NUFS Workshop 2024

Newsletter No. 7

Workshop in November

Date: November 9th, 2024   10:30-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Title: " The Necessity of Language-Content Balanced Instruction for Essay Writing Activities forJunior and Senior High School Students"

Presenter: Naoya Shibata (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Naoya Shibata is an EFL lecturer at the Centre for Language Education and Development, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies. He is also a president of Nagoya & Gifu JALT. This summer, he completed his Ed.D. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at the Graduate School of Education (TESOL), Anaheim University. His research interests include second language writing, content and language integrated learning, and materials development.

Abstract:

In order to develop speaking and listening skills, more English classes utilise (meaning-driven) communicative activities in Japanese secondary educational settings. On the other hand, many writing activities and teacher feedback on students' essays still tend to be language-driven and focus on grammatical accuracy and paragraph construction. Although learners might be allowed to comment on content of their classmates' drafts, many encounter difficulties in providing effective feedback on them due to limited content knowledge. This background highlights the importance of providing language-content balanced instruction to facilitate students' writing abilities.

This workshop is divided into two main sessions. In the first section, participants discuss the notion of 'good' writing and experience a sample class of theme-based instruction to consider the influence of English as a global language on grammar and vocabulary and develop their language and content knowledge relevant to the topic. In the second session, participants write a short essay and revise it based on language-driven and content-driven comments from others. Finally, I will talk about the importance of collaboration between English teachers and other subject teachers to design and develop language-content balanced curricula and facilitate students' writing abilities.

The number of participants: 29

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

- I would like to develop mind mapping stages and build these into my Essay Writing class. Students could group their ideas more visually and establish links between them.

- I want to do more writing activities to develop the students' writing skill, because o learned that writing is one of communication skills.

- Collaborative writing activities could be used to promote exchange of ideas and communication opportunities. Rewriting activities could also be used.

- Recently, Japanese education focuses on oral communication, but after hearing your lecture, I noticed the importance of writing.

- I liked the introduction of skimming and scanning as I have not done it before. I also liked looking for the conjunctions.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- The approach of writing activities helps them to analyze the role of words (cohesive devices).

- In junior high school, the students are good at correcting grammatical errors, but it's difficult for them to think about the content. Today I learned how to improve their contents of writing.

- I learned the importance of cohesive and cohesion in writing. We should promote both content and language learning. Writing could be composed of process writing.

- Many higher level students lack motivation to write and lack an understanding of why they are writing.

- I had my students write fun essay and realized they need to achieve a certain level to revise their classmates' writings. They can make comments on the content but my object is how to have them notice logics and coherence and cohesion.

3. Questions and Answers

Q 1): I always wonder if teachers give too many corrections on the students' writings, they will lose their confidence. What do you think?

As Nation (2024) highlights, "teachers should not feel guilty about using a significant part of the writing course to develop grammatical accuracy" (p. 206). However, many researchers suggest that **teachers should not provide too many corrections** on students' writing in order to avoid demotivating students to write. Although some studies report that many EFL learners in particular want teachers to correct all mistakes, this can prevent learners from becoming autonomous writers and reinforce their overreliance on teachers. Instead, teachers should decide one target grammar structure (e.g., the simple past tense and the third-person singular -s) when they want to provide language-focused feedback on students' writing. If teachers would like to facilitate learners' autonomous learning, indirect corrective feedback would be

more preferable than direct corrective feedback because students need to figure out reasons why they made mistakes on the specific grammar structure.

Q 2): I'm interested in your thoughts on how reading classes are separated from writing classes. Much of content is acquired / can be acquired in reading classes. Shouldn't reading and writing be combined in the future?

Oh, I did not intend to separate reading and writing classes. Actually, I sought to integrate four language abilities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) into one class. I believe you used all four language skills to listen, speak, read and write in my model lesson. You discussed the assigned topics and prompts (listening and speaking activities). You also had opportunities to read passages and their/their classmates' reading critically and meaningfully (reading activities). You also sought to develop the assigned passages in writing (writing activities). Thus, all four language skills were combined in class.

Q 3): I would like to know how to evaluate students' essays.

Assessing students' writing skills is always a challenge!! As I answered a couple of audience members' questions briefly, students usually find checklists useful to judge whether they have fulfilled minimum requirements. Teachers can use analytic trait rubrics to provide learners with constructive feedback on their writing performance. As Lee and VanPatten (2003) suggest, the allocation of marks in a rubric should not necessarily be equal in each category but clarify the importance of writing features (e.g., length, accuracy, and content depth). As I believe content clarity and depth is very important, I usually give more scores on content sections. Whilst learners have difficulty in using the target language accurately, the allocation for accuracy is small. However, the allocated scores gradually increase.

Q 4): Thank you very much for such a meaningful presentation. There were so many things to learn, and I hope you get back and talk sometime soon. Here are two things I can ask for today's workshop.

(a) I didn't know there are Soft and Hard CLIL approaches. Can you tell me a little more about Soft CLIL?

Briefly speaking, the difference between Soft CLIL and Hard CLIL is the learning/teaching objectives. Soft CLIL aims to improve learners' target language abilities whilst Hard CLIL attempts to develop learners' content knowledge. Ikeda's (2022, p. 17) table might be useful for you to understand Soft CLIL and Hard CLIL.

	Soft CLIL	**Hard CLIL**
Who teaches?	CLIL language teachers (in language lessons)	CLIL subject teachers (in subject lessons)
What kind of language work do they do?	Work on general language while supporting subject-related topics and language in their language lessons	Work on the language of their subject
What is the aim?	To teach language [and some content]	To teach content and some language
What do they teach?	The language curriculum as well as the language of the subjects to support subject teachers	Curricular subject-matter and subject language
Who do they work with?	Work with language department colleagues and subject teachers on developing subject and language with learners	Work with language teachers on developing subject and language with learners
How do they assess?	Assess and mark language	Assess and mark content (and sometimes language)
How do they give feedback on?	Give feedback on language	Give feedback on content (and sometimes language)
What kind of knowledge do they refer to?	Knowledge of the content of the subject teachers' lessons, which is sufficient to be able to work on related ideas and language during lessons	Content knowledge and knowledge about the language of their subjects, such as text-types, vocabulary, typical writing or speaking activities, language functions
What assumption do they have about learning?	That language depends on content; content depends on language	That content depends on language; language depends on content

(Adopted from Ikeda, 2022, p. 17)

(b) My low proficiency students are not good at peer editing and sharing. They probably feel embarrassed. Any good approach?

This is a great question. I understand some/many lower proficiency learners (as well as introverted students) do not want to share their writing with others. I strongly believe that sufficient sociocultural scaffolding would be necessary for them to overcome this phycological challenge. Teachers can provide guided writing instruction using textbook passages to understand how to write and how to provide comments on others. The teaching approach can easily scaffold the writing process for students.

Q 5): What gaps in English learning do you think should be addressed in English language teaching for young learners?

This is a very great (and probably trendy) question! Regardless of the starting ages of English education, spoon-feeding approaches with limited opportunities to use additional languages would not help learners develop their language abilities (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). "The best age is late childhood and adolescence if the learning conditions are those typical of regular school programs (e.g. three sessions of 50 minutes per week) and there is no real contact with the language outside the classroom" (Muñoz, 2016). Assuming from Muñoz's (2016) argument, English language education for young learners would be doubtful in the Japanese EFL context. In order to provide pupils with more opportunities to use English daily, primary school teachers would need to design and develop CLIL curricula and materials so that they can learn both language and content in language classes as well as other subject classes. In Toyohashi, some primary schools implemented successful CLIL curricula, so you might want to check their reports.

AR Discussion

Date: November 9th, 2024, 14:30-17:00 (Room MW01, 02, 03)

Title: Action Research Discussion

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

The number of participants: 14

Next Workshop will be held on December 7th , 2024.
Detailed information is here:
https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/

NUFS Workshop

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