

NUFS Workshop 2011

*Newsletter No. 7***Workshop in November**

(Part 1)

Date: November 12, 2011, 10:30-14:30**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 31**Instructor:** Marc Helgesen (Miyagi Gakuin Women's University)

Marc Helgesen is the author of over 150 professional articles, books and textbooks and has been a featured or invited speaker on five continents. He is professor at Miyagi Gakuin Women's University, Sendai and adjunct at Teachers College Columbia University, MA-TESOL Program in Japan. He is interested in connecting ELT to positive psychology and neuroscience as well as multi-sensory learning and extensive reading.



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Title: “English Language Teaching and the Science of Happiness: Positive Psychology in the ELT classroom”

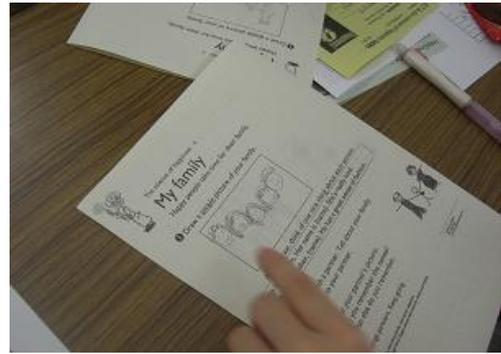
Abstract: Positive, motivated students -- engaged in what they are studying and with each other -- learn more. How do we facilitate that positive attitude in the language classroom? This activity-based session looks at ways positive psychology (TIME magazine calls it “The Science of Happiness”) can be combined with clear language learning goals for active, invested learning. This is more than “positive self-talk”. It is sharing with our students the concrete behaviors that happy people engage in. It will include recent development in positive psychology including Martin Seligman’s PERMA Model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) and Barbara Fredrickson’s Positive Emotion “Tipping Point”. A handout of 20 positive psychology ELT activities will be provided.

The number of participants: 26**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- I want to use all these activities with the classes I teach. I have classes where I could teach the whole unit on Happiness or I can adapt some for other classes, for example, I start off class with having students share what they did last night, but I can add in, “that was good”.
- Write 3 good things which happened today for a week. Because I learned that the psychological effect stays for 6 months. Also, it would be a good writing activity. Students can talk about them later.
- Human robots – good idea for teaching present progressive to JHS students.



- I want my students write/speak about happy topics to make them happy during English class, for example, three good things, happy journal and so on. I think students want to talk about their happy events or memories.
- I want third-year students of high school to write thank you letters. It might be good opportunity to reflect on what happened in their high school days.
- I want to try happiness journal. I got my students to write a diary, but happiness journal can make students who write it happy and it also makes other students happy by reading other students' journal.
- 'Thank you to the world'. I'm teaching first grade students at a junior high, and they're interested in other countries. Probably they know some ways to say 'Thank you' in other languages. This must be a good warming-up activity.
- "Remembering good things in your life", a pair work between students. Telling good experience to others is a good approach to open their mind and motivate them to write or speak about their experiences.
- All of them. I want to do an information exchange task with my first year middle school students. They will talk about a good thing they do and ask each other wh-questions. Then write about their partners.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I always avoided telling people my goals because I was worried about jinxing them – glad to hear that there's also some science behind it.
- Building good relationships with students is always the way to go. I believe that once happiness starts in class, it never stops. When we make a good start a class or a semester, it will create good learning experiences.
- I realized that it is not good to force my students to do activities by teachers' power. I should build good relationship and have them relax. I should help them feel happy in class so that they can learn much more. I realized that I should praise my sons and students more instead to scold. I really regret my attitude.
- I learned that thinking, speaking, listening and reading positive things can change students a lot. It improves students' motivation, English skills and even their lives.
- The eight items of "The Science of Happiness" are connected with the grammar points students learn. So we can make use of them in our classroom.
- Eight ideas. I try to remember all of them and to be always smiling. If I'm smiling, students will be happier and learn more.
- Re-living the past experience and sharing information is a good activity. High school students tend to hesitate to show their experience to others, but in English, I guess they would enjoy it a lot.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): Some say people can achieve the goal after announcing his or her determination. The professor of Harvard says about face fact. Please discuss which is better for students to appeal the goal or not.

A: I think there are several variables. It kind of depends on the type of goal. For example, I quit smoking 17 years ago. Part of my strategy was telling everyone I know that I had quit (past perfect – framing it to make it clear to myself and others that I had already accomplished this). By telling everyone, I wanted to put myself in a position to lose face if I started again.

But I played the video in our session to point out that things may not be as simple as we think – humans are very complex and psychology reflects this.

I do think, whether or not we talk about goals, it is important to break them down into small, doable steps. “I want to be bilingual” is too big and abstract. “I will practice English at least 20 minutes every day” is doable. Sonja Lyubormirsky (She’s the U. of California- Riverside researcher who identified the 8 things happy people do that I used in the workshop) has a chapter on goal setting/achieving in “The How of Happiness” (2008, Penguin)

Q (2): Where can I get a short video clip by Tal Ben-Shahar? Also, I’d appreciate it if you can suggest a book he wrote for general readers.

A: Point five on this video is about simplifying: (it starts at about 1:27 <http://bigthink.com/ideas/25069>)

There is a longer interview with him at: <http://bigthink.com/ideas/16653>

There are many videos at: <http://bigthink.com/search?email=&q=tal+ben+shahar>

Ben Shahar has done several books that are very good.

Happier (2008, McGraw-Hill). Is good.

http://www.amazon.co.jp/Happier-Can-You-Learn-Happy/dp/0077123247/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1322009013&sr=8-1

So is his book *The Pursuit of Perfect*. But a couple books I’d recommend before that:

Flourish (2011, Free Press) by Martin Seligman

http://www.amazon.co.jp/Flourish-Visionary-Understanding-Happiness-Well-being/dp/1439190755/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1322009246&sr=8-1

Positivity (2009, Three Rivers Press) by Barbara Fredrickson

http://www.amazon.co.jp/Positivity-Top-Notch-Research-Reveals-Change/dp/0307393747/ref=sr_1_1?s=english-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1322009327&sr=1-1

The How of Happiness (2008, Penguin) by Sonja Lyubomirsky,

http://www.amazon.co.jp/How-Happiness-Approach-Getting-Life/dp/0143114956/ref=pd_sim_fb_4

Q (3): Some activities are very personal. In present teaching environment, talking about one’s family can be a difficult topic for some students. Do you give some considerations for those students?

A: It is important that student we don’t feel pushed to talk about things they don’t want to. We might broaden the topic to be, for example, “my family or friends”. But, actually, I haven’t found this to be much of a problem (then again, I am teaching university students who are older and more mature than J/HS students)



Q (4): Is it necessary to explain to students the reasons for doing certain classroom practices, e.g. why standing up is good for their brains?

A: I think it is a good idea to explain why we do things:

It makes students more likely to be willing to do them. For example, we know that learners have different learning styles. Some student (called “kinesthetic” or “haptic” need to move around while they learn. Some non-haptic students think in is inconvenient or even annoying if we ask them to stand and move around. If the students know I am doing it to (a) give haptic learners something they need and (b) to give other learners experience with different ways of doing things, they are usually more likely to be happy to do it.

Secondly, if they know there is a reason for me asking them to do different things – especially unusual things, they are more willing to try unusual things.

Q (5): I would like to know more about your learners’ reactions to this course. It would be interesting to note their feelings at the beginning of the course and at the end of the course.

A: I haven’t done that kind of research or surveys. Probably should. Think, since I am doing these activities as additions to the curriculum, (not an entire class dedicated to positive psychology), it would be hard to identify very specific data. But I do end of course evaluations and the feedback is quite good. I also frequently do feedback activities on particular activities (usually a simple 1-5 Likert scale, plus a chance for comments). Last month I wrote a new activity called “I felt so good” (attached). I was delighted to find out that 87.5% of students doing the activity reported re-experience the positive emotion as they did the activity.



Q (6): When students cannot think of any good things, for example, when doing 3 good things happened today, what can I do? How can I advise them? Sometimes students say “Nothing special”, “I cannot think of any” or “Anything particular.”

A: That is part of the point – getting students to notice good things that are actually going on. And get them to savor those things. I show my student the “basketball/ moonwalking bear” video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4>

or just go to youtube.com and search: basketball moonwalking bear) to point out that we miss things we aren’t looking for. Often it helps to notice “little things” we do every day. We write these on the board.

Things like:

- the comfort of a kotatsu on a cold evening
- the flavor on onion soup (or ice cream or whatever they like)
- Hearing children laugh (there is a nursery school near my school)
- a sunny day
- having lunch with friends
- club activities

I sometimes walk to work and like noticing things like “wabi sabi” design of Japanese gardens, etc. We see these things so often we don’t usually “see” (notice) them. I also do things like “count nature

sounds” (different kinds of birds, for example. In summer in Nagoya, the sounds of cicada stand out). In the spring, I like consciously breathing deeply when walking through a park (great smells).

So the point is to notice the things that do happen. They don't have to be huge. Just noticing them helps us realize they are special.

Another related activity – in your handout there is an activity about eating a blueberry with mindfulness. It is similar to what we did with the last piece of cookie in the workshop. We usually just eat. Eating something with mindfulness is a good way to notice things.

I hope these ideas are useful and that you and your students continue to explore them.

(Part 2)

Date: November 12, 2011, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS), Robert Croker (Nanzan University)

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 17



Workshop in December (Scheduled)

Date: December 10, 2011, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

Instructor: Rob Waring (Notre Dame Seishin University)

Title: "The How and Why of Extensive Reading"

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