

## NUFS Workshop 2009

*Newsletter No. 9***Workshop in November****<Part 1>****Date:** November 14, 2009**Venue:** NSC College, Room 31**Time:** 10:30-12:00**Instructor:** Hiromi Osuka (Takashidai Junior High School),**Title:** "Teaching grammar communicatively through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)"

**Abstract:** Some twenty years have passed since Japanese English teachers first became interested in communicative activities and were expected to enable students to enhance their abilities to express themselves in English. Then, how can we teach grammar communicatively? How much time should we spend on communicative tasks in our limited class time? I will demonstrate several tasks I developed for my JHS students. My action research shows TBLT is more effective for grammar learning than traditional methods as well as fostering learners' overall communicative ability. The presentation also demonstrates how a required textbook can be modified in order to make handouts based on TBLT.

**Date:** November 14, 2009**Venue:** NSC College, Room 31**Time:** 13:00-14:30**Instructor:** Miwako Kushiro (Kagamihara High School)**Title:** "Introducing focus-on-form instruction (FFI) and its effect on student learning"

**Abstract:** This presentation will show the participants what FFI is and how it is incorporated into a high school second-year writing lesson with its effect on students. The presenter will discuss the effectiveness of FFI and its desirable role in a language teaching context at high school as an important element of Communicative Language Teaching. A lesson demonstration will be given so that the participants will experience the differences between the conventional teaching method and focus on form. The results of surveys, and findings of class observation will also be provided to investigate the effect of FFI on students.

**The number of participants:** 21**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- Hiromi showed us very important and interesting points. In her plan she gives her students one item in various kinds of activities. And I thought I need to ask my students about my class like her.

- Writing essays – I have my students write about the topics in the textbooks. I don't give time for brainstorming and pair conversation. So students work on writing individually. I'd like to follow her ideas.
- “What makes you happy?” was very interesting, because we can understand basic grammatical points. After that, we can talk pair and groups. This is a good way to deploy the communicative activity.
- Songs are really useful to learn language. I would like to use songs some time in my lesson. I haven't used them for ages. Hiromi-sensei designed the lesson very nicely from introduction, practice and personalization. I truly attended to the meaning in each activity.
- As for the TBLT, I thought it usually doesn't focus on form, however, Hiromi sensei's classes were well focused on form. She taught all the target grammar inductively and then all the activities were well designed for students to learn grammar points at the end. I was glad to be able to see how form focused TBLT flows.
- I want to use “治先生がどこに住んでいるか知ってる？” I thought there are distance between my hand-outs and students' real life. Hiromi's handouts were close to their life. Also her handouts have a nice balance input and output.
- Peer-editing: Friends' editing makes it possible for students to improve their writing skills. Knowing which sentences their friends checked as "expressions they'd like to use" gives students confidence in writing sentences. Knowing "information their friends want to know more" gives them chances to broaden and deepen the content of their writing. Knowing "some expressions their friends cannot understand well" gives them chances to revise their sentences.



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

- Editing improves students' writing amazingly. Comments from other students encourage them a lot.
- I learned how to deploy TBLT. I learned about it last year, but I couldn't find out clearly how to put it into practice.
- I learned the importance of choosing a topic. Since I sometimes feel difficulties to set a goal of each lesson, I would like to choose a topic that relates to students' real information or experiences.
- From Hiromi-sensei's presentation, I learned the importance of preparing steps (scaffoldings) carefully so that activities are student-friendly. I sometimes forget this.
- As for Miwako sensei's presentation, it was very interesting how writing and speaking practices are connected to form focused teaching. The way she has her students work on common errors is so interesting and I would like to try that way in my classes.
- From Hiromi's presentation, I learned I have to revise all materials and ideas to suit for my students to adjust their English level and daily life.
- It's difficult for JHS students to write sentences in Japanese. So writing sentences in English, of course, is out of the question. They need help to write or express their ideas. If we give students some adequate questions for



brainstorming, they can get some hints and put their ideas in order. Talking about writing topics with their friends makes students realize what they should write and they can develop speaking skills at the same time. If we make use of this idea, we can kill two birds with one stone.

### 3. Questions and Answers

**Q (1): When doing the “What makes you happy?” activity, were students able to make other examples of feelings (ex. angry, sad, interested, etc.)?**

**A (Hiromi):** I’m sorry to say, students could not make any sentences using the adjectives such as angry, sad, or interested. During this activity, students could not realize or think about what other adjectives would be able to be used with “make”. If I could give the students opportunities to think about the words which could be used with “make”, they would make sentences with such adjectives. I myself could not realize this kind of teaching procedure.

**Q (2): I like the way you use the songs to highlight grammar points in your class. I appreciate your sharing today. If possible, could you please share other songs that we can use in teaching grammar?**

**A (Hiromi):** I was able to use “As Long As You Love Me” in order to introduce the target sentence “the indirect question form”. I happened to know this song at a seminar as a good song for introducing the indirect question form because it was repeated many times miraculously in this song. Moreover this song makes us happy and students love this song.

I think that the songs used in our classes should be ones that make students happy, motivated to sing together, and moreover they should be sung in clear English. It’s difficult for us to find such kinds of songs. I bought two books which show English teachers how to use English songs. Of course, the books with CD show us how to use the lyrics. We can find the target sentences in all songs. I have already used some songs in the books. You can copy the lyrics in the books and make use of it easily. Here are the two books.

「決定版！授業で使える英語の歌 20」開隆堂 ¥3,800

「決定版！続授業で使える英語の歌 20」開隆堂 ¥4,000

(These two books are in the NUFS Workshop library.)



**Q (3): How can we broaden the range of necessary grammar items for communication through incidental focus on form? Is it necessary to force them to use target grammar in TBLT?**

**A (Hiromi):** In the textbooks used in junior high school, for example, the adjectives with “make” are only three words, *happy*, *sad*, and *tired*. If students think about their daily lives, are these three words enough to express their lives? If teachers give a task concerned with “make”, they realize they need other adjectives. From this point of view, I think TBLT makes students broaden their range of expression. In TBLT students get more opportunities to use the target sentences they have learned. I use TBLT not to force them to use target language but to give them opportunities to use target sentences out of necessity. Students are interested in target sentences (grammar), words, or phrases which are concerned with themselves. So I’ve tried to connect the words used with target sentences dealing with students’ lives.

**A (Miwako):** I have still been struggling with how to conduct incidental focus on form successfully in my lesson, so it's very difficult to answer to questions concerning this approach. I'm not sure if I could answer this question appropriately. The purpose of incidental focus on form is not teaching specific grammar items intensively, but attending to grammar extensively by dealing with problems which arise during communication activities. So, this Writing lesson is not dealing with certain grammar items. Grammar items and expressions necessary for communication depend on what each student wants to express. I think the teacher should attend to learners' errors and mistakes, and should provide them chances to notice forms through, for example, common errors, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation. The students learned basic grammar items through structured input and output in Oral Communication last year. They learned each grammar item using communicative tasks. I regard the Writing lesson as the next step coming after Oral Communication so that students can have chances to use grammar items they learned last year, which hopefully enables them to learn grammar recursively. However, if students don't feel necessity to use certain grammar items in communication, they might lose them gradually. I think it's necessary for students to sometimes have chances to learn grammar explicitly or to get a lot of reading input. To make this happen, horizontal articulation of the subject (English I & Oral Communication, or English II & Writing) and extensive reading are very important.



**Q (4): Focus on Form is a way to learn practical grammar. Do the students have an opportunity to learn superficial grammar for exams?**

**A (Miwako):** I'm not sure which is practical grammar and which is for exams, but basically I think the combination of focus on form and focus on forms is necessary. Students need chances both to notice language through communicative activities and to work on drill questions. It's important to keep it in mind that students need a lot of input to make form-meaning connection by working on meaning-focused activities before they develop the inner language system (something like drawers of language knowledge in the brain) necessary for output. We can introduce a lot of grammatical expressions to students, but it doesn't mean they learn them when we teach them.

**Q (5): Please tell me your points in correcting students writing except for grammar correction.**

**A (Miwako):** Right now, I point out basic grammatical errors only. If the students get used to writing more and their errors decline, I think I can extend the categories of error correction to those such as collocation, register, and so on. I think it's too early to introduce these categories to my students.

**Q (6): Could you explain the difference between focus on forms and focus on form?**

**A (Miwako):** Focus on forms is the conventional, traditional instruction which deals with each grammar item explicitly in one lesson. The grammar item taught in a lesson is predetermined. Most of the grammar textbooks used in high school are edited based on this approach. Focus on form deals with communication problems which arise incidentally in meaning-based lessons, so grammar items to be taught are not predetermined.

## <Part 2>

**Date:** November 14, 2009, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** NSC College, Room 31

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

**The number of participants:** 17

**Abstract:** group discussion on action research



## **Workshop in December (Planned)**

**Date:** December 5, 2009 10:30-14:30, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** NSC College, Room 31

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

**Title:** "Understanding and Using Textbook"

**Please send an email to Chihaya ([chiha143\(at-mark\)nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143@nufs.ac.jp)) to attend this workshop.**