

Integrating language skills to develop students' communicative ability

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1. Context:

- 1) Level: Junior high school 1st year students
- 2) Textbook: New Horizon 1(Tokyo Shoseki)
- 3) Problems:

There are three problems I faced this year. The first problem is to the taking of another English teacher in the middle of school year. The second problem is the assessment process with co-teachers. And the third one is the limited class hours I am having with the first year students.

Coming back to the same school I used to work after one year leave of absence, I started to teach the first year students from the second term. I was a little nervous about the situation that I have to meet new students from the middle of the school year since I have never had such an experience. I gradually put into practice communicative activities, pair work and group work. Despite the anxiety, the students got familiar with my teaching before long.

Even though the students can handle new teaching, the English teachers cannot handle new syllabus in the middle of school year. Soon I realized that it is impossible to conduct the same lesson plans with two other English teachers. Being told that we three teachers always do not have to have the exact same assessment criteria, we reached a consensus that we separately plan the lessons and assessment. It means that we can do whatever we want with our classes. So, I decided to focus on communicative activities in which student can use new grammar items in a natural way and learn useful vocabulary as well.

Once I started communicative activities, problems of limited class hours occurred. Three classes in a week is not enough to have them acquire all four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The students had a chance to learn some English at elementary school; however, the focus was mainly on listening and speaking. They were feeling more challenged towards reading and writing rather than listening and speaking.

It was necessary for them to have time for writing during the class rather than making writing homework. In such situation, time management was a crucial problem for students to build balanced skills in English. Moreover, the skills should be integrated for better acquirement.

2. Goal:

My goal of teaching this year is to balance the activities in class hours and have students acquire all the four skills in an integrated way.

3. What I did:

- 1) Communicative activities to introduce or review grammar and vocabulary knowledge.
- 2) Introduce some reading materials other than textbook to increase input.
- 3) Use rubric to show students clear goals.
- 4) Introduce conversation strategies for timed-conversation using target grammar structure.

4. Results:

Results of survey on 61 students (2 classes)

1) Do you like English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 Yes, very much.	45.9%	41.0%
4 Yes.	34.4%	39.3%
3 I can't decide.	11.5%	14.8%
2 No, I don't.	3.3%	1.6%
1 I hate English.	4.9%	3.3%

2) Do you enjoy English class?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 Yes, very much	50.8%	24.6%
4 Yes.	37.7%	54.1%
3 I can't decide.	8.2%	16.4%
2 No, I don't very much.	3.3%	3.3%
1 I don't enjoy at all.	0.0%	1.6%

3) Do you understand the English class?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 I can fully understand the class.	9.8%	13.1%
4 I am okay.	54.1%	49.2%
3 I can manage.	29.5%	27.9%
2 I have a little trouble.	1.6%	6.6%
1 I can't keep up the class at all.	4.9%	3.3%

4) Do you want to be able to use English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 Yes, I strongly think so.	34.4%	50.8%
4 Yes, I think so.	45.9%	34.4%
3 I can't decide.	11.5%	6.6%
2 No, I don't think so that much.	4.9%	8.2%
1 No, I don't think so at all.	3.3%	0.0%

5) Do you think it is necessary to master English in the future?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 Yes, I strongly think so.	36.1%	45.9%
4 Yes, I think so.	45.9%	41.0%
3 I can't decide.	11.5%	11.5%
2 No, I don't think so that much.	4.9%	1.6%
1 No, I don't think so at all.	1.6%	0.0%

6) Which skill do you want to improve the most? (multiple answers allowed)

	Sep.	Mar.
5 Listening	54.1%	70.5%
4 Speaking	73.8%	82.0%
3 Reading	45.9%	77.0%
2 Writing	75.4%	67.2%
1 Test (Entrance exam)	60.7%	75.4%

7) How much English can you use?

[Listening] How much do you understand when you hear English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 All of the part I learned	32.8%	29.5%
4 Half of the part I learned	52.5%	54.1%
3 A little of the part I learned	6.6%	11.5%
2 Only self-introduction and greeting	1.6%	1.6%
1 Only alphabet and simple words	4.9%	3.3%
0 I don't understand at all.	1.6%	0.0%

[Speaking] How much can you say in English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 All of the part I learned	24.6%	27.9%
4 Half of the part I learned	47.5%	49.2%
3 A little of the part I learned	19.7%	18.0%
2 Only self-introduction and greeting	6.6%	1.6%
1 Only alphabet and simple words	0.0%	3.3%
0 I don't understand at all.	1.6%	0.0%

[Reading] How much do you understand when you read English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 All of the part I learned	31.1%	42.6%
4 Half of the part I learned	50.8%	42.6%
3 A little of the part I learned	14.8%	9.8%
2 Only Self-introduction and greeting	1.6%	3.3%
1 Only alphabet and simple words	0.0%	1.6%
0 I don't understand at all.	1.6%	0.0%

[Writing] How much can you write in English?

	Sep.	Mar.
5 All of the part I learned	19.7%	24.6%
4 Half of the part I learned	49.2%	54.1%
3 A little of the part I learned	24.6%	14.8%
2 Only self-introduction and greeting	1.6%	1.6%
1 Only alphabet and simple words	1.6%	4.9%
0 I don't understand at all.	3.3%	0.0%

8) What do you want to do in the class? (multiple answers allowed)

	Sep.	Mar.
Communicative activities	21.3%	27.9%
Translation of the textbook	47.5%	50.8%
Grammar explanation & drills	42.6%	14.8%
Composition	34.4%	31.1%
Practice of pronunciation	39.3%	32.8%
English songs	3.3%	4.9%
Picture books, graded readers	16.4%	39.3%
Video taking	0.0%	4.9%
Quizzes	34.4%	41.0%
Interview test	8.2%	6.6%
Speech	4.9%	8.2%

9) Comments (March)

- I enjoyed reading stories from "Very Easy True Stories." (8)
- I think it is important for us to learn conversation strategies. (7)
- I want printed translation of the textbook. (It was useful to have printed translation of the textbook.) (6)
- I enjoyed communicative activities very much. (5)

- It was fun to read ORT. (5)
- I enjoyed timed-conversation in pairs. (4)
- I was uncomfortable to do pair work with boys and girls. (3)
- I need more grammar explanation. (3)

5. What I learned:

Unlike the first term in which most of students are still ambitious and enthusiastic about English learning, more students start feeling anxious about English in the second term. They learn more new words in each class, and grammar items get complicating lesson by lesson. The term tests get harder, and many students couldn't get as good score as they did in the first term. In such a situation, many students gradually lose fun feeling and confidence towards English. When I closely looked at the survey sheets of the students, I noticed that the students who say they understand the English class or they can use English fairly well are stating that they like English or they enjoy English class at the same time. Likewise, students who have difficulty to understand English tend to answer they do not like English or cannot enjoy the English class. It is crucial to have students have confidence by acquiring basic grammar and vocabulary knowledge steadily so that they can maintain the positive attitude towards English. I believe that communicative activities have students recycle the knowledge they have already have and try out the use of new knowledge, and this process helps students acquire English in a fun way.

Therefore, there is a suspicious aspect about this result since I have seen many slower students enjoying activities including communicative activities and reading. I presumed that the students might have thought that they have to take good grade in the end to fully enjoy learning. I have to improve the way of assessment so that the students can be motivated towards learning.

Another interesting point among this survey result was about Q9, "Which skill do you want to improve the most?" If I take the points above into consideration, it can be assumed that they would answer they want to improve writing skill because the term tests they have are mainly based on writing. Despite this assumption, it found out that they think they need more speaking than writing skill. This result was encouraging for me to plan the speaking activities and speaking tests from now on.

Noticeably, the number of students who answered they want to improve reading skill

also increased. It is a welcome change when skill integration was aimed. I presume that the reason of this result was due to introducing ORT and Very Easy True Stories. They enjoyed reading very much and noticed the importance of reading at the same time.

6. Future issues:

Through the half year of conducting communicative language teaching, there are several points I want to improve. The first issue is about assessment practice. I tried to use rubric for assessing students writing this year. By using the rubric for both students' self-assessment and teacher's actual assessment, it is possible to show students what they should do for the better grade. I found out that rubric is useful for better quality of outcome. I also used rubric for self-assessment of speaking. It should have been more effective if I conduct conversation test based on the rubric. The practice of speaking test is essential to motivate the students more towards communicative activities and timed-conversation. It is also necessary to improve the criteria in rubric.

Second, I would like to develop communicative activities more in which students can use English in an integrated way. I tried to create activities for beginner level of first year students with very limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and found out that they are effective not only for learning new grammar and vocabulary but also for recycling the knowledge the students already have. The communicative activities I plan are sometimes a little complicated because I want to create more realistic situation. However, the students enjoyed using the grammar items in the activities despite the concerns about the complexity. I would like to keep creating more fun and useful communicative activities.

Finally, I would like to improve the way of taking survey from the students for the action research. Teaching and writing this final report for the first time in two years, I feel even more keenly the importance of action research. I conducted the survey only in September and March, but the change of the result among these seven months taught me a lot of beneficial things for more effective teaching for the next year. To show the intention of my teaching to students, and to know the students better, I need to improve the way of survey, and change the questions in the survey.

Lesson Plan

1. Textbook: New Horizon 1 (Tokyo Shoseki) Unit 6 “Ms. Green’s Family”

2. Objective:

To understand the use of third person singular “s”

To write and talk about the picture of the family

3. Procedure:

Day 1: Part1(p.50,51) Introduction of “s” Introducing conversation strategies

Day 2: Part 2 (p.52) Introduction of question “Does ~?” and negative “doesn’t).

Day 3: Part 3 (p.53)

Day 4: Communicative activity “This is my family”

Day 5: Communicative activity “This is my family” part 2

4. Communicative activity “This is my family” [Day 4& 5]

Day 4

1) bring a photo of their family.

2) choose two people in the photo to talk about and write three sentences about each person.

3) exchange the writing in pairs and make comments each other (in Japanese)

Day 5

4) engage in timed-conversation in pairs about the photo and composition. Rotate the seats and repeat conversation 2-3 times.

5) make a presentation about the photo in a group of 5-6.

6) self-evaluation

Let's learn conversation strategies!

会話の“技”を覚えよう！

① 会話を始めるとき

Hi! How are you doing? [How ya doing?]

それに対する答え方

Pretty good. / Good. / Fine.

Thank you.

② 相手に同じ質問を聞き返すとき

How about you?

③ 会話を終えたとき

Nice talking with you.

それに対する答え方

You too.

☝ 会話のルール

1. Make eye contact.
相手の目をみて話そう。
2. Speak clearly.
もじもじしないではっきり話そう。
3. Smile!

笑顔で！☺

今日の会話

「朝食は何を食べますか？」 What do you have for breakfast?

Example

A: Hi, (I'm A の名前).

B: Hi, (I'm B の名前). How are you doing?

A: Pretty good. How about you?

B: Good.

What do you have for breakfast, A の名前?

A: I have rice and miso soup. How about you. B の名前?

B: I have cereal.

Nice talking with you.

A: You too.

家族を紹介しよう

目標：

動詞の三人称単数現在形や, who や what を使った質問文を使って, 自分や友達の家族について対話をしたり, また自分の家族について書いたりする。

会話の評価の観点：

観点	4	3	2	1
積極的に会話に臨む態度	写真を準備し, 常に積極的に日本語を使わず英語で会話をした。	写真を準備し, だいたい積極的に, あまり日本語を使わず英語で会話をした。	写真を準備できなかった。英語で会話をした。	写真もなく, あまり一生懸命英語で話そうとしなかった。
姿勢・アイコンタクト	常に相手の方をしっかりと向き, アイコンタクトをしっかりととることができた。	だいたい相手の方を向き, アイコンタクトをとることができた。	ときどき相手の方を向いて, アイコンタクトもたまにできた。	会話の間, 相手の方を見ることができなかった。
疑問詞 (what, who, where など) の使用	常に疑問詞を使った文を覚えて, 一人につき3つ以上の質問をすることができた。	だいたい疑問詞を使った文を覚えて, 一人につき3つ以上の質問をすることができた。	プリントに書いてある疑問詞を使った文を読んで, 一人につき3つ以上の質問をすることができた。	一人につき3つ以上の質問を聞くことができなかった。
三人称単数現在形 (plays, lives, likes など) の使用	常に動詞の三人称単数現在形に気をつけて質問に答えることができた。	だいたい動詞の三人称単数現在形に気をつけて質問に答えることができた。	三人称単数現在形には気をつけることができなかったが, なんとか質問に答えることができた。	質問に答えることができなかった。
Conversation strategies (会話の技) の使用	conversation strategies を4回以上使って, 会話が続くように努力した。	conversation strategies を3回は使って, 会話が続くように努力した。	conversation strategies を2回は使って, 会話が自然になるように努力した。	conversation strategies を1回使ったか, または一回も使えなかった。

合計

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作文の評価の観点：

観点	4	3	2	1
内容・パラグラフ (段落)・完成度	he や she を使って、家族の説明がよく書けている。パラグラフがあり、一つの作文としてまとまりがあり、完成している。	he や she を使って、家族の説明がよく書けている。一つの作文として完成している。	he や she を使って、家族の説明が書けているが、まとまりがなく一つの作文としての完成度にやや欠ける。	he や she を使って、家族の説明があまり書けていない。一つの作文として完成までにもう少し努力が必要である。
文法・つづり	文法やつづりの間違いがない。	文法やつづりに1, 2か所間違いがある。	文法やつづりに3, 4か所間違いがある。	文法やつづりに5か所以上間違いがある。
長さ	家族について7つ以上の文が書けている。	家族について6つの文が書けている。	家族について4, 5つの文が書けている。	家族について3つ以下しか文が書けていない。
記号・スペース・大文字・小文字など (capitalization & punctuation)	記号や大文字・小文字の間違いがない。正しくアルファベットが書けている。単語と単語の間のスペースも適切である。	記号や大文字・小文字、アルファベットの間違いや、スペースなどの不自然なところが1, 2か所ある。	記号や大文字・小文字、アルファベットの間違いや、スペースなどの不自然なところが3, 4か所ある。	記号や大文字・小文字、アルファベットの間違いや、スペースなどの不自然なところが5か所以上ある。
準備・提出状況	丁寧に書きあげ、写真を添え、時間内に提出した。プリントにはしわやしみがない。	丁寧さ、写真、提出期限、プリントの状態のいずれかに何か一つ不備がある。	丁寧さ、写真、提出期限、プリントの状況のいずれかに2以上の不備がある。	仕上げが丁寧でなく、写真がそえられず、いい加減に書かれた感じがある。

合計

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Let's talk!

家族を紹介しよう

👉 who, what, how, where などの疑問詞を使い友達の写真に写っている人について質問しよう。

Step 1 次のようなことを聞きたい時は、英語で何というのかをまず考えよう。

1. 写真に写っている人が誰なのか聞くとき。
2. どこに住んでいるのか聞くとき。
3. 職業を聞くとき。
4. 年齢を聞くとき（子どもの場合は年齢を聞いてもOK）
5. どんなことが好きなのか聞くとき。

Step 2 会話をするときのポイントをおさえよう。

★ポイント その1★

聞く対称の人に合わせて、聞く質問を変えよう。上で書いた質問を全部聞かなくてもOK。

兄弟や姉妹、いとこなど、子どもの場合・・・年齢を聞いたり、好きなことを聞いたりしよう。

両親の場合・・・職業を聞いたり、好きなことを聞いたりしよう。

祖父母、親せきのおじさん、おばさんや、いとこの場合・・・どこに住んでいるのか聞こう。

★ポイント その2★

Conversation strategies（会話の技）を上手にを使って、会話をスムーズにしよう。

あいづち／興味を示す場合 I see. That's great. Nice. Really? など

聞こえなかった場合 Pardon? Sorry?

始めや終わりのあいさつ Hi. I'm ~. / Nice talking with you. / You, too.

興味をもったことについてさらに質問をしたり、コメントできるともったいいよ！

例： A: He likes karaoke.

B: Does he sing well?

A: Yes, he is a good singer. など

Step 3 では会話に挑戦してみよう！ Let's talk!

書き方例