

Newsletter No. 4

< Summer Workshop 2010 >

Title: “How to Increase the Amount of English in your English Classes”

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

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322 (57 Takenoyama, Iwasaki-cho Nisshin-city, Aichi)

Goals:

- * To learn specific ways to increase the amount of English in your English classes
- * To experience these ways first hand in the role of students
- * To develop your own activities that will result in more English in your classes

Outline:

In today's world, it has become important that people, in all countries, be able to use English with a certain degree of proficiency in all four skills. Toward this goal, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology is instructing English teachers to begin teaching in English from 2013.

Presenters will demonstrate many specific ways to increase in-class use of English by both teachers and students. These range from small changes such as using English for routine class procedures ("Take out your books please and turn to p. 42.") to larger changes, including integrating the four skills, teaching grammar through communicative activities, and adding evaluation of speaking and writing to grading. Such changes do, in fact, result not only in more English in class but, most importantly, they result in more learning. Data will be presented that document improved learning and motivation in classes and in schools that have adopted such teaching practices.

Workshop participants will try out new teaching activities by experiencing them first hand as students. Then participants will create new teaching activities based on one of their own textbook lessons.

All lectures, hands-on activities, group work and presentations by participants are conducted in English. Participants improve and practice their English while learning new ways to increase the amount of English in their English classes. Participants always comment that they learn much from each other in the Workshop, as they share their ideas, activities and teaching experiences.

<Day 1>

Date: August 4, 2010 9:30-12:30, 13:30-16:30

Title: ‘How to Increase the Amount of English in your English Classes, Part I’

The number of participants: 21



Morning

Instructors: Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies) and Hiromi Osuka (Takashidai Junior High School)

Abstract: How (and why!) should teachers and students use more English in English class? The presenters will guide participants in various hands-on activities of three basic types: *routine procedures* in English, *teacher talk as input*, and integrated-skill *communicative activity “chains”* for learning target language. Osuka will then report on the effects that this communicative teaching approach had on her junior high school students’ learning and motivation. Mutoh will summarize how these activities answer the question: Why should teachers and students use more English in English class?



Afternoon

Instructor: Reiko Iwai (Agu High School)

Abstract: How can we help our students learn grammar rules? How can we cause them to use target grammar in class? Before jumping into mechanical drills or after finishing the textbook, is there room for doing something else to deepen students’ understanding or discoveries of grammar? Iwai will demonstrate communicative activities that she developed in her four years of struggling to answer these questions and then show the result of her students’ feedback. In the second half of this session, participants will be given time and guidance in creating communicative activities for a lesson in their own textbook.



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

- To motivate the students, I must keep interesting classes. Only explanation in Japanese is very boring for students. Also, they have to speak as much as they can to learn English. My lessons tend to explain grammars and less activities, so I’d like to use many activities in my class.

(Hiromi)

- The second activity on handout 有名人に会ったことある? It is very fun activity. We played it in a group of four, and when all of us got the same answer, we said “Bingo!” Students enjoy activities that give them chances to get to know their classmates.
- “変身の術を見破ろう” – We can do this activity in every grammar. English is not do difficult. So every student can enjoy it. This is a good way to use English.

(Nancy)

- I like Nancy’s idea of having learners quiz vocabulary. I think it is a good idea to have students try to explain words in their own words. This would help personalize the vocabulary.

- I'm interested in "quizzing vocabulary". It was amazing. I always have the students repeat to teach new vocabulary, and say Japanese. I have done like this for many years. Of course I use the sentences "What does it mean? It means" But it was boring for students. I want to try "quizzing vocabulary" from next lesson.

(Reiko)

- Write Your Own Emotional Experiences – This activity improves writing ability, speaking ability, listening ability and can be communicative.
- "My Embarrassing Memory" is a good material for both input and entertainment. This will make students interested in the meanings of the target grammar items. It will also give students a good chance to share their experience with their classmates.
- I'd like to use the activity called "Who do you think I am?" It was interesting because in the activity you can hear many examples including the grammar topic in a quiz style, and after that you can focus on the grammar with some drills. In addition, with the same sentences you heard in the quiz, you can practice dictation. Students can develop not only grammar skill but also listening skill.
- Quizzes using a lot of sentences with the passive voice. They are very familiar to their lives. Students will enjoy trying quizzes.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- In the lessons demonstrated today, the same vocabulary was used repeatedly. It will familiarize students with the vocabulary. In Reiko-sensei's lessons, she starts with grammar (form-based) and gradually moves to topic-based activities. Students can understand how to use the grammar in real communication.
- As we teachers tell the students to use English in English class, we also keep English. But as for the slow starters that interfere from English learning, I usually speak in Japanese after I do in English. I know that's not good.
- I realized personalization was an indispensable portion for L2 learning through today's workshop.
- I learned a variety of communicative activities and to focus more on giving students opportunities to speak in a class. Sometimes I think teachers focus too much on how to teach English in English class, but we need to focus more how to let students speak English in English class.
- I found out it's important to think about 'function' when we teach English.
- I think the message "Make teacher jobs into pair work" is a very important principle. Also, personalization that was seen in today's presentations is the key to encourage students to use English more.
- I need to think about four elements of teachers' attitude: enthusiasm, encouragement & praise, teachers' competence or skills for communication, atmosphere & activities in class.



3. Questions and answers

Q (1): I'm not sure about the differences between oral introduction and input. Please give me some suggestions.

A (Hiromi): I think that oral introduction is included in input activities. Input activities are considered as activities which cause students to connect meaning with form while understanding the sentence.

A (Reiko): "Input" is a kind of umbrella term that stands for having students receive a certain amount of shower of language. That means 'oral' is included in 'input.' Possible inputs are conducted by listening and reading.

A (Nancy): Input is a broader term. It means any kind of *samples of language*, spoken or written, that a learner receives, intentionally or not. It may happen in school or outside of school. If in an English class, it can occur at any point in a lesson. An oral introduction is always intentional and occurs as a first step to something. It can also mean a spoken introduction of a person so that people can become acquainted. In both cases it has a function: to make the entry (to the lesson or the relationship between people) easier and smoother.

Q (2): When would dynamic assessment be beneficial during your lessons, how is dynamic assessment part of your lesson plan? What is(are) a student's (students') ZPD in relationship(s) to your grammar point?

A (Hiromi): I'm a beginner of learning language assessment, so I'm afraid that I cannot answer this question properly. I learned that dynamic assessment is a kind of interactive assessment. I try to work out activities which enable students to interact with each other as much as possible. At this point students will have a lot of opportunities to get dynamic assessment from each other and from the teacher. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is concerned with the gap between what they can learn by themselves and what they can learn with the help of their friends or their teachers. From this point of view, as I plan a lot of activities in order to learn grammar communicatively using group dynamics, their ZPD concerning grammar will improve or expand.

A (Reiko): Not only in grammar lessons but in others, dynamic assessment can be done by teachers' response to students' reactions such as questioning, praising, acceptance, answering as you usually do as a means of assessment, which can be done by peers as well as teachers. ZPD is also done during these DA. As I put students comments, in pair work, they can monitor themselves pointing out with each other while they are using the target language. In the context of communicative language activities, a teacher to student's() or student's() to student's() can automatically do assess by themselves.



Q (3): I need to have align assessment to goals. Do you have any examples of sets assessment and goals? I would like to see examples of sets lesson plans, handouts and test paper.

A (Hiromi): I learned that defining assessment criteria is very tough especially for beginner teachers. So we should make use of the examples made by predecessors and improve them to adjust to our usage. The

library in the NUFFS and the small library in the NSC have those kinds of materials. Why don't you look for suitable ones?

A (Reiko): I have several ones. In making align assessment, staffs coordination and discussion are inevitable. So the easier and the more simple the align assessment, the better, because reliability and credibility of the assessment will increase. Some example can be seen a book "Communicative Grammar Teaching" –activities for Hungry Teachers.

A (Nancy): Here's an example: If the goal is communicative competence, then communicative activities should be an important and regular part of each class. Assessments along the way would be make on students' interactive speaking. This can be done by recording conversations and evaluating them. Students can identify various strong, weak and interesting aspects of their conversation by making a transcript. The teacher can also make a rubric (a set of criteria, each with a scale) and use it assess the recorded conversations. The more often that procedure is done during the term, the more students become used to and skillful in it. The final assessment would be exactly the same: a recorded conversation (unrehearsed). It could be assessed by the teacher and self-assessed by the participants. Their degree of skill in both the conversation and the self-assessment could be part of the grade.

Q (4): I would like to know how to get students who are not willing to do pair work to start.

A (Hiromi): If you make use of pair activities, the student who is not willing to join the activity affects the pair activity. Sometimes both of them do nothing. In my case, I try to make use of groups of four and I hope the groups have a leader who takes a leadership role. If there is a student who tries to join the activity keenly, the student exerts an influence on the other students who are not willing to join the activity. Groups of four produce the power of the group, which is called group dynamics.

A (Reiko): I suppose you are a part time teacher or you have to give one shot lesson. In that context, it is sometimes hard to induce those unwilling students to do pair work within one lesson instantly. I believe something that drive students to do their unwilling activities takes a certain period of time and energy. If possible, outside of the class you can talk to the students personally and ask why they don't participate those activities. You will find why those students don't do that work. In that way, real communication will start. Not only classroom but also outside of the classroom, there can have many chances of communicating with your student, which will improve your relationship with your students, I suppose. Once I was a part time teacher, and I found it sometimes difficult to have students' attention to my lesson. I gradually realized that person to person's communication esp. outside of the class would help. Better understanding your students will help to find a way to solve your problem. If the majority of that group don't want to do the pair activity, you can ask Japanese teacher of help.

A (Nancy): Can you figure out *why* they might be unwilling to do pair work? If so, you might be able to work on the cause(s). Maybe lack of confidence, lack of interest in the content they're supposed to talk about, a belief that it's unnatural for Japanese to speak English together. As Reiko said today, the Japanese English teacher is a great model.



Q (5): For me, it is difficult to connect meaningful activities and communicative activities. Are there any advice?

A (Hiromi): I interpret “being meaningful” as connected with the learners’ life. We should emphasize the things which are important to learners and the things learners are interested in. Moreover I think we should know what learners want to study and how they want to study. We should make communicative activities considering those points if the activity fits into what learners want.

A (Reiko): This question is hard to answer, because I don’t see your class and it ‘cannot’ be said it is ‘not’ meaningful communicative activities.

A (Nancy): There’s an interesting answer to your question in James F. Lee and Bill VanPatten’s *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*, 2nd Edition (2003), pp. 120-121. They introduce a comparison by Paulston (1972) of mechanical drills, meaningful drills and communicative drills. “The classification...is based on the degree of learner control over the response: whether or not there is one right answer, and whether or not the answer is already known to those participating in the interaction. The classification is based also on whether or not learners need to understand either what is said to them or what they themselves are saying in order to complete the drill successfully” (p. 120-121). “The difference between mechanical and meaningful drills is that the learner must attend to the meaning of both the stimulus and her own answer to complete the meaningful drill successfully. Yet there is still one and only one right answer, and the answer is already known to the participants.” (p.121). “Unlike the previous two drill types, communicative drills require attention to meaning, and the information contained in the learner’s answer is new and unknown to the person asking the question. Thus, the answer cannot be deemed right or wrong, in terms of meaning conveyed” (p. 122).

Q (6): When students learn English in communicative way, what kind of preparation do they need?

A (Hiromi): During communicative activities, students are given opportunities to act freely. So how they participate in the activities is their responsibility. The harder they try to join the activities, the more they can get out of it what they really want.

A (Reiko): Before answering your question, I need to know more about what ‘preparation you meant. You might face some difficulties in your daily lessons or you have some anxiety to give lessons in communicative way. I have to clear it up.

A (Nancy): No special preparation is needed, but a willingness to get into the idea of using English (rather than studying it) would be nice.



Q (7): In regards to reading aloud in steps, some readings are a bit long to do all the steps Nancy demonstrated. With a long text, should I shorten it or cut out the steps?

A (Nancy): Both of your suggestions are good, and they could be combined as well. Shortening can also take at least two forms: the teacher (or each pair of students!) could choose some portion of the text and use only that part for the reading aloud steps or the teacher could write a summary of the whole section. Or

maybe pairs or groups of students could collaborate on a summary, thinking about what should be kept and what cut. Then the reading aloud steps would be interesting since newly formed pairs would see how other students had summarized the same text. For students, reading a “reformulated text” is a valuable language task.

Q (8): (to Hiromi) Will you explain about integrated skills more in detail?

A (Hiromi): I think true language acquisition will be accomplished using all skill areas; speaking, listening, writing, and reading. I feel good activities consist of using various approaches to the four basic skills. If we make use of using these skills, students will improve their English. I interpret that we should work out communicative activities integrating the four basic skills as much as possible.

Q (9): (to Hiromi) Could you show us how you presented the other usages of to-infinitive to your class?

A (Hiromi): I planned the activity named “何か飲み物が欲しいです” for learning the usage of to-infinitive used in an adjectival way. I was going to introduce this activity to you, but we didn’t have enough time to try this activity.

