

NUFS Workshop 2013

*Newsletter No. 1***Workshop in May (Day 1)****Date:** May 11, 2013, 13:00-16:00**Venue:** Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322**Title:** Demonstrations (Focus on Form)**Presenter:** Noriko Ishitobi (Ueda Junior High School)

Abstract: Focus-on-form instruction (FFI) is a grammar teaching way which “entails a focus on meaning with attention to form arising out of the communicative activity” (Ellis, 2006, p. 100). According to Lee and VanPatten (1995), grammar teaching should include both structured input and output since “learners need not only input to build a developing system but also opportunities to create output in order to work on fluency and accuracy” (p. 118). Completion of the task requires integrated use of all four skills and focus on the target form. In this workshop, participants will experience FFI by using handouts developed by the presenter. Moreover, she will show the results of action research about how her students improved their English ability through FFI.

**Presenter:** Miwako Kushiro (Kagamihara High School)

Abstract: In this demonstration, a sequence of a lesson based on an approach called focus on form will be presented. The demonstration shows how to teach grammar in a communicative way. The lesson starts with input-based instruction (structured input), and ends with output-based instruction (structured output). The characteristics and effectiveness of these approaches are also discussed, compared with the problems of traditional approaches of grammar teaching which have been the mainstream at schools in Japan for a long time. Participants will take part in this demonstration by playing roles of students. Frank comments, opinions, and questions will be welcome and appreciated.

**The number of participants: 51****1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- Communicative Grammar Teaching – I’d thought that teaching grammar is boring and can’t help it. But today I came to know I can do something this interesting and I can try to be creative.
- Relative clause using movies – Movie or drama is a good topic for students to express their own opinions. In addition, they can learn how to use relative clauses in a natural setting.

- I want to use the way that input the target grammar without explaining first, and then continue noticing and output.
- I'd like to develop more interesting input activities in my classes. The input activities really grabbed my interest in the topic. So I'd like to work on better attracting interest in the topics from the students I teach.
- I'm teaching at high school, so I want to use the activity of relative clause. I think students will be interested in using English because they can express opinions about themselves. Also, they can get to know with classmates better.
- The activity we did first in Kushiro-sensei's lecture: matching the titles, pictures and stories. Actually I don't have enough idea what to do in introduction. Like this activity, if I use famous or popular things students might know, it will be easy to attract their interest.
- Using the grammar point before introducing it. I usually tell the students the grammatical point first. But today I really enjoyed and could smoothly learned grammar by noticing them. I felt my class was not interesting.
- Ideal boy/girl friend – It is very interesting that students write ideas, share ideas in groups, write down the group conclusion and tell it to the class. The most surprising point is they get a feedback of grammatical errors. It's a very good activity!
- I thought Ishitobi-sensei's newsletter is very nice idea. I usually collect students writing homework and just explain the students mistakes in oral or writing on blackboard in next class. But it's a good idea to make students correct the mistakes by themselves.



2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- Focus-on-forms activities are more useful than a boring instruction. When I saw the result of teaching, I understood that focus-on-forms works very well.
- I learned how to use focus on form in the class. I also learned how I should teach English using English.
- Grammar drills aren't necessarily helpful in improving students' understanding. I thought I had to make students work in pairs or groups more frequently.
- I learned about a new learning style which I could really use in my class especially on how to build confidence to learners.
- input → noticing → output. Through using English, students are able to learn and understand the grammar point.
- To let the students talk in pairs is very important. Some students don't know how to make conversation. But the two teachers in today's workshop used materials which has conversations formats. I thought they will be helpful.
- Even though I taught some grammatical rules to students, they easily forgot them. I have to introduce more activities related to output.



- I could make sure myself that teaching grammar as a tool of communication is the right way to teach English. I have been using that way to teach English though. Today in Miwako sensei's presentation, the results of test scores of her students shows that this is the right way we should go.

3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): To start something new is a kind of big challenge. Because there're many other teachers in my school and I have no confidence to do something new. I'm still a new teacher there. But I want to try something new. Give me some advice.

A (Noriko): Of course it is ideal to have the same lesson plans across the whole grade. It is not easy to make changes. However, we do not want to make it as excuse of not trying things. We should have some freedom to use communicative activities instead of explaining grammar even though we have to teach the same textbook as other teachers. Trying out something new and seeing students' change is a great joy for us teachers. Let's be brave and try to start from something small. Let's ask students' opinion after we tried the new things. If we know that our students appreciate what we did, we would be greatly encouraged and it would be the motivation for our next trial.



A (Miwako):

I think it is very difficult to totally change our teaching styles at one time. It may also make our colleagues feel uncomfortable. So, I think it is better to start with changing small part of our teaching style and incorporate just small communicative activities into our lesson plans. Sharing those ideas with our colleagues is also important. Asking students' comments on those activities might also help us develop better lessons. I think taking little but steady steps will make us confident in introducing new ideas into our teaching. After all, I suppose a lot of teachers are now aware that they have to change their teaching styles somehow because of the implement of the new course of study. Now is the time to start something new.

Q (2): Do you make your handouts by yourself? What are key points to make handouts?

A (Noriko): In this workshop, I used the activities I wrote, but I do not believe that we always have to create original one. We can of course utilize existing activities, but the thing is it is difficult to find appropriate activities for focus on form. The steps of focus on form activities are:

1. starting with input activity: the first stage should not be explanation of grammar and mechanical drilling as teachers conventionally do, but the meaningful input activity.
2. followed by noticing stage: students notice the form and connect with the meaning here. Simple explanation is okay to do.



3. finishing up with output activity: students have to use the target grammar point to express their ideas and exchange information.

The output activity is hopefully followed by some error correction activity. This way, the activity can include all the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The integration of the skills is necessary.

For more details, check out the books we wrote “フォーカス・オン・フォームでできる！新しい英文法指導アイデアワーク” 中学1～3年/高校 (明治図書).

A (Miwako):

The handouts I used for the demonstration was actually made about five years ago. I only replaced movies to new ones and added the final speaking activities. I made all the handouts for grammar teaching then, and those handouts have been used in all the classes at my school since then with some changes and replacements of activities. I think it doesn't matter whether you use your own hand-made handouts or ones made by someone else as long as you find them useful for your students. When I made those handouts, I “borrowed” a lot of ideas of activities from ESL materials published by Longman, Cambridge, and many more.

Two major key points to make handouts for grammar teaching, in my case, are as follows.

1. Set a clear goal on what students will be able to do using the target grammar item.
2. Keep the flow of “input → noticing → output.”
3. Give “eye candies.”

As for No.2, lessons starts with input activities to make students focus on meaning, and students do not manipulate grammar items, such as filling in the blanks with proper words, and rewriting the sentences with proper grammar. After input, students spend some time noticing the grammar items. Here, I often use Japanese. After this, students work on communication practice using the target grammar items. Here, students have some meaningful information exchange but they do not know what their partners will say. In either input or output, students have reporting activities using the information they get in the information exchange activities.



No.3, eye candies, usually means pictures and photos that make handouts look interesting and fun. I like drawing pictures and I used to draw some pictures on handouts by myself. These days, I use a lot of pictures and photos on the Internet. It doesn't take much time to get some of those and paste them on handouts. Some of the websites I often use are:

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/clipart/?campaign=DE>

<http://www.fotosearch.jp/>

Q (3): I'd like to know more about evaluation and assessment.

A (Noriko): I do not assess students' speaking or writing in learning activities themselves. The language knowledge students enhance through communicative activities should show up in term tests. Besides, I give students writing task and assess according to the rubric I provide to students beforehand. Speaking

tests should be also conducted. They should be different from speeches and presentations in which students memorize texts and make presentations in class, but the spontaneous conversation in pairs made up on the spot. Since students are not likely to learn speaking if we do not assess them, a speaking test is a must. I also would like to learn how to conduct better speaking tests.

A (Miwako):

At my school, assessments are conducted as follows:

Term tests: 50%

Speaking tests: 20%

Essay writing: 20%

Portfolio and attitude: 10%

The ratio sometimes changes due to some reasons.



Q (4): How can I further utilize and apply this system to the elementary setting? Any ideas on activities would be greatly appreciated.

A (Noriko): How about meaningful input activities using matching, drawing pictures, and so on? For output, I think speaking is enough when writing is not possible yet. Information exchange tasks by using cards are often used in first year of junior high. Same things can be done in elementary schools, too. Good luck!

A (Miwako):

I'm not familiar with teaching English to elementary school students. I'm not sure if the approaches I used in the demonstration are useful to teach them because learners are not only to listen and speak, but also to read and write in these approaches. While it is helpful to explain some grammatical points to high school students in the noticing phase, I doubt it is also the case with elementary school students. I suppose approaches like Total Physical Response are much more helpful to younger learners.

Q (5): I'd like to know how to have students understand contents of the lessons in the textbook and reach the final output activities. / Can we apply this focus on form style to teach with textbook? And if yes, how?

A (Noriko): I use focus on form in order to introduce new grammar points in the textbook. Translating each text is a waste of time when I have activities to do. So I always give Japanese translation beforehand. I try to include pair work and group work in class as much as possible, and students work in pairs and groups to do reading section in the textbook as well. Students work in pair and groups when they do checking new words' meaning, comprehension check and reading aloud practice. I like this way because the four skills can be integrated. I learned the way from a high school teacher at the workshop a few years ago. If you are interested, please come and join our monthly workshop.

A (Miwako):

Focus on form approach is suitable for grammar teaching, so I think it may be useful for teaching target grammar items in the textbook, or developing students' communicative ability using certain kinds of

grammar. If “contents of the lessons in the textbook” mean contents of the essays and stories in the textbook, I think some approaches to develop reading strategies are necessary.

Q (6): I’m teaching third-year high school students. I’d like to know how to have students tackle with the entrance exam by using the method of today’s workshop. / I should teach piles of grammar points in one lesson for University Entrance exam. How should I manage the class which includes focus on form?

A (Miwako):

I think focus on form is basically an approach to develop students’ communicative ability, not to train them answer drill questions. One of the guidelines of structured input and output is “Present on thing at a time.” I’m afraid teaching a lot of grammar points in one lesson contradicts this principle. However, it is a much better approach to help internalize grammar structures than just working on drill questions. I think it might be possible to occasionally pick up an important grammar item and present it to students, using some part of the whole lesson with only input-based activities.

Q (7): Do you pick the movies, actors, musicians for handouts based on your opinions or do you survey students first to make sure the content is interesting?

A (Noriko): I am not as good as Miwako to use trend movies and actors, so I leave the answer to her. As for topics, the thing I keep in my mind is to try to use positive things in life such as students’ ideal ○○, happy events in life, and favorite ○○. I see that students have fun with these topics. I learned the idea from Dr. Marc Helgesen. His workshop will be held in October this year, too.

A (Miwako):

I sometimes pick up those examples based on my own preference, and sometimes on students’ preference. I don’t do survey on my students, but I often listen to them talking about their favorite singers, actors, TV dramas, etc. I am a “TV kid” myself, so my TV set is always on while I am at home. I can get a lot of information about “trend.”

Workshop in May (Day 2)

Date: May 12, 2013, 9:30-12:30

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room 1

Title: Orientation for Action Research

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

Presenter: Michael Rector (NUFS)

Abstract: Developing more effective teaching practices is a challenging and often stressful process. How can one know if ones lessons are effective or not? Action research can be an effective tool to demonstrate the value of a change in practice. In this presentation I will explain how I used action



research to develop more effective communicative lessons in cooperation with the Japanese English Teachers at a junior high school where I was an ALT. I will explain my research plan, demonstrate an activity, and share the results of my research.

The number of participants: 21



Workshop in June (Scheduled)

Date: June 8, 2013, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

Venue: NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31

Presenter: Tim Murphey (Kanda University of International Studies)

Title: Exciting Classes as Socially Intelligent Dynamic Systems (SINDYS) Through Critical Participatory Looping"

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