

Newsletter No. 5

< Summer Workshop 2010 >

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

<Day 2>

Date: August 5, 2010 9:30-12:30, 13:30-16:30

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

The number of participants: 22

Morning

Instructors: Kazuyoshi Sato, PhD. (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies) and Aki Hakamada (Shiroyama Junior High School)

Abstract: How can we teach in English? How can we have our students use more English in our classrooms? Sato will first introduce several techniques by using hands-on activities. These techniques include (1) how to launch a lesson in English, (2) making a communicative activity a main focus, (3) using input-based activities, (4) using more pair and group work, (5) teaching conversation strategies, and (6) changing assessment. Then, Hakamada, a junior high school teacher, will show how she used these techniques in her English classes by demonstrating several activities. Moreover, she will show how students changed both their attitude toward learning English and their results based on her yearlong action research.



Afternoon

Instructor: Miwako Kushiro (Kakamihara High School)

Abstract: Kushiro, a high school teacher, will demonstrate activities for communicative grammar teaching. In her trials to improve the teaching of grammar, her grammar lessons became very communicative and provided learners with chances to use English for real-life communication, which eventually turned out to be much more helpful for the learners to enjoy and



understand grammar than just working on conventional drill exercises. 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?

(Yoshi)

- Retelling stories – I usually have my students retell stories after listening some short stories. Actually I’ve had trouble having them do the activity but from the idea Dr. Sato introduced to us, I found out I need to have them understand the stories comprehensively first, which will make the retelling activity successful.
- I usually have my students retell stories after listening to some short stories. Actually I’ve had trouble having them do the activity but from the idea Dr. Sato introduced to us I found out I need to have them understand the stories comprehensively first, which will make the retelling activity successful.
- Two-minute talk Yoshi showed us is interesting. When the students have models or choices, even junior high school students can do that.

(Aki)

- TPR. I have never tried TPR in my lesson, but I want to see if it’s possible to introduce it to my lesson. It looks very fun.
- “What I like” procedure 2: speaking in a group and listening to others while taking notes – Students need to speak in front of others, but ‘one student in front of all the other students’ type takes time and the student got very nervous and they have only few chances to listen to others’ comments. But this activity is good.
- I would like to use Aki’s idea “Bingo” using name card. Before doing Bingo, we sit our seat of we finished. Aki said, ‘If you haven’t finished yet, you should ask people who already finished and ask who has ‘yes’ answer.’ That’s a good idea. It was interesting. I try to use this idea with my lessons.

(Miwako)

- I would like to try some writing activities that Kushihiro sensei used. It was fun to personalize my writing and share with partner. As an AET, I’m not involved in a lot of the writing the students do. However, I’d like to be more involved.
- Teaching comparatives by using Arashi as a topic. My high school girls would love it. Suddenly an up-in-the air grammar point becomes something interesting, thanks to the series of activities.
- I would like to try deciding seats by using chopsticks. It was fun to choose.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned a variety of activities that would be great for communication but mostly, through the Russian activity, I



learned the importance of not overloading students with new words. It can cause a lot of frustration.

- I learned that learners need a lot more time for intake than I thought. Being a learner of Russian made me realize that.
- Aki's Russian instruction was a very enlightening session. English teachers usually don't notice what it is like learning English, but learning some other things (sports, musical instruments, other languages etc.) make them realize the process and difficulty of learning skills. I learned it is very important to look at English learning from that viewpoint.
- This year I focus on reading comprehension in my AR report. I tend to focus only on input activities. I should think about converting from input to output. I start the lesson with fast reading material for five minutes, so I want to try small talk in place of that.
- I'm really interested in several handouts that other groups made. To communicate and exchange information with teachers of different background is one of the incentives to attend this workshop.
- The most impressive and helpful idea for me was: Comprehensive understanding is important when students output information.



3. Questions and answers

Q (1): The presentation today showed communicative activities that are not from the textbook. Some teachers are more confined to the book, so I'd like to know more about how to provide meaningful communicative activities when a teacher has to stick with the book.

A (Yoshi): Actually, those communicative (grammar) activities were all developed based on the textbook they used. If you are a senior high school teacher and teach English I or II, please refer to the handouts Ms. Inoko developed. We did not have time to introduce how to develop communicative activities by using those textbooks this time. However, her handouts clearly show we can. If you spend less time on translation (or you can give a copy of Japanese translation to your students), you can spend more time on other meaningful and communicative activities. As language teachers, we need to develop our skills to develop activities based on the textbook, which are suitable to our students.

A (Aki): My activities are usually based on the textbook using target sentences and phrases. So I think the teacher who has to stick with the book could do those. Here I can tell you some other activities I learned the other day which are really connected with the book. 1) Making questions which answer would be the each sentences of the text, if the text is monolog. (If there are five sentences, make five questions.) 2) Pretend being one person in the text and say the text in different way, if the text is dialog. If the text is like A saying 'Do you play the piano?' and B saying 'Yes', then what students are expected to answer 'Yes, I play the piano,' pretend being B, or say 'You play the piano.' pretend being A. The aim of these activities is to check understanding not only grammar transformation but also content of the textbook. These are meaningful and also communicative! Please try them.

A (Miwako): In my opinion, teachers can incorporate some communicative activities into their strictly textbook-bound lessons. For example, teachers can make drill questions homework so that students can work on communicative activities at school and drill questions at home for review. Instead of explaining grammar items to students, teachers can give some input activities aiming at communication using a target item. Teachers can pick out one or two grammar items to teach at one time instead of trying to teach every item on a page of a textbook. Teachers often feel pressured to teach everything on a textbook to students, but students do not acquire it right away. Some items are to be learned according to natural developmental sequences, and it is more likely for students to learn the items when they are developmentally ready. Lightbown & Spada (2006) said, “Fortunately, learners can learn a great deal that no one ever teaches them. They are able to use their own internal learning mechanisms to discover many of the complex rules and relationships that underlie the language they are learning. In this sense, students learn much more than they are taught.” If teachers do not try to teach everything, they can spare some time to use communicative activities in class.

Q (2): I wonder if some teachers teach 12th graders complicated grammar points and sentence structures that come up in university entrance exams (but maybe do not come up in daily language) communicatively. I found it more difficult to teach high school students communicatively than to teach junior high school students.

A (Yoshi): As two senior high school teachers (Ms. Kushiro and Ms. Iwai) demonstrated, it is possible to teach grammar communicatively even to senior high school students. However, we do not have to teach all the grammatical points communicatively. Sometimes, it is OK to teach grammar explicitly if those points are rather exceptional. Also, research shows that students can learn most of the grammatical points by themselves (if the program is appropriate). It means we can teach essential grammar communicatively, while students



can learn other points by themselves (including doing drills). Remember that students do not acquire grammar unless they have enough input and output. Please read a short article I wrote on grammar teaching, which is included in Ms. Iwai's handout.

A (Aki): I have never taught high school students, so I cannot say which is more difficult, but I found it difficult to teach communicatively with limited vocabulary and grammar to junior high school students. For me it's easier to make activities higher grader, of course it depends on what kind of grammar point I put in the activity. If students know more, they suppose to be able to express better, don't you think so? Planning communicative activities means what kind of situations we can set for our students to use certain target language (grammar point or vocabulary), so maybe there are hints in your textbook. Try to see how the target sentences are used or think how you use in your life. (You can even 'google' the sentence, something will hit you!)

A (Miwako): I agree it's often difficult to introduce communicative activities to preparation for university entrance examinations. But I think it's possible to change some part of the lesson aimed examinations into more communicative one. First, please think how much of your lesson is teacher-centered. Is it possible to make just one part of it into pair or group activity? For example, instead of giving students a word test as a vocabulary review, how about letting them make word quizzes by thinking of the definitions of the target vocabulary and give each other the quizzes? When it is very difficult to let students engage in real-life communication, I think it's all right to think of ways to increase chances for students to use English even in a small part of the lesson. Students often learn much more with the help of peers than what teachers teach.



Q (3): (To Miwako) How long do you usually spend to finish one unit of grammatical point?

A (Miwako): When I taught the first-year students of my school with this format, I usually spent 2 or 3 hours per one unit.

Q (4): (To Aki) Have you ever tried to teach Russian to your students? If yes, how was their reaction? What did you notice?

A (Aki): No. What I have done is when I start using the textbook for 7th graders, I spend a few minutes to introduce 'Hello and Thank you' in many different languages, because there is a section in the textbook which I use. I don't skip that page because it is useful to let students notice that there are many languages which are used in the world and it succeeded.

<Day 3>

Date: August 6, 2010 9:30-12:30

Venue: Conference room at Aichi Kenko Plaza Hotel

Abstract: Mid-term presentation on action research

The number of participants: 14

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS)

