

## NUFS Workshop 2010

### *Newsletter No. 3*

#### Workshop in July

(Part 1)

**Date:** July 3, 2010, 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 31

**Instructor:** Yukimi Fukumoto (Hotei Junior High School)

**Title:** The Benefits of Adapting Communicative Language Teaching in Japanese Junior High Schools

**Abstract:** Communicative language teaching (CLT) has gained popularity among English teachers at Japanese junior high schools. However, teaching grammar communicatively is not as easy as it may sound. The presenter gives examples of how to teach grammar communicatively. Referring to her action research, the presenter also demonstrates that CLT, which increases students' motivation and creates cooperative classroom culture, becomes a powerful tool to promote students' communicative abilities and grammatical accuracy needed for written tests and exams.



**Instructor:** Mitsuru Hirano (Kakamihara High School)

**Title:** Integrated Skills

**Abstract:** Since I started reforming my teaching, I have been challenging to make handouts including a wide range of activities in order to study English communicatively. As you know, even though it is not easy for us to produce well-balanced handouts, it is 'must.' Today, I would like to introduce my handouts included four skills and demonstrate one complete lesson using handouts. I hope this presentation will help you a lot.



**The number of participants: 40**

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

**(Yukimi)**

- I really liked the sentence activity on the white board. I felt it was really fun. I'd like to use it in the future.
- I'd like to use listing and describing activities to make students motivated and to learn grammar items.
- I'd like to try the 'Group Review Quiz' activity – it looks like a fun way for students to review language that includes everyone and holds their attention. I also liked the speaking test with groups of 3 or 4 students, in which they used their learnt sentences and the others gave appropriate responses ("Me, too!").

- In order to introduce new key sentences or new grammar point, using interesting or funny pictures make students understand better what they are learning now.
- Board game where each member of a group is involved. Because everyone has a chance to use English in every round, instead of just one student.



### **(Mitsuru)**

- The model conversation is a good idea for the students to follow when making or having a conversation.
- I like Mitsuru's procedure to write an essay. Usually I tell the students to think of Japanese first although I don't like that. I'm going to start with questions like Mitsuru's.
- I'd like to use 'Quick Look' to let students talk with each other. It helps them to keep their conversation.
- It was very interesting to do the activity of Mr. Hirano. Vocabulary input – vocabulary test – vocabulary output. I knew this pattern, but it was first time for me to do it. We can use and memorize new vocabularies and expressions smoothly. I want to use this kind of input and output activity in my class.
- Low level students tend to lose concentration on learning. So we need to prepare some quizzes which stimulate students' interests to study more or to concentrate on learning.

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

- Both of the speakers were very positive to think of designing their classes systematically according to the students' level. On the other hand I design the class as I like and I don't think of the students' level very much. I should change my teaching plan by thinking the flow from the beginning to the finish.
- I learned that to understand and use English, new grammar, it's necessary for us to speak English. The students have to speak English with new grammar, and I have to give them many opportunities to speak English in each lesson. I also learned I must make interesting or funny handouts for students to get up their motivation.

### **(Yukimi)**

- I really learned the importance that video has in explaining what you did. It was very easy to see how it went. Also, this can be a great tool to show the students how they improved or did not improve over time. Also, you can show it to explain to future students.
- Drills are also important, which makes students test their understanding and satisfied with what they learned.
- She prepared a lot of materials and props to create a setting for students' language use. I think those teachers' effort encourage students to speak.

### **(Mitsuru)**

- You provided a lot of good conversation activities that are crucial for preparing the students for their final work. I learned the importance of really preparing the students for the activity you have planned.

- Understanding students and changing the approach depending students is very important. I respect your skill.
- All activities were very well-connected. Students can gradually develop their understanding if they follow the procedure. I found that very useful and important.

### 3. Questions and Answers

**Q (1): Do you usually use a computer in your English class?  
When I used it, it took much time to prepare computers.**

**A (Yukimi):** No, I don't usually use a computer in my class. I usually print out pictures and bring them to my class. However, I'm trying to use more technology in my classroom because I used to teach Japanese with Power Point slides and Internet resources at a U.S. college and it made my classes more exciting. Last year I used a computer to do jeopardy with my junior high school students. It took me some time and efforts to prepare the slides and set up the computer device in the classroom, but the reward was bigger than the effort. As you suggest, time management is a big issue. I think we should make a decision considering the educational outcome and required effort/time to accomplish it. We can start little by little.



**Q (2): Did the students actually travel abroad and use their passports? Did you evaluate their feelings of the lesson's value after that?**

**A (Yukimi):** Yes, my students went through passport control, showing their passports to the ALT who acted as an immigration officer. In the next lesson, my students traveled abroad and went sightseeing in my hypothetical lesson. Many students gave me positive comments such as the lesson was enjoyable, group work was fun, and learning about foreign countries was great.

**Q (3): How would you define 'grammatical competence'?**

**A (Yukimi):** I'm glad and thankful that you raised this question. Because I presented communicative competence along with grammatical competence, my slides might have been confusing. As you probably know, communicative competence consists of several aspects such as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Definition may vary among researchers, but my definition is in line with that of Savignon (1997): "grammatical competence is...the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of a language and to manipulate these features to form words and sentences" (p.41).

**Q (4): How lucky your students are! It's ideal for learners to learn English forms through communication. I'm afraid I don't agree with you only one point. I don't think grammar learning is for tests. Grammatical knowledge is useful for them to produce their complicated ideas clearly. I hope students will understand why they learn grammar, which will change their attitude toward grammar. What do you think?**

**A (Yukimi):** Yes, I completely agree with you. I understand that knowing grammar helps students to communicate successfully in English. However, many students can't see the connection between communicative activities and traditional form-focused tests prevalent in the Japanese educational system. Furthermore, it is often the case that students' primary concern is on how to score well on form-focused tests, although many of them express their desire to become competent in English. This is why I'm trying

to show that learning grammar communicatively leads to better performance on form-focused tests. I might have given you a negative impression with grammar learning, but that is not my intention. In fact, my students don't perceive grammar negatively as a result of communicative language teaching.

**Q (5): I may have not been listening, but in regards to the answers to your survey, did you provide them yourself? Did the students choose from a list of answers or did they write them on their own?**

**A (Yukimi):** I used Likert items to estimate students' attitude toward English and their level of satisfaction with my activities. I also included open-ended questions to elicit more detailed answers. If you're interested, I'd like you to refer to NUFS Action Research Report 2009 because it has my action research report with the student survey and more comprehensive result.

**Q (6): Could you please tell me how to make the beautiful chart again?**

**A (Yukimi):** Sure. I use Windows Vista, which comes with Microsoft Office 2007. Word 2007 and Power Point 2007 have Smart Art function, which allow us to create beautiful charts and graphs that I showed you in my presentation today.



**Q (7): Have students been asked how they feel about the effectiveness of repeating sentences after the teacher?**

**A (Yukimi):** No, I haven't. I often encourage my students to repeat English sentences after me so that they can verbalize English sentences fluently in the succeeding output opportunities. I believe that repeating sentences after a teacher helps students to increase part of their fluency, but I have never asked my students' opinions about the effectiveness. It might be an interesting question to ask.

**A (Mitsuru):** I understand what you said. I skipped repeating because everyone does that. Of course I also do it for students, after that I do the reading activity.

**Q (8): You're using the same textbook with students from 4 different courses. Do you need more time to cover the same activity in some courses than in others? Do you give them the same tests? Do students from some courses always do better than students from other course?**

**A (Mitsuru):** Last year the Science and Math course students had 3 English lessons in a week whilst other students had 4 lessons a week so I was able to control time only for Science and Math students. This year, all students have 3 lessons a week so we should cover the same activity give the same tests. Academic and English course students do better than Science and Math, and General course students in the tests.

**Q (9): You said your ALT doesn't evaluate papers. Have you asked him/her to do it? Do you prefer to do it? Why?**

**A (Mitsuru):** I did not say that. It is impossible for her to read all papers so the JTE reads them.

**Q (10): I'm interested in teaching English rhythms. I have just started, but I get my students put slash in the text and give my handout that shows where the slashes are put and stressed words. Students read the text with me at the same time. I want to know more methods to teach English rhythms.**

**A (Mitsuru):** I focus on the first accent on target words. I think it is easier to memorize where the first accent is using not only repeating but also clapping.

**Q (11):** How effectively do the students acquire and use the language on the ‘conversation strategy’ cards?

**A (Mitsuru):** The students learned various conversation strategies so I do not want them to forget what they have learned but I think it is just a supplementary tool.



**Q (12):** Vocabulary spelling practice in pair will be useful. I want to introduce it in my class. Do you spare some time for practice before the test?

**A (Mitsuru):** No. I don't. I give them an ‘Output vocabulary activity’ instead.

**Q (13):** Do you use additional methods for vocabulary input?

**A (Mitsuru):** I have tried ‘Paraphrasing’ twice. After memorizing target vocabulary, students play Jyanken, winners look at the blackboard, and losers look at the back. The teacher chooses a word from the target words and writes it on the blackboard. Winners give losers hints without using the word itself.

**Q (14):** I’m teaching at 3<sup>rd</sup> year. How can I find an effective way to introduce ‘small talk’ activity? The students are reluctant to do a pair work.

**A (Mitsuru):** In our school new comers start ‘small talk’ in the first lesson so no one wonder why we do this. If you try to start this, use easy conversation such as ‘If you Doraemon gave you ONE tool from his pocket, what would you get?’ ‘If you found one million yen on the road, what would you do? Before starting, write a model conversation including Basic Conversation Strategies on the blackboard and choose a naughty boy a girl to talk with you as a demonstration. It is a good way to change an atmosphere.

**Q (15):** I’m wondering how many periods are necessary to cover whole one lesson. I’m required to cover one lesson in about 5-6 periods (with 3 sections).

**A (Mitsuru):** Every one has a different situation so I cannot say the exact number of the periods. If you would like your students do a big post reading activity like Fun Essay, they need at least 3 periods including peer-editing, common errors and a couple of drafts to complete the post reading activity. If you have 5 or 6 periods for one lesson, decide what you really would like to teach your students and plan a lesson.

**Q (16):** About vocabulary input, it takes time to cover, because I always put English word with English definition and Japanese meaning. Should I skip English definition?

**A (Mitsuru):** I have never touched English definition. I would like my students to learn collocation of the vocabulary so in my handout I cover them later in the output activity. I think you can skip English definition.



**(Part 2)**

**Date:** July 3, 2010, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 31

**Advisor:** Nancy Mutoh, Mathew White (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

**Abstract:** Monthly report on action research

**The number of participants: 25**



**Workshop in August (Schedule)**

**Date:** August 4-5, 2010, 9:30-16:30

**Venue:** Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

**Title:** "How to Increase the Amount of English in your English Classes"

**Instructors:**

**Day 1:** Nancy Muto(NUFS), Hiromi Osuka(Takashidai Junior High School), Reiko Iwai(Agui High School)

**Day 2:** Kazuyoshi Sato(NUFS), Aki Hakamada(Shiroyama Junior High School), Miwako Kushiro(Kakamihara High School)

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