

## NUFS Workshop 2008

*Newsletter No. 10***Workshop in December****<Part 1>****Date:** December 6, 2008, 10:30-14:30**Venue:** NSC College, Bld. IIS, Room 51**Instructor:** Tim Murphey (Kanda University of International Studies)**Title:** "Student and Teacher Hope, Agency, Re-motivation, and Altruism"**The number of participants:** 26

**Abstract:** Studies have shown that people are motivated, de-motivated and re-motivated by a variety of causes. However, some stay unhealthily de-motivated and actually assume a hopeless stance for long periods of time. Taking cues from psychotherapy meta-analyses and their conception of hope as being composed of agency thinking and pathways thinking, I show how some people can increase their pathways thinking by increasing their networks of social resources and models (social capital) so that they find more pathways and confidence in themselves (agency thinking). Hopelessness (leading to desperation and depression) is often caused by isolation and lack of pathways thinking. Two essential characteristics of a healthy learning ecology would seem to be 1) that we have access to a community that provides ample pathways and 2) that we are provided scaffolded-tasks which allow us to develop our confidence as effective learners. Finally, altruism and volunteerism will be suggested as ways to fight depression and demotivation.

Examples and evidence will be presented from videoed excerpts and students' publications, and implications for teachers made explicit. A variety of activities will be proposed to help teachers and students create networks of support, invite more agency among students and colleagues, and stimulate good group dynamics and remotivation.

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

- Pair reading: I usually do this activity in my reading class in Japanese. Students seem to deepen their understanding toward what they've read. My peer advised me to do this activity with much easier stories in English.
- I would like to use the pair reading activity Tim introduced to us. The passage was even challenging for me but with my partners help, I could really enjoy the activity. If I choose easier materials, my students should be able to do this activity.
- I would like to use two activities in my class:



collaborative writing and reading. When I worked on these activities with my partner, I felt comfortable because we could help each other to complete the tasks. I am sure collaborative learning can help students to understand better.



- I would like to conduct more survey to know the background experience of my students.
- I realized social capital is so important. Therefore, I'd like to use these activities: (1) action log, (2) self explanation, (3) dictation, (4) newsletter and (5) intensive positive experience.
- I'm interested in an activity based on associative thinking. This has changed my perception about reading comprehension greatly. Writing action logs in some ways looks very effective to make high school classroom more collaborative. I want to think how to adopt this activity to my lesson.
- Tell students about learned helplessness: to encourage them to empower themselves. Speed dictation to encourage collaboration. Mentions: it's a great warm-up activity.

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

- I had a wonderful experience through the 'self-explanation after reading' activity which impressed the content more on me and stimulated and activated my brain a lot. I realized how large teachers' impact on students are to demotivate them toward learning.
- Having studied some mental things for language learning. I was taken to a mysterious world by Tim today. It means that it is important for us to learn not only teaching techniques by also psychological areas.
- A lot. I liked the concept of 'brief therapy', asking questions and then just listening without really advising. Also, the idea of encouraging students to do their homework together is good and I'll try and use it for my class.
- As an English teacher, I should give the students environment in which they study English happily. I should not bring up the students as 'rats' which cannot go out of cages.
- It is very important to let students know that making mistakes is all right. Giving some time to interact verbally is important so that students give up isolated feelings and are ready to put something new and positive in their baggage. I would like to be able to create good and relaxing atmosphere in my classrooms like Tim.
- This was my third time to take part in Tim's workshop, and every time I was inspired and learned a lot from him. I would like to share happy feeling with my students and help them learn English.
- I learned students need a near-peer role model. I was shocked to understand 'learned helplessness.' I don't want to give it to my students.
- I learned the teachers themselves can be both demotivators and remotivators. Teachers often complain about students' low motivation and tend to say, 'You can't help it'. But such a situation can be changed through teachers' efforts, especially the one to try to create more collaborative environment.



### 3. Questions and Answers

#### **Q (1): If students are to learn accountability, when if ever do tests come in as opposed to collaboration?**

I have written several articles about students making their own tests or at least contribute questions (one sent to Chihaya to post, from the TESOL Journal, 1994 Vol 4 #2). I also highly advise teachers to get students to do self-evaluations of their work in their classes and to give themselves a grade. Students do not learn accountability when all the power is in the teachers' hands-they mostly learn to be submissive (i.e. helpless).

#### **Q (2): What kind of reading materials do you think is more suitable for 1st/2nd graders in high schools to have them tackle with your 'self-explanation after reading' activity?**

I suggest texts at or just beyond their level so that they are "pushed" to explain things that will generate new understandings that they can collaboratively figure out with a partner. It could be about topics they know well and like (e.g. Ichiro's baseball history) and it is just the language that they have to deal with and paraphrase and explain.

#### **Q (3): I am strongly interested in how psychological approach influence classes. I'd like to know more about it.**

If you mean the use of psychology in teaching, I would agree with you that it is very important in teaching. Some say that psychology actually tells teachers more about how to teach than linguistics. Group dynamics and sociology are also useful fields to explore. And of course "brain based learning" is combining these fields attractively. There have been several books in the last few years on psychology and the language learner.



#### **Q (4): Is there an ACL (Antecedent Conditions of the Learner) survey for kids?**

I do not know of any studies done on children like this (my colleague Joe Falout may tell me more later). I suspect that similar questions could be used with almost anyone and the results would probably be useful. For example, children's responses to "Do you like learning new things?" will probably be a reflection of their past experiences learning and tell us what kind of emotional baggage they are carrying at present and their attitude towards school and learning. Of course when dealing with kids, the question might be given in their native language with faces to circle.

#### **Q (5): Being different from private schools, our public school teachers cannot normally choose students so we have a wide range of students. Do we need to divide them into groups depending on the same levels?**

In general education the pendulum keeps swinging from streaming into levels to having mixed levels (see *Detracting for Excellence and Equity*, Burriss and Garrity, 2008 ASCD). Perhaps both streaming and mixing are good for different reasons and we should try to have both at different times in our classes and curriculums if possible. If public school teachers have lots of mixed levels, I suggest they try to see it as helpful to lots of co-learning among peers. Of course teachers need to know how to sell it to the students, that is, through helping others you yourself learn more. And teachers need to structure time for students to

actually help each other.

I recently experienced a mix of all 4 years in a university class, with some very fluent and some pretty low. I had them bringing in at least three items (phrases or idioms) to each class that they were trying to learn themselves and I had them teach them to random partners. Then random partners had to learn the three items of their first partner and teach them to another partner (and learn the three things their partner got from a previous partner). Each cycle had them learning three items and teaching three items to their new partners. Advanced and lower levels reported they loved it and said it was one of the most valuable things they had ever done to learn.

What does NOT work is a teacher in situations with multiple levels is the teacher just talking all the time, or too much. John Holt reportedly once said, "The greatest enemy to learning is the talking teacher."

**Q (6): I like Benjamin Zander's advice "Don't take yourself so seriously." If I gave that advice to my classes (1st year university students), would it contradict what their Japanese professors are telling them? Maybe a clash of cultures?**

I know some Japanese professors who would whole-heartedly agree with Zander (I think Kazuyoshi Sato is one). So it is not a question of culture so much as of individual academic personality and beliefs. Our beliefs are flexible and can change from one context to another. Learning other languages is learning different ways to be in the world and act in the world. We have multiple identities and managing them appropriately in different contexts is advisable and possible, and many already do.

**Q (7): For me right now, my colleagues are more challenging than students. How can I have them involved to cultivate our garden: how to build a good team to work together for making better teaching and learning environment?**

Some gardeners work alone, but it is more rewarding and more fun to work with others. Invite them to do research with you, to present at a conference with you, to write a short article. Ask them for help with a problem you have and show that you value their input. People are naturally helpful but often feel useless because no one around them asks for help.

**Q (8): We have tried Super English Language High school (SELHi) for three years. We have the biggest problem now. I realize that it is very difficult for all teachers to cooperate with each other in teaching English to from 1st year students to 3rd year students, because they have their own beliefs in teaching English. How can I solve this problem?**

I do not see having different beliefs as being a problem-I see it as being a rich resource. Obama reportedly chose Hilary Clinton for his secretary of state because he wanted someone who would not be intimidated by him and express her own opinions and ideas so he could learn more. It is not always comfortable with different ideas but it does usually end with better decision-making. "Solving the problem" can be done by asking for other people's views and ideas respectfully, learning what they have to offer, and considering how we might learn from each other and improve things together. I know this is not always a comfortable thing to do, but it is worth trying.



*Thank you all for your wonderful questions and for giving me the opportunity to think more about these topics. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

*Tim*

### **<Part 2>**

**Date:** December 6, 2008, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** NSC College, Bld. IIS, Room 51

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

**The number of participants:** 21

**Abstract:** Group discussion



### **Workshop in January (Schedule)**

**Date:** January 17, 2009, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 51

**Instructor:** Brian Cullen (Nagoya Institute of Technology)

**Title:** "Ireland: Land of Song and Story"

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