grammar or post-reading activities?

A: I think it is necessary to give task-based grammar lessons before post-reading ones (writing?). Writing is an output activity, so students need some time to make connection between the form and meaning without producing the language. This will help develop the grammar system in their mind, and help them ready for output.

### Q (3): Some questionnaire of the students at Kagamihara High School showed that a few

**students still prefer conventional grammar class. I have a lot of students who want Japanese translations of every single sentence in a reading textbook. How do you deal with the students who are not happy about a new method?**

**A:** I think it is OK to use both drills and communicative teaching materials. I use drill questions as homework or a consolidation activity at the end of the lesson. Students want translation because they are required to write translation in tests held at school. If we want to change such attitude of theirs, it is necessary to change the way of assessment. My school is now working on that aspect though it is very difficult in many ways.

**Q (4): Which kind of task type does T or F question belong to? I often have students make their own T or F statement based on the reading text. Is it a kind of task?**

**A:** I'm not sure if T or F questions themselves are a task. If students do, for example, class survey using T or F questions, I think it is a task. In my understanding, a task always has a goal (more of real life than linguistic) to achieve.

**Q (5): I'd like to know how to introduce better grammar instruction (structured input activities) as processing before intake.**

**A:** I myself want to know the answer! I always try to plan a sequence of activities from easy ones to more challenging ones. Students don't produce the target grammar at this stage.

**Q (6): I'm wondering how new grammar points can be taught with tasks. I'd like to know principles to learn grammar effectively in TBLT, if there's any.**

**A:** I'm still learning about it. Structured input and output is so far the most effective perspective in my lesson planning.



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

**Date:** August 7, 2008 8:30-12:30

**Venue:** Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room

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

**The number of participants:** 17

**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 20, 2008, 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** NSC College

**Instructor:** Junko Yamanaka (Trident College)

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

### **(Part 2)**

**Date:** September 20, 2008, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** NSC College

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

**Topic:** Group discussion

Please email Chihaya ([chiha143\(at-mark\)nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143@nufs.ac.jp)) if you can attend this workshop.