

NUFS Workshop 2011

Newsletter No. 9

Workshop in January

(Part 1)

Date: January 21, 2012, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 52

Instructor: Paul Crane (NUFS)

Title: “Introduction to Language Learning Strategies”

Abstract: According to Rebecca Oxford (1990, 2011)

language learning strategies (LLS) are “specific actions or behaviors taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and transferable to new situations.” In other words, LLS could help students to become more successful and independent and language learners. Participants in this workshop, after taking a survey to find out what language learning strategies they already use, will then be introduced to a variety of LLS that they could introduce in their own teaching contexts to make their own students more effective language learners.



The number of participants: 28

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

- Asking questions each other including the partners’ names – this activity can be used in the first couple of classes of the year. Students can get to know each other well. And the warm-up questions are great, too.
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears – I will use the activities we did today: read the words, predict and retell the story.
- Retelling the story after watching movies with some key words. In groups or in pairs, students can retell by helping each other. In this activity, they can develop social skills as well as other strategies.
- I’d like to use ‘charades’ because it’s easy for junior high school students to express English words with gestures. Using gestures and working with friends boost students’ motivations. Also, predicting with keywords, watching videos, summarizing and retelling stories are very effective because those have enough inputs and outputs.
- A game called ‘Taboo’ is very interesting. At today’s workshop we used the cards written in Japanese. If my students use this kind of cards, they can enjoy playing the game because they have already known the context of each card.
- I want to have my students do SILL. Through the result, they can understand the tendency of their learning English.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned that the road to success is setting goals. Language learning strategies help students become independent learners.
- Teachers themselves need to realize the learning strategies. Then we can give activities focused on certain learning strategies. It is also important to teach learning strategies explicitly once in a while.
- The SILL was very informative in that it identified areas for improvement in my own language studies.
- I learned that we have tons of strategies we can use from next April. I was very nervous to be a teacher but I'm not now. I want to use a lot of strategies flexibly. Today I heard the name of SILL for the first time. I want to remember it and use it to learn & teach English.
- I found unconsciously we use a lot of strategies. I'm going to review what I am doing in my class from the aspects of LLS.
- I've learned a lot of language learning strategies in this workshop and classes held by NUFS. But I've missed and forgot many LLS and I realized there are a lot of strategies I've never tried. If I've never tried the strategies, I can't teach them to my students. So, first of all, I have to try them by myself in order to train myself.

3. Questions and Answers

First of all, thank you to all the participants in today's workshop! The energy and enthusiasm which you showed was so important for the overall atmosphere of our gathering. Referring again to Tim Murphey's "Language Hungry" text, (which, by the way, should be essential reading for all language teachers and students!), Chapter 20 is titled "Good Students Make Good Teachers" and basically it says that how students respond in and out of class has an effect on the teacher, which in effect helps to improve the whole classroom experience for everybody. Thank you for attending so positively!

Q (1): I want to teach my students strategies for studying by themselves. And I think those should be taught explicitly. Or can we show the strategies in activities, too? (Noriko)

Q (2): Should teaching learning skills occur as part of the class time? (Ben)

A: *Thank you, Noriko and Ben for such great questions! I would like to address both of these questions at the same time because of the similarity between them. In my humble opinion, my answer to both questions is "Yes!" As teachers, if there is any way possible that we can help our students become better learners, that is part of our job, and I think the teaching of language learning strategies (LLS) can definitely help them. Although research data about LLS is not always conclusive because of the complexity of measuring strategy use and proficiency improvement, (Oxford, 2011) in general, it is believed that helping students become aware of different LLS can help them become more effective learners. One thing to keep in mind is that motivation is linked to LLS use, so also finding ways to increase the interest and motivation level of the students is a very good idea. Therefore, I do*



suggest introducing strategies in class and in activities. Time is always a constraint in our teaching contexts, but if there is a way that you can slip something related to LLS into the lesson, that is a beginning. As we noticed in today's workshop, one lesson could contain many possibilities for employing LLS! I think the challenge here is trying to identify only one or two to focus on. As I also mentioned during the workshop, one of the goals of LLS is to help the students to become more autonomous learners, so also letting them know what they can do outside of class using LLS, for example with their homework and studying for tests, could also be brought to their attention.

Q (3): Paul said learners need to be independent to learn language in their own way. However, especially lower level students don't know or can't find how to study. Do you have any suggestions for such students? (Kosuke)

A: *Excellent question, Kosuke! (Is this the same Kosuke that was a student of mine? ☺)*

I completely agree with you about the fact that lower level students do not know how to study. It is probably natural that students will study the way that they have been studying in elementary school and junior high school. This may not always be the most effective way to study a language, however. To really understand English, it's not enough to just "know"; students need to "do"; to me this is the difference between "learning" and "acquisition" and this is one of the goals of communicative language teaching, right? LLS are tools to help them accomplish both the goals of learning AND acquisition. So, when you give the students homework or tell them to study for a test, show them different ways to study using LLS as a hint. When doing an activity in class, it might be good to explain that there are some LLS imbedded in the activity itself. Another thing that is important is to encourage the students to make studying "personal" because this could motivate them more. Give them tasks and activities that are not only interesting, but also activities that could be related to their own interests.



Q (4): Are the old and new versions of Tim's 'Language Hungry' very different? (Harumi)

A: *To be honest, Harumi, I don't know. I only have the original version which is the one with the blue cover. The newer version has a green cover. (That's different, isn't it? ☺) I would guess that the basic content is the same, but some of the content was probably updated; for example: in one of the chapters called "A Teddy Bear in Your Ear", there is a suggestion to use a "Walkman" and it may have been updated with newer technology gadgets like CD players or iPods.*

Q (5): Given that people respond to different manners of learning in different ways, how important is it that we score highly in all of the SILL categories? (Sean)

A: *You have a very good point, Sean. Each learner is unique, and what is effective for one person, might not be so good for another. There are so many variables involved (age, gender, culture, background, etc.) and it is inevitable that we are prone to making generalizations. I think the SILL can be used in different ways, but for me, I want to use it for starting the process of raising consciousness or awareness*

about what LLS are. If somebody scores lower on some questions or in a particular category, it simply means that there strategies which they are not using which is not necessarily a bad thing. By realizing this through the SILL, the students might be interested in trying new or different strategies which they may not have been aware of.

Q (6): I have a question about the LRL. How do you have the learners keep an inventory about the strategies they use? Or maybe I misunderstood. I just wanted to know how you use SILL with the LRLs. (Kevin)



A: Thank you for asking about this, Kevin. I'm sorry about rushing out of time at the end like that. First of all, LRL means "Learning Reflection Log" which is my term for what Tim Murphey calls "Action Logs". At the end of a learning activity, like this workshop, I ask students/participants to reflect on what they did in class as a way of reviewing and summarizing, and this is very effective for learning. That itself is a very powerful LLS! The notebooks that I showed you were student examples of their LRLs. At the beginning of the semester in my LLS class, I have the students do the SILL, then paste their results in the front cover of their LRL notebook to help remind them of LLS throughout the semester. What I didn't have time to show you was the chart that students filled out towards the end of the semester. I asked them to be aware of activities in their other classes to notice what kinds of LLS were implicitly or explicitly included in activities and to identify them in terms of what Oxford (1999) calls "direct" (memory, cognitive, and compensation) or "indirect" (metacognitive, affective, and social) LLS. This was a very worthwhile and exciting activity for me because it demonstrated how much more aware of LLS they had become after taking my class, not to mention that their other classes contained many imbedded LLS!

References

- Murphey, T. (1998) Language Hungry. Macmillan Language House. Japan.
Oxford, R. (2011) Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies. Pearson Education. Great Britain.
Oxford, R. (1990) Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know. Newbury House. USA

(Part 2)

Date: January 21, 2012, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

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

Abstract: Monthly report on action research

The number of participants: 12



Workshop in February (Scheduled)

Date: February 25, 2012, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 52

Instructor: Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)

Title: “Brain Studies and Factors of Learning”

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