

## NUFS Workshop 2013

*Newsletter No. 7***Workshop in November****<Part 1 >****Date:** November 16, 2013, 10:30-14:00**Venue:** NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya)**Presenter:** Miwako Kushiro (Kakamihara High School)**Title:** "How to create effective handouts based on the theory of focus on form"

**Abstract:** Even before the implementation of the new educational guidelines this April, many high school English teachers had been worried about how to teach English “all in English” or communicatively. They still are, especially in terms of grammar teaching. In this workshop, the presenter will explain the basic theory of Focus on Form and how to apply it in making effective handouts for grammar teaching. Focus on Form regarded as an effective approach that can replace traditional ways of teaching grammar. Participants will experience the process from learning about the theory to making handouts by taking part in a demonstration lesson as students, making actual handouts, and giving micro teaching.

**The number of participants: 32****1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- I'd like to try 'Who's who?'. I'm sure students will be interested to talk about famous people which they admire.
- I want to use activities of 'High School No.3' because the flow, which is 'input – noticing – output is very natural'. I think that students can intake the target grammar through those activities.
- Small talk – Many interesting questions are good for fun class.
- I'm so impressed that every group has completed making those wonderful activities and they all look useful. When we actually work on making a handout, we realize how well Miwako's handout is elaborated in many ways. I think we should look at more Miwako's handouts before we make our own handouts. Or we can start from modify hers to our teaching setting.
- All activities in the handouts Kushiro sensei made. In particular, among the structured input activities, survey questions are very interesting. When we have different answers, it's more interesting to ask and share their answers in pairs.
- Miwako made use of meaningful input and did well to introduce the new grammar 'causative verbs'. Her activity showed us in what situation we should use "causative verbs" naturally.
- I liked the idea (junior high group No. 2) to let students arrange a room and let them explain to their friends. It can easily generate information gaps and easily let students exchange information each other. Furthermore the topic, furniture, is very interesting for students to arrange.



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

- It is difficult to create a material for focus on form by myself but I was able to cooperate with workshop members and develop a material today. It was wonderful to share the materials with other colleagues. I hope this kind of workshop will be held again to share ideas.
- Making lesson plans and handouts are time consuming but today I realized that collaborating with other teachers doesn't only help save time but it produces an excellent lesson plan wherein students can enjoy and successfully acquire the target languages.
- As a lot of teachers think, traditional grammar teaching is boring for not only students but also for us. I want to know how I can teach English grammar interestingly and efficiently to them. And also it is important to have students think the structure and situation the grammar point is used. So it is good for students to make sentences from the topic which they are interested in.
- I learned the process to construct classes. 'Noticing' is very important but other parts are also very important as well. So to make a class schedule, I think it is better to have an original style and adopt many ideas to it.
- 'Don't put the cart before the horse': This is a shocking saying, but I'm afraid that I might have done this in my classes. This is a very important idea which I must not do in my classes.
- It's possible to teach grammar without boring explanation. Conversation is very important in learning English.
- I really enjoyed the workshop today as it gives me a clearer picture of CLT. This will be very beneficial to my teaching skills since it helps me to broaden my knowledge to another dimension.



*In this workshop, participants made a group of 3 or 4 people, and made up handouts based on focus on form. You can download them from our website:*

[http://www.nufs.ac.jp/local\\_interchange/workshop/Information\\_exchange/index.html](http://www.nufs.ac.jp/local_interchange/workshop/Information_exchange/index.html)

## 3. Questions and Answers

### 1) I think the presenter was far better than the workshop bit. Why not present longer?

The main purpose of the workshop on November 16th was to let the participants experience making handouts based on focus on form approach and share their ideas with each other. We often come up with good ideas when we are talking with our colleagues. That was why we had much longer time on group work.

### 2) How do you make your materials? Are you always thinking about making materials, or suddenly you get a good idea? / I am always impressed with Kushiro sensei's well-organized handouts. How can I make such an organized material?

I often "borrow" ideas from ESL books published by companies like Pearson Longman, Cambridge, Oxford, Cengage, etc. I have dozens of these books at home, and I often refer to them. When I organize my lesson plan following "input-noticing-output" sequence, I decide on the final goal of the lesson. Then

I look for proper activities from these books, and I arrange them to make them suitable for my students.

### 3) What are some important considerations for designing an input exercise?

The key characters of structured input are as follows:

- The activity requires that the learner attend to the grammatical item in the input sentences while focused on meaning.
- Learners are asked not to produce the grammatical item, only to process it in the input. (To process means making form-meaning connection.)

The guidelines for the development of structured input activities are as follows:

- a) Present one thing at a time.
- b) Keep meaning in focus.
- c) Move from sentences to connected discourse.
- d) Use both oral and written input.
- e) Have the learner “do something” with the input.  
(The learner always responds to the input in some way: saying yes-no, agreeing-disagreeing, checking off things that apply, matching, ordering, and so on.)
- f) Keep the learner’s processing strategies in mind. (Learners should focus attention during processing on the relevant grammatical items and not on other elements of the sentence.)



### 4) About student’s noticing, students who go to the cram school have already known about grammar. So they can find the form easily. I’m afraid that those students feel boring. I’d like to know about that.

I think you can choose which grammatical items to teach based on focus on form approach. It may be useful to teach in the approach some grammatical items that are difficult for Japanese learners to acquire, or some items that we don’t have in the Japanese language such as present perfect, relative pronouns, and so on. If the topic of the activity is interesting and taps the students’ own world, they may not be bored. It can be a good review activity for those who have already learned some grammar items in advance.

### 5) What is the most challenging part of creating a lesson plan/handout that uses focus on form? I’m not sure if the same process (input-noticing-output) is also true in teaching younger learners. Especially students who can’t read and write.

The most challenging part is to come up with effective activities and make them suitable and interesting to my students. I also have to make the sequence of activities relevant as steps toward personalization, that is the final goal which is writing and speaking activities.

I am not familiar with teaching English to younger children. Focus on form approach focuses on grammar instruction, so it might be more suitable to older learners such as 5-6 graders and junior and senior high school students who have developed their metacognitive ability to some extent. I think it is necessary to ask experts on teaching English to younger learners for advice in that aspect.

### 6) Today’s topic ‘focus on form’ is interesting and I’d like to use it, but unfortunately in my school, we don’t have much time to teach grammar to students slowly. And we have to cover

**almost all English grammar points for one year. I want to know how I can use or apply these activities to my school. If you have any ideas, please tell me.**

You can choose which grammar items to teach based on focus on form approach. It's not necessary to teach everything according to the approach. The goal of structured input and output is to communicate with the target grammar items. The best way to acquire grammar items is to actually use them, so you can choose some items students find difficult to learn and teach them with focus on form approach. I think the students can learn better these items by having meaningful exchange using them.



**7) It's difficult to design the handouts even if I've learned the structure of the handouts ( input → noticing → output ). Among the books in the references, which book do you recommend I read first? Are there any good textbooks which was based on focus on forms other than 「新しい英文法指導アイデアワーク高校編」?**

The books I found very helpful are as follows:

Focus on Grammar 1~5: Irene E. Schoenberg, Jay Maurer Longman

ICON (Intro) (1)~(3): D Freeman, K Graves, L Lee McGraw-Hill

Elementary Communication Games-A collection of games and activities for elementary students of English: Jill Hadfield Nelson

Intermediate Communication Games-A collection of games and activities for low to mid-intermediate students of English: Jill Hadfield Nelson

Advanced Communication Games-A collection of games and activities for intermediate and advanced students of English: Jill Hadfield Nelson

Boost! Grammar 1~4: Jason Renshaw Pearson Education

Impact Grammar: Ellis, R & Gaies, S Longman

Grammar dimensions Book1~4: Lansen-Freeman. D (Ed) Heinle & Heinle

Expressions (Intro) (1)~(3): Nunan Heinle & Heinle

I "borrow" activities from these books and arrange them to suite focus on form approach.



## <Part 2>

**Date:** November 16, 2013, 14:00 -17:00

**Venue:** NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya)

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

**Abstract:** Monthly reports on action research

**The number of participants: 16**



## **Workshop in December (Scheduled)**

**Date:** December 7, 2013, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

**Venue:** NSC College, Building Minami, Room A31

**Presenter:** Matthew Shaefer (Rikkyo University)

**Title:** "Communication strategies - Making conversations more natural, engaging, and fun"

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