

NUFS Workshop 2010

Newsletter No. 11**Workshop in February**

(Part 1)

Date: February 19, 2011, 10:30-14:30**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 31**Instructor:** Junko Yamanaka (Trident College)**Title:** “Extensive Reading Activities: Now It’s Time to Act Locally”

Description: Through NUFWS Workshops, the importance and effectiveness of Extensive Reading (ER) has been discussed and confirmed. ‘Thinking globally’ has been done. Now it is time for teachers to “act locally”. Since ER is still a new concept or approach for many administrators, co-teachers, students and parents, teachers need to be *strategic* in order for the successful implementation of it. Strategies teachers could use for starting, maintaining and expanding ER programs will be suggested, including activities that help motivate students to be more involved in ER. Importance of how teachers ‘act’ will be proposed and discussed.

**The number of participants:** 23**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- ‘Predicting content from titles’ is a very interesting activity, because guessing the contents from book titles need a lot of imagination. And it’s the chance to communicate about what people think and how people feel.
- Genres & Tiles – this activity will help students find the books they want to read. I don’t think many students know what blurbs are. (I didn’t!) Helping students find books is very important.
- Fruit basket on reading is quite a fun activity that enables students to use four skills while moving their bodies.
- I liked ‘Drop Everything And Read’. I think I could use this in class provided we have enough books. It will give the learners time to enjoy reading in a meaningful way. They will feel like they have more autonomy in their reading. Too often I give them the reading, but I would really like to give them choices to read on their own.
- I liked the book selection activity useful for building vocabulary about reading.

2. What you learned from today’s workshop.

- I learned there are a lot of genres in graded readers. It would be good to show this to students so that they may be able to find some genres they like.
- I have never tried ER in my class, but now I understand how effective ER is. Also, I learned that we teachers



have to enjoy reading and tell our students the joy of reading. To be honest, I haven't read a lot of books so far, but today I decided to read more English books to improve my own English and, of course, to enjoy it.

- I felt the passion and the love to the books from Yamanaka sensei. Like Yamanaka sensei herself said, I think the most important thing for successful ER is that teachers show their loving feeling towards reading.
- It is important for us to keep records for persuading those who disagree about ER or believe only a traditional way of teaching.
- I've been interested in having students try ER, but I've had no chance to try it. Through today's activities and Ms. Yamanaka's collection of amazing books, I came to be interested in trying ER by myself. Probably, if I can find out the joy, I'll be able to tell students the importance of ER.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): I think the course objective of Junko-sensei's ER/reading class is to help students like reading, but I wonder how a typical class is taught. Are the students required to read a certain number of books? Do they write book reports? Do they discuss a particular book and are they given a comprehensive test?

A: When students read books in class, the only requirement would be that they read as much as possible, keeping a brief record of what they have read. How many books they read during one class time depends on what books they choose or their reading speed. However, the minimum number of books or words students have to read during the semester should be announced at the beginning of the course. The record (or report) should be very simple, so that students will *not* spend much time to write it. (Their time should be used to read the next book, rather than write in detail)

Students select and read different books, so no particular books are discussed during class, even though the teacher might at times introduce a particular book to recommend to class.

Comprehension tests are not given. Evaluation is not done with each book a student has read. For example, how much a student understood the book or how much time it took him/her to read the book is not important at that point, because as students go on reading more and more, their comprehension will improve and their reading speed will go up eventually. Evaluation therefore should be done in a longer span (at least a semester), based on how many books, words or pages they have read. (See my answer to Questions 6 & 7 about assessment)



Q (2): I'm not sure whether or how much my students improved their English because of ER. Should I be patient?

A: Improvement depends on how much students read. Think of an example of saving money. Let's think the number of words you are reading is like the amount of money you are saving in your bank. You work hard and earn money. Each week or each month you put the money into the bank. The bank book shows the amount of money you have saved. It increases little by little. It usually takes a long span of time in

order to save enough money for you to do something. Only a few months later, how much is saved? Can you buy something expensive with that? Probably not (yet). You know the answer now, don't you? Yes, you should be patient! Also, if your work is *easy and enjoyable*, you do not mind working longer hours and so you are able to make more money, and by the end of the year, before you know it, you will have saved a lot of money!

Q (3): If possible, I'd like to introduce ER in my class, but I'm not sure how I can check if the students really read books.

A: If you provide attractive books that are appropriate levels for your students, they will be tempted to read them. Teachers should make sure students understand the value and meaning of ER, and advertise how fun it is to read easy and interesting books. Once they find enjoyment in reading, they will surely keep on reading, and teachers do not have to worry if they really have read or not. However, constant reminder, commercials, or talk by the teacher is necessary. Talk to your students in a friendly and passionate way to remind them about why ER can be enjoyable and good for them.

One way that gives you some idea if they really read the books is to have students write a short comment (either in English or Japanese) for each book they have read. Also, ask them to recommend good books to each other and to the teacher with reasons. The teacher then should read what students recommended and give feedback to them. This will make the students become responsible, know that their teacher is serious and eager, and the teacher can get information about books students like. This will provide good communication and trust between the teacher and students.



Q (4): Some scholars, for example, Dr. Shirahata, say that it's not possible for readers to become conscious of and retain new vocabulary or grammar items without intentionally trying to find their meanings in a dictionary. Do you think it necessary to give some kind of follow-up activities concerning vocabulary and grammar?

A: In ER, students can use a dictionary if they want to, and in reality, many of them do. Usually they are encouraged to go on reading without a dictionary, but many do use it when they encounter important words they really want to know the meaning of; some wait until they get to the end of each chapter; and some check words after they have finished reading the book. They do learn vocabulary intentionally this way. Also, many scholars mention that students learn vocabulary and grammar incidentally by encountering them in books many times (See Ellis, 2005; Nation, 1997). Context-rich texts help students learn vocabulary and grammar naturally.

In ER, each student reads a different book, therefore providing follow-up grammar or vocabulary activities as a class is not possible. Or do you mean creating an activity for each book or using exercises that are sometimes in the book? Teachers need to be careful, though, because as soon as they try to focus on form, students tend to lose interest in the books. Reading then becomes “study” rather than “enjoyment”. It is important that students find enjoyment in reading, so that they will keep on reading by themselves. I believe vocabulary and grammar instruction is important and effective, but I recommend that it be done outside of an ER program.

Q (5): Do you do any post-reading activities with your students?

A: Usually not. Writing a book report or writing in the record sheet is the only post-reading activity for each student. However, toward the end of the school year, I have students write about books they recommend (often on half of A4 size paper). I put the paper together and make a booklet (私のおすすめ本), and place it in the library so that new students will be able to see them when they select books. Students can also make posters or a class poster to promote ER as the final project in the course.



Q (6): I would like to know more about alternative assessment. Should we assess ER or can we just give certain amount of time to the students and let them read freely?

Q (7): How do you evaluate your students?

A: Here are some ideas for assessing ER. Teachers could combine some of them.

1. Based on the number of words, pages or books students have read. Book reports, and/or record sheets can be used for this purpose.
2. Portfolio evaluation can be used. Book reports, record sheets, pair work activity sheets, book recommendation forms or advertisement, mini posters, and so on can be compiled and submitted at the end of the semester for evaluation.
3. If there is SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) time in class, teachers could include students' attendance and attitude (their involvement) during that time too.
4. Students give oral presentations. They can report on books they have read, recommend good books, or introduce strategies that have worked.
5. Give EPER Test (find information on the internet) at the beginning and end of the term (or school year) and check their improvement.
6. Use outside tests (TOEIC test, for example) to measure their progress.

Q (8): You showed books as reading materials for extensive readings, but what about essays, news or magazine articles? I teach more content related courses, so it's hard to find books that would be content appropriate. So would be doing similar activities with different reading materials effective as well?

A: Any material that students feel interested in is all right for ER. However, if the material contains too many unknown words per page, it is not appropriate for ER. It is said that unknown words in a text should be within 5% in order for L2 readers to comprehend the text and learn vocabulary (Nation, 1997; Kadota, 2003). Essays, news or magazine articles may possibly contain many unknown



words for average students even if the content might be interesting or appropriate. Students also need background knowledge to read and understand them. Probably they can be used for advanced level students, or more suited for intensive reading.

(Part 2)

Date: February 19, 2011, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 31

Advisor: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 17



Workshop in March (Scheduled)

Date: March 26-27, 2011

Venue: Irigo Garden Hotel

Title: Final report on action research

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS)

This workshop is for action research group members only.