

## NUFS Workshop 2011

*Newsletter No. 10***Workshop in February**

(Part 1)

**Date:** February 25, 2012, 10:30-14:30**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College, Room 52**Instructor:** Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)**Title:** “Brain Studies and Factors of Learning”

**Abstract:** Brain science is uncovering some unexpected factors of learning, such as sleep, movement, reward, and emotion. How can we use these findings to make our language teaching more effective? In the first half of the session, the presenter will discuss these factors of learning, and the theory of brain plasticity. The second half will be a workshop, where participants will work on ways to implement these factors of learning in the classroom.

**The number of participants:** 19**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- I found a lot of nice suggestion and ideas. I've tried to make activities using wh-questions separately. Today I got new ideas sing them all together. Through concrete activities, I understand how I should make a new brain-friendly lesson.
- I'd like to specifically try the classmate profile sheet. I believe the students would like to know more about each other and if they all could have classmate profile sheet of everyone, it could provide a nice memory of everyone from this first year.
- Party planner – it is quite interesting to actually plan a party. Some students can actually have the party. This kind of activity enhances students' imagination and creativity.
- I want to try the activity our group made using party invitations to practice question forms.
- Class album – I want to use this because this year will be the first year for me as a teacher and I want to know about my students. To know them, I want them to make the class album using wh-questions.
- How to make a new brain-friendly lesson on wh-questions. Usually learning grammar is very difficult for students. However, if the grammatical thing is connected to the real world context, students will find it interesting.

**2. What you learned from today's workshop.**

- To learn effectively, learners need good rewards, repetition and movement. I always want my students to gesture when they learn new words, ex. throw.
- Excises are important for learning. Brains are first created to move muscles. If we develop our brain,



we need to exercise. So in the classrooms, activities like pair/group work are effective. I'd like think about brain friendly activities from now on.

- I was impressed by the following words by Kelly; “The purpose of all teaching is to make students active.” “Language is the voice of our genes”. I'll keep these messages in mind and put them into practice in my classroom.
- What is put in long term memory is determined by the emotional center of the brain, so emotional content is important.
- I learned the importance of focusing on learners. Because students are not static being like objects. We should take emotions, relationships and son on into account.

### 3. Questions and Answers

To the members from Curtis Kelly

I was planning to send you a mail, when a few questions came in from Sugiura san. Thank you for asking. In case any of you would like to contact me directly, my mail address is [ctskelly\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:ctskelly@gmail.com)

#### Q (1): Are there any brain-friendly ways to promote long-term motivation?

Motivation is pretty much something separate from, but well informed by brain studies. A book on the topic that looks interesting will soon be released:

[http://www.amazon.co.jp/Psychology-Language-Learning-Insights-Research/dp/0230301150/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=english-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330397662&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.jp/Psychology-Language-Learning-Insights-Research/dp/0230301150/ref=sr_1_1?s=english-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330397662&sr=1-1)

The key to motivation, though, is just understanding that it exists in everyone, all the time. It is just a matter of what needs the learners is trying to satisfy, because that will shape what they will be motivated to do. The need might be to learn something that will help them solve problems, it might be the need to have friends, or it might be the need for autonomy.

In fact, I spent six months on sabbatical researching motivation but unfortunately did not find any one theory that was really valuable for my classes. I do, however, have a presentation topic that I love, on “Dealing with Difficult Students.” Shall I come to Nagoya again?

#### Q (2): We can praise students as reward. What are other rewards?

I think there are many. It is estimated that self-esteem motivates 80% of human behavior, so praise is just one way. Anything that makes learners feel good about themselves helps, whether it is praise, recognition from peers, pride in a job well done, doing something fun, or just communicating. Look at what your students write in their class evaluations: They often say they liked the class because they could make friends, they could communicate a lot, or because the teacher was “yasashii.” Take comments like these seriously. They have more meaning than we usually assume.

So, as I said, to get your students motivated, ride the wave of their psychological development. Do these things:



1. Use topics that interest them: relationships, celebrities, humor, TV, music etc.

2. Personalize whenever possible. “We just studied past tense on page 90, so now, tell your partner three happy things that happened to you when you were a child.”

3. Try to use activities that are related to positive topics, such as the ones Marc Helgesen showed you. One of my favorite ways to practice gerunds is what I call a “class thank you chain.” I start by choosing a student and saying “I’d like to thank Hiroshi **for smiling** so often.” Then Hiroshi chooses another student to thank for something else, using the same for +-ing structure, that student thanks someone else, and so on.

4. I have found that the things students love to do the most, that make them feel good, are: a) to be creative (invent a new machine), b) to share something personal (tell your group three adjectives for characteristics you want in your ideal partner), c) to succeed at a challenge that not everyone can succeed at (discuss this mystery with your partner and try to solve it), and d) to identify their values (would you steal an expensive medicine if it were the only way you could save your friend’s life?).



5. Praise in public, scold in private. Remember, praising one student in public makes everyone feel better. Scolding one student in public makes everyone feel worse. If you scold, for talking in class for instance, try an “I,” not “You” approach, i.e., say it is your own problem. “I know you want to talk to Junko, but *I’m having a really hard time* teaching this class when you do. I’d really appreciate it if you waited till later to talk.”

6. Never let a student fail. If you do, it means you fail too. Go to your utmost to make every single one of them successful at something. That means breaking the rules of teaching sometimes and treating different students differently. For example, you might tell a weak student a day in advance what questions you are going to ask him, or you might tell a weak and demoralized student the answers too, so he or she can answer successfully. Be a coach, not a God.

### **Q (3): Would you please let me know some reference books related to today’s topic?**

There are so many that I don’t know where to start. If you are only going to read one book, read *Brain Rules*, and visit Medina’s site:

<http://www.brainrules.net/>

If you liked the plasticity stories, read *The Brain that Changes Itself*.

[http://www.amazon.co.jp/Brain-That-Changes-Itself-Frontiers/dp/0143113100/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=english-h-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330399806&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.co.jp/Brain-That-Changes-Itself-Frontiers/dp/0143113100/ref=sr_1_3?s=english-h-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330399806&sr=1-3)

I also liked *The Female Brain*, since it talks about the brain as a “pharmacy” not “computer.”

[http://www.amazon.co.jp/Female-Brain-Louann-Brizendine/dp/055381849X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=english-h-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330399881&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.co.jp/Female-Brain-Louann-Brizendine/dp/055381849X/ref=sr_1_1?s=english-h-books&ie=UTF8&qid=1330399881&sr=1-1)

Then too, The Brain Science Podcast is a fantastic place to learn about the brain if you don't have time to read books and if you ride the train often. Start with the earlier ones, which I thought were better, especially interviews with: Ratey, Shanker, Doidge, Brizendine, Brown, Taub, Blakeslee, Mezernich, etc.

<http://www.brainsciencepodcast.com/episodes-page/>

Finally, if you'd like to see the kinds of activities I have made for my own books that I consider brain-friendly and motivating, ask for inspection copies of:

**Active Skills for Communication 1-3** - Cengage (probably 1 or 2 is the right level for your students)

<http://www.cengage.jp/top/>

**Writing from Within 1 or 2** – Cambridge (book 1?) <http://www.cambridge.org/contacts/japan/>

**Significant Scribbles** (Pearson) <http://www.longmanjapan.com/>

Please tell them you attended my presentation on brain studies, because they sometimes sponsor my presentations, especially Cengage.

(Part 2)

**Date:** February 25, 2012, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College

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

**Abstract:** Monthly report on action research

**The number of participants:** 11



### **Workshop in March (Scheduled)**

**Date:** March 24-25, 2012

**Venue:** Irigo Sea-Park & Spa

**Title:** Final presentation on action research

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

**This workshop is for action research group members only.**